

THE BIRDS OF SAUDI ARABIA

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The Birds of Saudi Arabia

CHRIS BOLAND AND ABDULLAH ALSUHAIBANY

VOLUME 2: SPECIES ACCOUNTS

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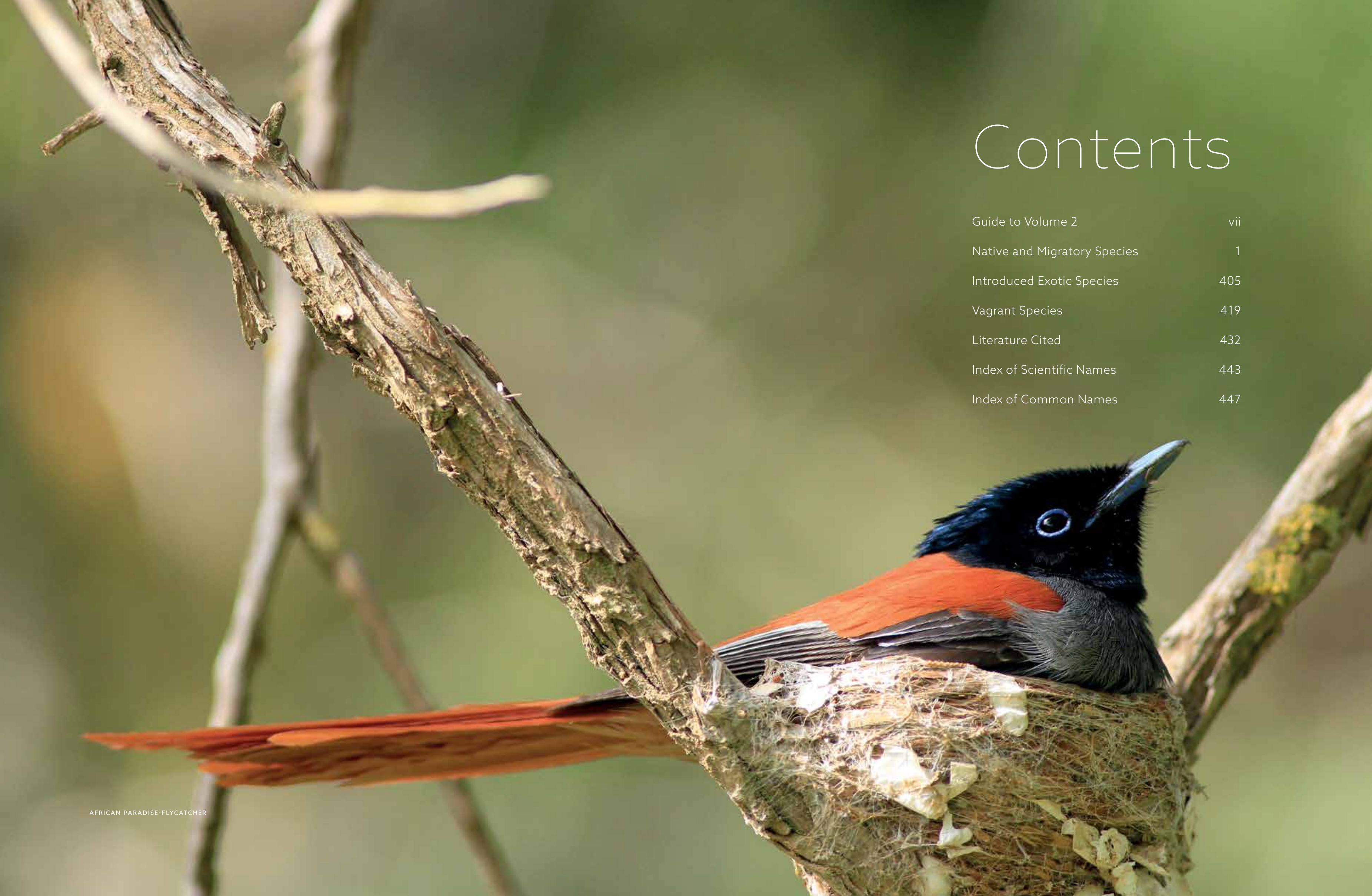
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Guide to Volume 2

This volume contains a description of each of the 401 native and migratory species that regularly occur within Saudi Arabia, followed by descriptions of the 11 introduced exotic species that have formed feral breeding populations within the Kingdom, and finally an annotated list of the 87 vagrant species confidently recorded in Saudi Arabia.

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF SAUDI ARABIA

To date, there is no official checklist of the birds of Saudi Arabia. For this book, we have collated the expert knowledge and observations of the leading ornithologists and bird photographers of Saudi Arabia to develop a comprehensive checklist containing 401 regularly occurring native and migratory species, 11 feral exotic species, and 87 vagrant species. Thus 499 bird species have been recorded with confidence in the Kingdom. We believe that this is the most precise checklist of the birds of Saudi Arabia ever assembled (Appendix 1 in Volume 1).

SPECIES NAMES AND TAXONOMY

The common and scientific names used throughout the book are based on the taxonomic system used by BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. By convention, official bird names are presented in British English (whereas the rest of the book is in American English). Arabic names are from *Birds of the Middle East* (in Arabic: Porter and Aspinall 2016) except where recent taxonomic revisions

prevent this. Arabic names in brackets are commonly used names within Saudi Arabia.

CONSERVATION STATUS AND POPULATION TRENDS

For each species, global conservation status and population trend is from the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* (www.iucnredlist.org) and is up to date as of 10 March 2020. Regional conservation status and population trend is from the IUCN¹ with updates from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species where applicable.

Additional species-specific information about conservation status is included for globally threatened or regionally endangered species. This information is derived largely from the IUCN Red List, *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, and our own records.

SIZE, WEIGHT AND WINGSPAN

Body size, weight and wingspan measurements are based on data provided in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*,² with updates from our own records where applicable. For species that are often found in flight the wingspan is provided at the end of the account.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS

As described in detail in Volume 1, the birds of Saudi Arabia can occur as one or more of the following:

- 'Breeding residents', which remain year round and breed within the kingdom
- 'Breeding migrants', which arrive in Saudi Arabia in spring to breed and then leave to spend the non-breeding season elsewhere

- ‘Winter visitors’, which breed outside the kingdom and then spend part or all of the non-breeding season in Saudi Arabia
- ‘Passage migrants’, which breed outside the kingdom and then pass quite quickly through Saudi Arabia on their way to their non-breeding grounds outside the Kingdom
- ‘Erratic visitors’, which arrive in Saudi Arabia at any time of year without breeding or wintering here.

To confuse matters slightly, a large number of species have multiple statuses within Saudi Arabia. For example, some Common Quail in Saudi Arabia are breeding migrants (they arrive in Saudi Arabia to breed before wintering in Africa), others are winter visitors (they breed in Europe and winter in Saudi Arabia), while others are passage migrants (they breed in Europe and then pass through Saudi Arabia on their way to Africa where they spend the winter). These different populations are depicted using different colors in the distribution maps.

STATUS OF BREEDING BIRDS

The status of breeding birds given in each species account is based on the following categories of estimated annual breeding pairs:

- Extremely rare: 1–10 breeding pairs
- Very rare: 11–100 breeding pairs
- Rare: 101–1,000 breeding pairs
- Uncommon: 1,001–10,000 breeding pairs
- Common: 10,001–100,000 breeding pairs
- Very common: 100,001 – 1,000,000 breeding pairs
- Abundant: Over 1,000,000 breeding pairs

This method of categorizing breeding status can lead to anomalies. For instance, the Common Moorhen (3,000 pairs) is classified as uncommon, but it is likely to be seen at almost every visit to a wetland. Conversely, the Yemen Linnnet (100,000 pairs) is classified as common, but it has a restricted range, and is only likely to be seen in the southwest. Nonetheless, these categories should give a general impression as to the national status of each breeding species.

STATUS OF NON-BREEDING BIRDS

The status of non-breeding birds given in each species account is based on the following estimates of their relative annual abundance, from most to least abundant:

- Abundant: Occurs annually in very large numbers
- Very common: Occurs annually in large numbers
- Common: Occurs annually in moderate numbers

- Uncommon: Occurs annually in small numbers
- Scarce: Occurs annually in very small numbers
- Rare: Does not occur annually but has been recorded more than 10 times in total
- Vagrant: Has been recorded less than 10 times in total

This method of categorizing non-breeding status is somewhat subjective, but is nonetheless based on the collective experience of Saudi Arabia’s leading birdwatchers. This approach will contain some anomalies. For example, many migratory birds travel at night and hunker down in bushes during the day. As a result, they may be far more abundant in the Kingdom than we realize. Conversely, large soaring raptors migrate during the day and therefore are highly detectable. Nonetheless, these categories should serve as a general guide to the national status of each non-breeding species.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS

Data on estimated annual breeding population sizes are from the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia*,³ again with updates from our own records where applicable. These estimates are extrapolations based on survey data compiled from over 66,000 records across the Arabian Peninsula. While some of the estimates will no doubt be inaccurate and based on inconsistent sampling, they nonetheless represent the best (and only) attempt to quantify the population sizes of the breeding birds of Saudi Arabia. These estimates are of wild birds only – thus the estimated population sizes for farmed species, such as the Common Ostrich, do not include domesticated animals. The only deviations from the population estimates provided in *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia* are for Arabian Lark, Asir Magpie, Egyptian Vulture, Grey Francolin, and Lanner Falcon, based on the lack of recent records for these species. Although specific numbers are given for annual breeding pairs, these should be regarded as broad estimates with wide error bars.

BEHAVIOR

The descriptions of habitat preferences, foraging behavior, social behavior, breeding behavior, and seasonality, utilize data and our own observations from Saudi Arabia wherever available. However, for many species such data have not been recorded or reported within the Kingdom; therefore we have used records from other countries in the Arabian Peninsula, or from Africa, Europe or India, as required, either from our own observations and

records or from the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Additional species-specific references are cited in the bibliography at the end of this book.

DISTRIBUTION MAPS

The species distribution maps are expert range maps derived from decades of observations by the authors of this volume along with data in Jennings (2010) and other published reports. The distribution maps use the following color scheme to depict the residence status of the birds of Saudi Arabia:

- Year-round range for breeding residents
- Breeding (spring-summer) range for breeding migrants
- Non-breeding (winter) range for winter visitors and erratic visitors
- Range for passage migrants

When a species range is mapped, the breeding range (green for residents, yellow for breeding migrants) is given priority over the wintering range (blue), which in turn is given priority over the passage range (orange). Thus, in instances where a species can conceivably be found across the entire

Kingdom both in winter and on migration, then the map is depicted as entirely blue.






Arrows indicate the approximate direction of movement for migratory populations based mainly on the relative locations of the breeding and non-breeding ranges. These are not intended to represent precise migratory routes but rather to demonstrate the general direction of movement between breeding and wintering grounds. The small black dots indicate provincial capitals while the large black dot is the national capital, Riyadh.

BEST PLACE TO SEE

The best place to see is our expert suggestion for where best to see each species. In the case of very widespread species, the best place to see is generally a classic example of the bird’s preferred habitat.

CALENDAR BARS

The calendar bars presented in the species accounts depict the approximate months that each species is present or breeding in the Kingdom.

	Breeding
	Not Breeding
	Rare and not breeding
	A small portion of the population is breeding
	Absent



ARABIAN BABBLER

SECTION 1

Native and Migratory Species



RED-TAILED SHRIKE

COMMON NAME: **COMMON OSTRICH**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Struthio camelus*

ARABIC NAME: النعام

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

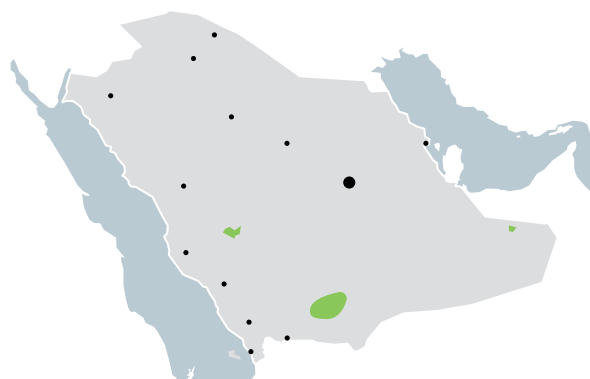
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 175–275 cm / M: 100–156 kg; F: 90–100 kg (20% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in southern Africa and the Sahel region to eastern Africa and previously occurred throughout the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* The endemic Arabian subspecies (*S. c. syriacus*) of the ostrich once roamed throughout Arabia to Syria and was still numerous in the 19th century but was hunted to extinction sometime between 1939 and 1966. Fortunately the species was reintroduced (using the most closely related African subspecies, *S. c. camelus*) into Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area (Mahazat as-Sayd) (1994), ‘Uruq Bani Ma’arid (2017) and Saudi Aramco’s large fenced enclosure at Shaybah Wildlife Sanctuary (2016). **HABITAT:** Formerly occurred in hard stony plains with scrub (including harrats) in the north and arid steppe at the edge of the Rub’ al-Khali. It is now restricted to the three reintroduction sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Grasses,

seeds and leaves taken from or near the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Solitary breeding pairs or groups consisting of a territorial male, a primary female and 2–5 additional females. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory with booming calls and prepares the nest. The male and (only) the primary female incubate, tend the chicks and feed the young for 9 months. *Nest:* A shallow scrape (3 m diameter) on open ground. *Clutch:* The primary female lays 5–11 eggs. Each secondary female lays a further 2–6 eggs in the primary female’s nest. *Incubation:* 42–45 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 3–5 days and are fully feathered at 4–5 months. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded.

Once common, the ostrich was hunted to extinction in the Arabian Peninsula by 1966. It has since been reintroduced into three large protected areas within Saudi Arabia.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 80

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

COMMON NAME: **HELMETED GUINEAFOWL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Numida meleagris*

ARABIC NAME: دجاجة حبشية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 53–63 cm / 1,135–1,823 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa (except equatorial forests and hyperarid deserts) and southwestern Arabia (Saudi Arabia and Yemen). It has been deliberately introduced to many localities around the world. Genetic studies are needed to determine whether the Arabian population is a distinct subspecies or if it originated from deliberate introductions. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This large, unmistakable ground bird occurs in the far southern Tihamah and

At the current rate of decline, this extraordinary bird could become extinct in Saudi Arabia by 2030.

lower foothills. **HABITAT:** Below 600 m in open fields adjacent to good scrub and tree cover with nearby surface water for drinking and thick vegetation for hiding and nesting. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Plant matter and invertebrates taken by scratching at the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs or polygynous groups where multiple females lay their eggs in a single nest. The male may attempt to mate with several females early in the season. *Parental roles:* The female selects the nest site, builds the nest and incubates the eggs. Both adults tend the young (the male performs most of the brooding for the first 2 weeks). Adults and young join larger flocks after 1–3 months. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, lined with vegetation and feathers, well hidden in dense cover (such as tall grass, base of a tussock, under a bush). *Clutch:* 6–12 eggs (up to 50 eggs if multiple females lay in the one nest). *Incubation:* 24–27 days. *Nestling period:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, hide nearby and then fly at 30 days. *Broods:* Probably single-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500

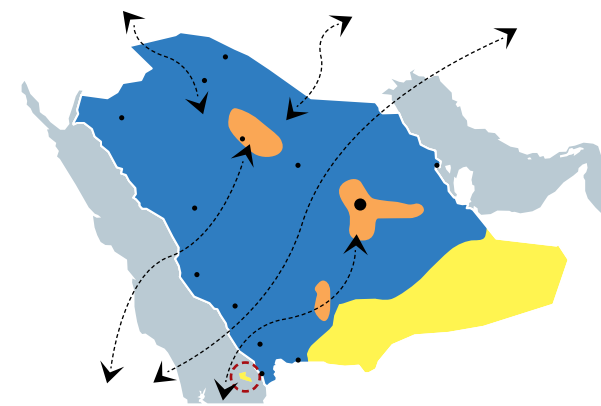
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan treatment ponds

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

COMMON NAME: COMMON QUAIL
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coturnix coturnix*
ARABIC NAME: سماني شائعة
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 70–155 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in western and central Eurasia from the British Isles to central Russia and south to Iraq with small isolated populations in Arabia and winters 2,000–7,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa and in India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This beautifully plumed quail occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and over winter and breeds in patches in central regions. It may also breed in the north and east. **HABITAT:** Irrigated fields of cereal and fodder crops (especially alfalfa and fodder grasses) and sometimes wheat. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds and other plant matter, as well as invertebrates taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forage in groups of 10–20, though they stay well hidden and



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 6,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



generally only 4–5 are seen at a time when they are flushed from undergrowth. It migrates in larger flocks sometimes containing hundreds of birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Complex: territorial breeding pairs with variable pair bonds, including monogamy, polyandry, polygamy and promiscuity. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory, while the female builds the nest, incubates and tends the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, lined with grass and plant material. *Clutch:* 8–13 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–20 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, hide nearby and then fly at 19 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded. **NOTE:** Quail are very cautious and thus more likely heard than seen. The male often gives a series of rhythmic notes repeated every few seconds. **WINGSPAN:** 32–35 cm.

This bird is very unusual in that the female often chooses to change partners during a nesting attempt in order to be paired with a better male.

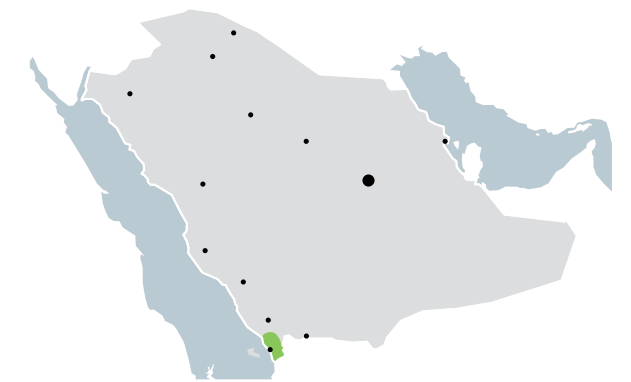
COMMON NAME: HARLEQUIN QUAIL
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coturnix delegorguei*
ARABIC NAME: سماني مهرجة (السمان الضاحك)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–19 cm / 49–95 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, with a small population in southwestern Arabia. Three subspecies are recognized, including *C. d. arabica*, which is endemic to Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* Though it is seldom recorded, this exquisitely patterned quail is probably widespread in the extreme southern Tihamah. **HABITAT:** Grassland with scattered bush cover near water and lowland cultivated areas, particularly sorghum, maize and other cereals. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Grass and weed seeds, shoots and invertebrates taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in coveys of up to 20 birds during the non-breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs (possibly with some polygyny with two females laying in the same nest), but several may nest in a cluster verging on a colony. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, sparsely lined with plant material, well hidden in low grassland. *Clutch:* 4–8 eggs (up to 15 eggs if two females lay in the one nest). *Incubation:* 14–18 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, hide nearby and then begin to flutter after 5 days. *Broods:* Opportunistic, triggered by rain. There are very breeding records from Arabia. **NOTE:** This is a secretive bird that is best located by its distinctive call.

If a predator approaches a Harlequin Quail nest, one of the adult quails will feign an obvious injury to draw attention to itself and entice the predator away from the chicks.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Grass and weed seeds, shoots and invertebrates taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in coveys of up to 20 birds during the non-breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs (possibly with some polygyny with two females laying in the same nest), but several may nest in a cluster verging on a colony. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, sparsely lined with plant material, well hidden in low grassland. *Clutch:* 4–8 eggs (up to 15 eggs if two females lay in the one nest). *Incubation:* 14–18 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, hide nearby and then begin to flutter after 5 days. *Broods:* Opportunistic, triggered by rain. There are very breeding records from Arabia. **NOTE:** This is a secretive bird that is best located by its distinctive call.



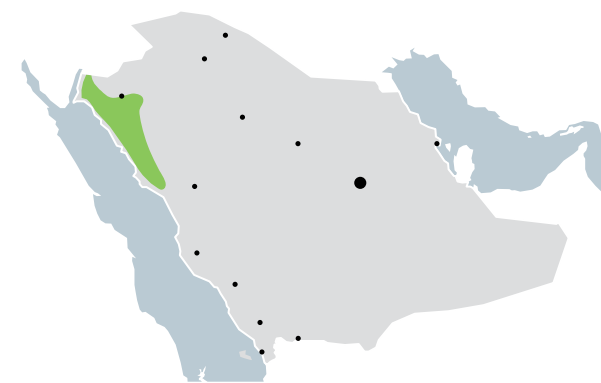
Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya pivot-irrigation fields



COMMON NAME: **CHUKAR**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alectoris chukar*
 ARABIC NAME: حجل شائع
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–39 cm / 450–800 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from Bulgaria east to northwestern China and south into northwestern and southeastern Arabia.
SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding resident.* This boldly marked partridge is locally common in the extreme northwest. It previously occurred further south (near Yanbu' and Jabal Radhwa) but there are no recent records from these areas. **HABITAT:** Between 1,600–2,000 m on arid hillsides with shrubs and scattered bushes, particularly on the granite slopes of Jabal al-Lawz.
FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Roots, grains, shoots, seeds, berries and insects taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in groups of up to 20 when not breeding.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 4,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal al-Lawz

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Generally socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes tending simultaneous clutches. *Parental roles:* The female incubates the primary clutch and occasionally lays a second clutch, which is incubated simultaneously by the male. Both adults tend the brood (or their respective broods). Family parties sometimes merge to form groups of up to 40 birds. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, usually sparsely lined with plant material and feathers, typically sheltered by a rock or shrub. *Clutch:* 8–15 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–23 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, hide nearby, fly weakly at 7–10 days and are fully grown at 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded, unless the female lays a double clutch. **WINGSPAN:** 47–52 cm.

Many partridges have a curious mating system where both the male and the female can incubate separate clutches simultaneously.



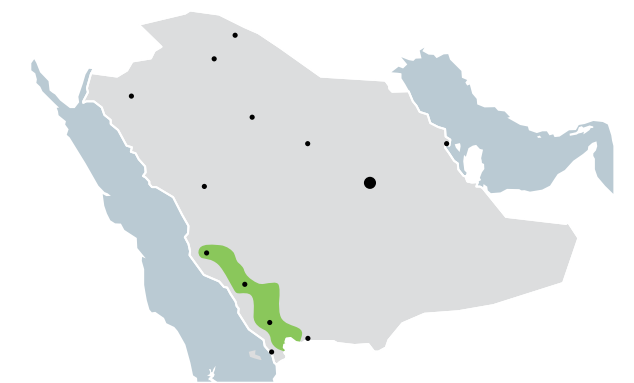
COMMON NAME: **PHILBY'S PARTRIDGE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alectoris philbyi*
 ARABIC NAME: قهيية (حجل فيلبي)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 33–36 cm / 441 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in the highlands of southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen.
SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common breeding resident.* This enigmatic Arabian endemic can be found south from Tayif on the eastern side of the escarpment. **HABITAT:** Mainly above 2,000 m in fallow and stubble fields and bare terraces, usually with adjacent rough grass, rocky areas and nearby scrub. Also found on bare hillsides and boulder scree. Only two nests have ever been recorded, both above 2,800 m. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Plant matter, seeds and invertebrates taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in coveys of less than 15 when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown, possibly socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Unknown, but probably similar to Chukar. Broods of up to 15 young have been recorded in Saudi Arabia, sometimes accompanied by two adults. *Nest:* Unknown (similar species use a shallow scrape on the ground, scantily-lined, concealed in thick vegetation and sheltered by a low shrub or rock). *Clutch:* 8–10 eggs (n=2). *Incubation:* Unknown (22–26 days in similar species, 25 days in incubators). *Nestling period:* Unknown (similar species remain at the nest for a few days and fly weakly around 7–12 days). *Broods:* Unknown.

Named after the British explorer Harry St John Philby (Sheikh Abdullah), this striking bird lives only in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Nest: Unknown (similar species use a shallow scrape on the ground, scantily-lined, concealed in thick vegetation and sheltered by a low shrub or rock). *Clutch:* 8–10 eggs (n=2). *Incubation:* Unknown (22–26 days in similar species, 25 days in incubators). *Nestling period:* Unknown (similar species remain at the nest for a few days and fly weakly around 7–12 days). *Broods:* Unknown.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 15,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN PARTRIDGE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alectoris melanocephala*

ARABIC NAME: حجل عربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 39–43 cm / 522–724 g / M: 724 g; F: 522 g (25% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs in western Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This poorly known Arabian endemic species occurs in the west of the Kingdom south from al-Wajh.

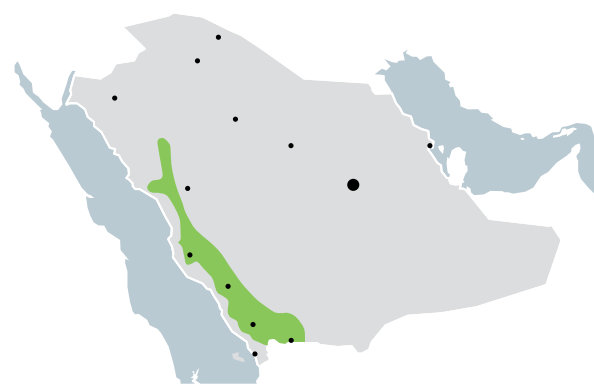
HABITAT: Broken, well-vegetated country with rocks and boulders, including hillsides, ravines and wadis with trees, bushes and ground cover, such as arid acacia scrub and highland juniper forests. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly plant matter, seeds and invertebrates taken usually from the ground. *Activity:* Crepuscular and diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in groups of less than 15 when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown. *Parental roles:* Unknown. Males and females might incubate separate clutches with the broods amalgamating post-hatching. *Nest:* Unknown (similar species use a shallow scrape on the ground, scantily-lined, concealed in thick vegetation and sheltered by a low shrub or rock). *Clutch:* Unknown (8–15 eggs in similar species).

Incubation: Unknown (22–26 days in similar species, 25 days in incubators).

Nestling period: Unknown (similar species remain at the nest for a few days and fly weakly around 7–12 days).

Broods: Sometimes double-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird is a tremendous candidate for an extensive research project, such as a PhD or masters program. There is a large population that has essentially never been studied. Not one nest has ever been found. Almost any information obtained about this bird would be worthy of publication. All other well-studied partridges have proven to be incredibly interesting. Finally, it is an endemic species living in extraordinary conditions in a fascinating part of the world.

Despite a global population of 400,000 annual breeding pairs not one nest has ever been found in the wild. You could be the person that finds the first nest.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve

COMMON NAME: **SEE-SEE PARTRIDGE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ammoperdix griseogularis*

ARABIC NAME: طيهوج (حجل سي سي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–25cm / M: 187–238 g; F: 182–205 g (10% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Syria and southeastern Turkey, east through northern Iraq to Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is also a small, isolated, permanent breeding population in northern Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This tiny partridge has been recorded on only a handful of occasions, primarily near Sakaka but once at King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al Harrah). In one record (Sakaka, April 2017) a male was calling loudly to other birds within its

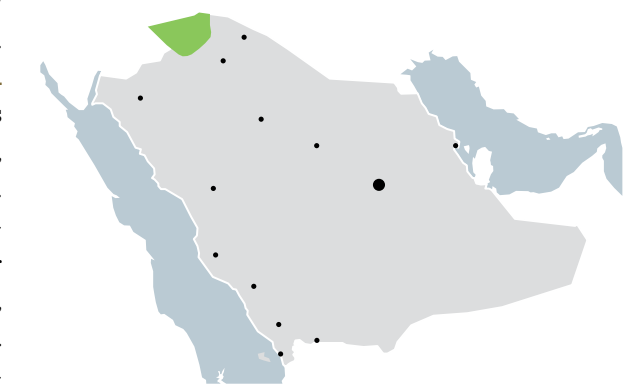
This tiny partridge – the smallest in the world – occurs in small numbers in the northern deserts. It has been recorded only near Sakaka and Harrat al Harrah.

small group, which is typical for a partridge family group and suggestive of breeding. In another (Sakaka, May 2018) 18 birds were seen together, including several juveniles. **HABITAT:** Sandy-gravel deserts or stony basalt hills with a sprinkling of desert vegetation, and usually close to water.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Shoots, leaves, berries and seeds, as well as occasional insects, usually taken from the ground. These birds fly to water to drink up to three times per day.

Activity: Diurnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It forages in small coveys with up to 18 recorded once near Sakaka, though these appeared to consist of three close groups of around six birds.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Possibly socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female incubates the eggs and either the female or both adults raise the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, unlined or lightly lined, sheltered beside vegetation or a rock. *Clutch:* 5–16 eggs. *Incubation:* Uncertain, but at least 21 days. *Chicks:* Unknown (in similar species, young leave the nest 9–20 days after hatching and are fully-grown at 30 days). *Broods:* Single- or possibly double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 40–42 cm.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sakaka



COMMON NAME: **SAND PARTRIDGE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ammoperdix heyi*

ARABIC NAME: حجل رملي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

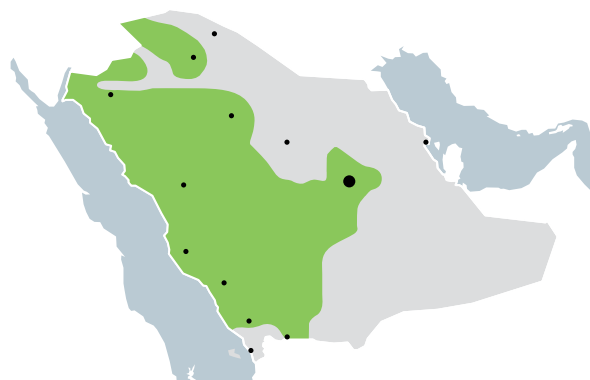
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–25 cm / 180–200 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from eastern Egypt to southern Syria and particularly Arabia (Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen), which comprises more than 80% of its global range. Four subspecies are recognized, including *A. h. intermedius*, which is endemic to the Arabian Peninsula and *A. h. heyi*, which is near endemic occurring in Saudi Arabia and extending north into Syria and Sinai. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* With its exquisite wing markings this elegant partridge occurs in the west of the Kingdom (*A. h. intermedius*) and in northern and central regions (*A. h. heyi*). **HABITAT:** Below 2,000 m on rocky hillsides, wadis, ravines and stony plateaus with some vegetation cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds (especially in summer), berries and insects (including locusts during swarms) taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in coveys of 10–15 birds, though up to 70 have been recorded at waterholes on the Tuwaiq Escarpment. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:*

Uncertain, possibly socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, though sometimes nests are only 30–70 m apart and occasionally two females may lay in the same nest. *Parental roles:* The female incubates the eggs and both adults accompany the brood. Family parties may amalgamate to form flocks of up to 20 (or possibly 70 as recorded in Africa). *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground or a rock cleft, unlined or with fragments of vegetation, sheltered by a bush or in a rock recess. *Clutch:* 5–14 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest 9–20 days after hatching and are fully-grown at 30 days. *Broods:* Single- or double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 39–41 cm.

Despite its common name, the Sand Partridge rarely occurs in sandy areas; instead it prefers rocky hillsides and stony plateaus.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 530,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hawtat Bani Tamim



COMMON NAME: **GREYLAG GOOSE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anser anser*

ARABIC NAME: إوزة ريداء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

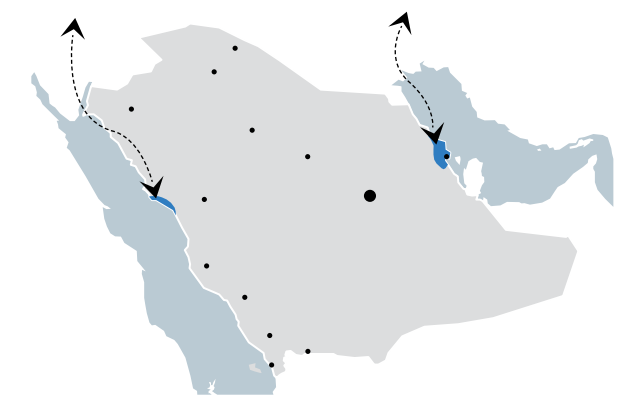
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 76–89 cm / 2,450–4,100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in boreal and temperate Eurasia, from Iceland east to China and south to Turkey and Iraq and winters 2,000 km south around the Mediterranean, Iraq to southern China and occasionally south into Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* Only a very few of these big gray geese breeding at the west of its range migrate south to winter at sites on the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea coasts. It may even be regarded as a vagrant to the kingdom. **HABITAT:** Open wetlands,

This goose forms complex social relationships. Interestingly, individuals suffer less stress and win more battles if their “friends” (close social group members) are beside them.

particularly vegetation-rich coastal lagoons, lakes and marshes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic and terrestrial leaves, shoots, rhizomes, grass seeds and grains taken either in the water or from the ground. When feeding on water it may upend to reach submerged plants. It visits dry land mainly to feed on grass, leaves, grains and crops. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is generally sociable elsewhere; however, its scarcity in Saudi Arabia means it usually occurs only as individuals or very small groups of up to seven birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Sadly this large goose is a prime target of hunters wherever it occurs. Consequently it is always shy and alert, never allowing approach closer than about 200 m. **WINGSPAN:** 147–180 cm.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anser albifrons*

ARABIC NAME: إوزة غراء كبيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

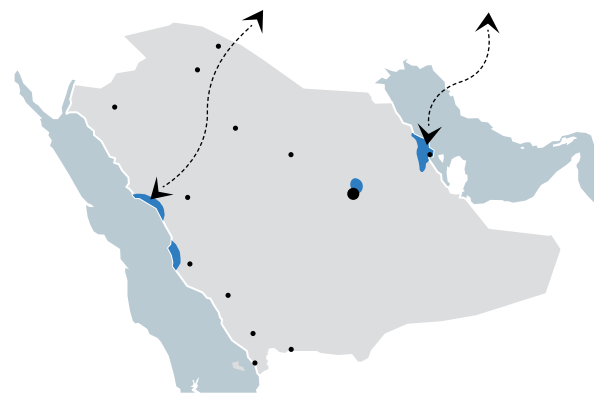
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 65–86 cm / 1,800–3,600 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the Arctic tundra of northern Russia, North America and Greenland and winters 4,000 km south in western USA and Mexico and patchily across southern Eurasia to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia is south of this species' normal wintering range. However, during especially cold northern winters some populations breeding in Russia may reach as far south as Saudi Arabia. Thus this hefty goose is not present in the Kingdom every winter. **HABITAT:** Freshwater inland lakes, marshes and farms adjacent to wetlands, as well as coastal khawrs and lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Grasses, leaves, berries, fodder and crops (such as sprouting cereals and potatoes) taken from the ground. It forages mostly by grazing on dry land, such as in stubble fields near Riyadh. It may also take roots, stems and seeds of plants. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal (feeding on moonlit nights). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a social species outside the breeding season with groups of up to 11 recorded in Saudi Arabia, although individuals have also been recorded. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This is the goose most likely to be seen in Saudi Arabia, but it is still a rarity. Unfortunately hunting pressure adds to its shyness and unapproachability, so it readily flies well away when disturbed. **WINGSPAN:** 130–165 cm.

After breeding in the Russian Arctic, these large and beautiful geese migrate 4,000 km south for winter, occasionally reaching Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'

COMMON NAME: **COMMON SHELDUCK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tadorna tadorna*

ARABIC NAME: شهرمانة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

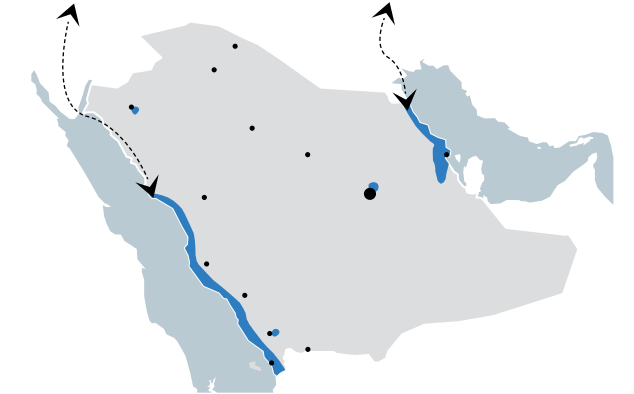
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 58–67 cm / M: 830–1,500 g; F: 562–1,250 g (20% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Iceland east to northeastern China with small populations south to Turkey, Syria and Iran and winters 1,500 km south from northern Africa and Western Europe to southeastern China, with variable numbers arriving in Saudi Arabia in winter. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia represents just about the southern limit of the wintering range of this fine-looking duck. It is not present every year, but is occasionally numerous. Some birds occasionally visit during summer months. **HABITAT:** Open areas where it can scan for predators on coastal flats and freshwater wetlands, especially nutrient rich, seasonally flooded sabkha and shallow freshwater wetlands with reed-fringed edges. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic invertebrates, such as crustaceans, mollusks and worms, as well as some fish, amphibians and occasionally vegetable matter, such as grasses and grains. It forages in water by dabbling, head dipping and upending and occasionally by grazing on land. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is recorded in small flocks typically of less than 150 birds. It can be occasionally numerous, for example over 2,500 were counted at Sabkhat al-Fasl in 2003. It maintains a strong pair bond throughout the year such that pairs are quite obvious even in winter flocks. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is hunted throughout its range and is therefore shy and takes flight easily. **WINGSPAN:** 110–133 cm.

While this large stately duck usually occurs in small flocks, in some years it can be quite numerous; for example, over 2,500 arrived at Sabkhat al-Fasl in 2003.

during summer months. **HABITAT:** Open areas where it can scan for predators on coastal flats and freshwater wetlands, especially nutrient rich, seasonally flooded sabkha and shallow freshwater wetlands with reed-fringed edges. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic invertebrates, such as crustaceans, mollusks and worms, as well as some fish, amphibians and occasionally vegetable matter, such as grasses and grains. It forages in water by dabbling, head dipping and upending and occasionally by grazing on land. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is recorded in small flocks typically of less than 150 birds. It can be occasionally numerous, for example over 2,500 were counted at Sabkhat al-Fasl in 2003. It maintains a strong pair bond throughout the year such that pairs are quite obvious even in winter flocks. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is hunted throughout its range and is therefore shy and takes flight easily. **WINGSPAN:** 110–133 cm.



Winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

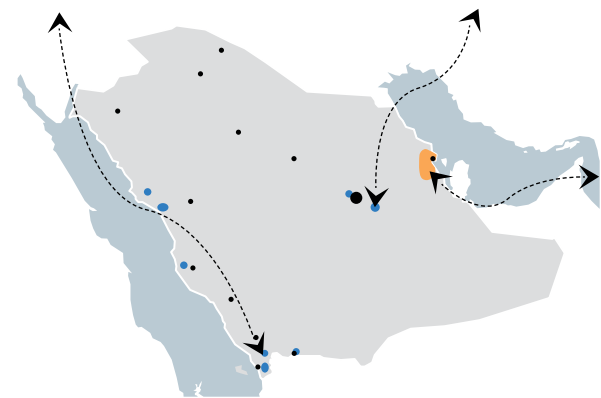
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **RUDDY SHELDUCK**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tadorna ferruginea*
ARABIC NAME: شهرمانة حمراء (بط أبو فروة)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 61–70 cm / M: 1,200–1,640 g; F: 925–1,500 g (15% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur patchily in northwestern and northern Africa, Ethiopia and Turkey to Uzbekistan and south to Iraq and Kuwait; migratory populations breed from the Black Sea to Mongolia and winter 1,500 km south in northeastern Africa and southern Asia, occasionally entering the Arabian Peninsula, mainly in the east. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, rare winter visitor.* This warm ruddy-colored duck is a widespread winter visitor (Sep–Feb) at constructed wetlands, where it may nest opportunistically. Breeding has been recorded at two sites in the Eastern Province, though not since 1984. **HABITAT:** Treated wastewater lagoons and other artificial wetlands. May also occur at open brackish sites (as recorded elsewhere). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Grains, shoots, tubers, aquatic plants, insects, crustaceans, aquatic mollusks and also small fish, amphibian spawn, frogs and small reptiles, taken by dabbling in water or grazing on land. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs or small groups, 37 were counted in Abqaiq wetlands one January. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs (possibly with life-long pair bonds), territorial around nest site. *Parental roles:* The female incubates. The male defends the nest site and guards the female. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow hollow on the ground, lined with grass and tufts of the nesting female's own downy feathers (perhaps also in a hole in a cliff, bank or burrow, or amongst rocks or ruins as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 8–12 eggs. *Incubation:* 28–29 days. *Chicks:* Young are led to water shortly after hatching and fly after 55 days. *Broods:* Breeding is probably opportunistic. **WINGSPAN:** 121–145 cm.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



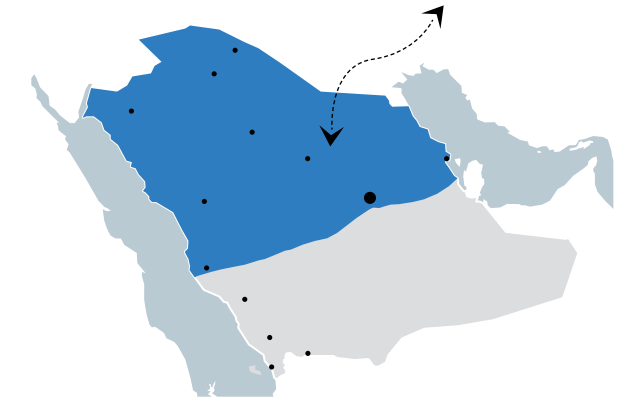
COMMON NAME: **RED-CRESTED POCHARD**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Netta rufina*
ARABIC NAME: بطّة حمراء قنّة (الونس)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 53–58 cm / M: 720–1,000 g; F: 520–870 g (20% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in small patches across Europe; migratory populations also breed in Europe and from the Caspian to Mongolia and winter 2,000 km south around the Mediterranean, Nile Delta and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor, rare and erratic summer visitor.* Saudi Arabia is near the south of this silent but colorful duck's wintering range. Some individuals enter the Kingdom and stay for several months over winter. Occasionally birds wander into the Kingdom during summer. **HABITAT:** Freshwater sites, such as marshes (especially with deep reed-fringed pools), slow-flowing watercourses, lakes and occasionally ornamental lakes or on the coasts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly green aquatic vegetation, seeds, roots and occasionally invertebrates, amphibians and fish. It feeds by diving (after a leap), upending, dabbling and head dipping. It rarely grazes on land. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found singly or in very small groups. The largest group recorded in Saudi Arabia was of only four birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When at rest, it sits high on the water in the open. It is shy and when disturbed it rises with some difficulty, pattering along the surface before flying strongly. It is usually silent in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 84–90 cm.

*What a wonderful bird!
 The male of this large
 duck has a glossy black
 breast, a bulbous red head,
 a magnificent scarlet bill
 and bright red eyes.*

HABITAT: Freshwater sites, such as marshes (especially with deep reed-fringed pools), slow-flowing watercourses, lakes and occasionally ornamental lakes or on the coasts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly green aquatic vegetation, seeds, roots and occasionally invertebrates, amphibians and fish. It feeds by diving (after a leap), upending, dabbling and head dipping. It rarely grazes on land. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found singly or in very small groups. The largest group recorded in Saudi Arabia was of only four birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When at rest, it sits high on the water in the open. It is shy and when disturbed it rises with some difficulty, pattering along the surface before flying strongly. It is usually silent in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 84–90 cm.



Winter visitor, summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **COMMON POCHARD**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aythya ferina*

ARABIC NAME: بطء حمراء رأس (حمراوي)

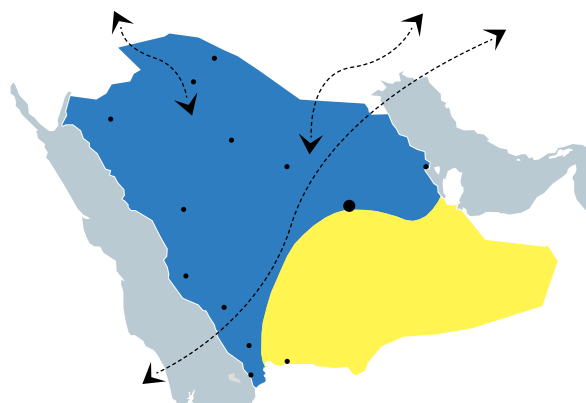
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–49 cm / 467–1,240 g



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in the British Isles and western Europe; migratory populations breed from central Europe to northern China and winter 3,000 km south in southern Europe, northern Africa, the Nile, Iraq and Pakistan to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, erratic winter visitor.* This bird is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Sep–Oct) and erratic winter visitor. Migration is likely to be on a broad front but there are records of sizeable flocks moving north up the Red Sea coast in spring. Some are thought to feed offshore in the Arabian Gulf, only coming inland in bad weather, which supports its apparent erratic occurrence in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Open freshwater sites, such as lakes, wastewater lagoons and ornamental pools, or sheltered coastal lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic vegetable matter, including seeds, rhizomes, tubers, leaves and grasses, as well as various invertebrates, notably mollusks and crustaceans. It is a diving bottom-feeder (to 2.5 m), but also upends and dabbles. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Flocks of up to 500 have been seen in the Arabian Gulf, but in most places 50 would be considered a large group. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When disturbed it paddles away from danger and becomes airborne after pattering along the surface. It rarely stays in the one area over the entire winter. Instead it moves long distances (over 200 km) between successive wintering sites, probably in response to food depletion. Sadly, like many waterbirds this duck is vulnerable to lead poisoning from ingested gunshot pellets.

This chestnut-headed duck migrates from eastern Africa through Saudi Arabia to its breeding grounds in Eurasia, sometimes flying more than 300 km per day.

COMMON NAME: **FERRUGINOUS DUCK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aythya nyroca*

ARABIC NAME: بطء كميت (حمراوي أبيض العين)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

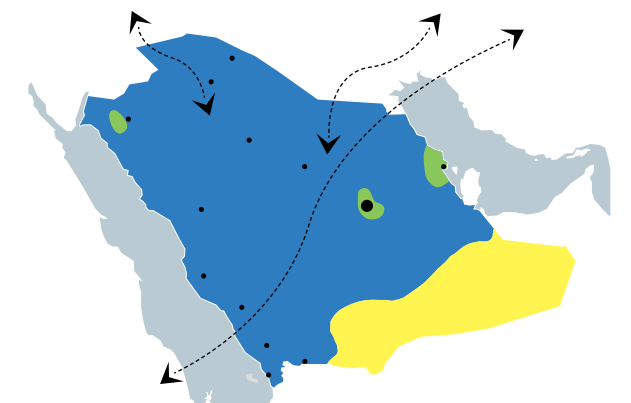
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 38–42 cm / 464–730 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in isolated patches around the Mediterranean and Black Sea south to the Arabian Peninsula and east to Afghanistan; migratory populations breed from central Europe to Mongolia and winter 2,000–5,000 km south around the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa and across southern Asia, including all of Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter*

visitor. This reddish-brown or 'ferruginous' duck is widespread on migration and over winter (Sep–Apr). A small breeding population is probably resident in Saudi Arabia, mainly in the Eastern Province and around Tabuk and Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Undisturbed wetlands with overgrown reed fringes, such as treated-wastewater lagoons and ornamental lakes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic seeds, roots, shoots and invertebrates, as well as amphibians and small fish, taken by diving, upending or dabbling. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in shallow water (less than 1 m), alone or in small groups of less than ten, though 23 were once recorded in Dhahran. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in loose groups; the pair bond dissolves during the incubation phase. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest, incubates and tends the ducklings. *Nest:* Variable: either a hollow in the ground in thick vegetation near the water's edge, or a basket made of plant stems and built up from the water amongst dense reeds, lined with plant material and tufts of the nesting female's own downy feathers. *Clutch:* 7–11 eggs. *Incubation:* 25–27 days. *Chicks:* Young swim shortly after hatching and fly at 56–60 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 63–67 cm.

Duck eyes are often highly visible when open; thus other group members can easily assess which birds are asleep and adjust their own level of vigilance accordingly.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



COMMON NAME: **TUFTED DUCK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aythya fuligula*

ARABIC NAME: بطّة قنبراء (أبو خصلة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–47 cm / 560–1,020 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles and western Europe; migratory populations breed in Iceland and northern Europe across most of Russia and winter 6,000 km south in northern and eastern Africa and southern Europe through India to Japan and south into the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This rather majestic-looking duck is primarily a widespread winter visitor (Oct–Feb) and passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep–Oct). A few individuals may also stay over summer. **HABITAT:** Large, open wetland sites, particularly with pools lacking surface vegetation, such as reservoir lakes, the Riyadh River and ornamental lakes. It occasionally occurs in sheltered coastal lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Green vegetation and seeds, with a sizable intake of invertebrates, including mollusks and crustaceans. Jumps to dive to depths of up to 13 m and therefore it feeds in deeper water compared to other diving ducks. It

also up-ends and pecks from the surface.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**

Social, it usually forages in groups of

4–10 individuals, but groups of up to

50 have been recorded and once 400

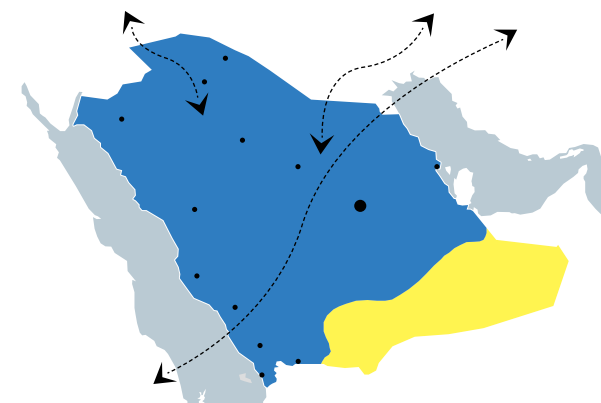
were observed at Hofuf). **BREEDING**

BEHAVIOR: Does not breed in Saudi

Arabia. **NOTE:** It is a small rather compact duck, which tends to swim away from danger and later takes flight after a patter along the surface. It has strong flight with rapid wing beats that can make a whistling sound, presumably to alert group members to the presence of danger.

WINGSPAN: 65–72 cm.

This splendid duck with its long head crest can dive 10 meters below the surface where it finds and eats mollusks.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **GARGANEY**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spatula querquedula*

ARABIC NAME: حدفة صيفية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–41 cm / 240–585 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to northern China and winters 5,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa, Nile Valley, India and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, very rare winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This bird is a common and widespread broad front passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Mar–May,

Aug–Nov). It can be quite abundant in

some years with numbers generally more

numerous in autumn. **HABITAT:** Shallow

freshwater wetlands, such as swamps,

marshes, settling ponds with emergent

vegetation, reed-choked ponds, roadside

pools and even desert floods. It may also

rest for short periods on calm seas dur-

ing migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic invertebrates,

along with amphibians, small fish and varying amounts of vegetable matter,

such as seeds, grasses, roots and other parts of aquatic plants. Feeds by head

dipping, dabbling, pecking from the surface and upending but does not dive.

Activity: Nocturnal and partly diurnal (it sometimes feeds by day in undis-

turbed wetlands). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually seen in groups of up to a

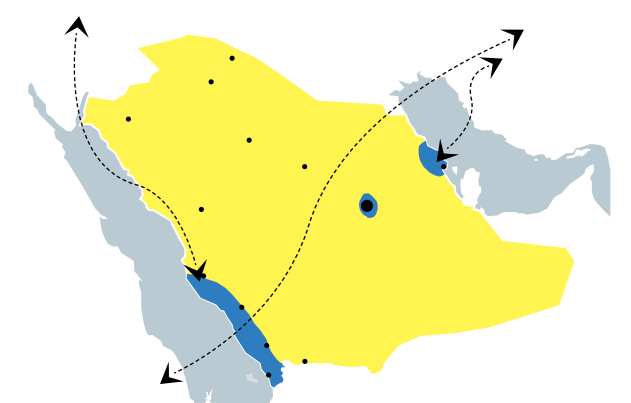
dozen but flocks of 50 to several hundred are regular during migration, espe-

cially in autumn. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

NOTE: This small duck is unobtrusive as it feeds but when alarmed springs

directly from the water and flies fast to the next pond or circles and lands

again nearby.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sakaka settling ponds

COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN SHOVELER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spatula clypeata*

ARABIC NAME: منقاري منقار (أبو منقاري)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

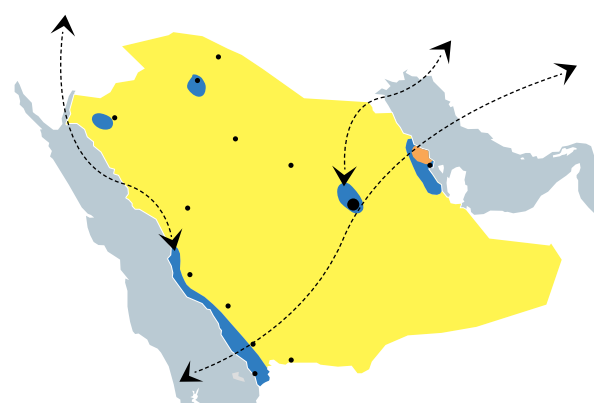
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 43–56 cm / 470–800 g



MALE



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



FEMALE WITH BROOD

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout most of northern Eurasia and North America and winters 2,000–6,000 km south in southern Europe, Africa, southern Asia and Central America. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant, common winter visitor. This bird with its large, distinctive bill occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia over winter (Oct–Mar) and as a passage migrant. Furthermore,

breeding has been recorded occasionally at a wetland in Qatif, well south of its main range and probably occurs undetected at other wetlands. **HABITAT:** Shallow freshwater and brackish wetlands with fringes of dense reeds and other emergent vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Aquatic invertebrates, seeds and plant remains, taken by dabbling, dipping, upending, head sweeping and shallow diving. **Activity:** Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in groups of 10–15 though groups of up to 52 have been recorded in Dhahran. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Mating system: Seasonally monogamous territorial breeding pairs. Parental roles: The female builds the nest, incubates and tends the ducklings, while guarded by the male. Nest: A shallow hollow in the ground, lined with grass, leaves and tufts of the nesting female's own downy feathers, located close to water, in a marsh, bog or lush grassland. Clutch: 8–12 eggs. Incubation: 22–23 days. Chicks: Young swim shortly after hatching and fly at 40–45 days. Broods: Single-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird has the rather extraordinary ability to detect the presence of mammalian urine, which may help it to avoid certain nest predators. **WINGSPAN:** 70–85 cm.

This emerald-headed duck often swims in tight circles to create a whirlpool in the water that brings food to the surface, which it then scoops up with its shovel-shaped bill.

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in western USA and southern Europe; migratory populations breed in Canada and USA and from central Europe to northeastern China and winter in USA and Mexico and southern Europe, northwestern Africa, Nile Valley and Iraq to the east coast of China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Uncommon winter visitor. This mottled dabbling duck is an uncommon winter visitor to Saudi Arabia, though it appears to be increasing presumably as a result of the increase in wetlands in the kingdom. Most wintering birds are seen at wetlands adjacent to the coast. **HABITAT:** Shallow freshwater sites, such as lakes with good vegetation cover, nutrient rich ponds and quiet stretches of slow flowing streams. It occurs less often in coastal lagoons and tidal creeks with cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Seeds, buds, roots and stems of aquatic plants. Food is mostly obtained underwater via upending and head dipping. It occasionally grazes on land on sprouting crops and grasses or picks up grain. It sometimes steals food from other species if it can, including ducks and coots. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs in small groups of up to 10, with the largest flock reported in Saudi Arabia containing 90 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 84–95 cm.

COMMON NAME: **GADWALL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Mareca strepera*

ARABIC NAME: سمارية (بط سماري)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–58 cm / 550–1,000 g

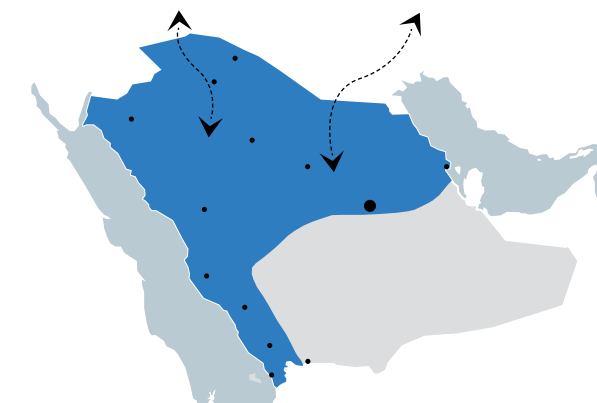


MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in western USA and southern Europe; migratory populations breed in Canada and USA and from central Europe to northeastern China and winter in USA and Mexico and southern Europe, northwestern Africa, Nile Valley and Iraq to the east coast of China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Uncommon winter visitor. This mottled dabbling duck is an uncommon winter visitor to Saudi Arabia, though it appears to be increasing presumably as a result of the increase in wetlands in the kingdom. Most wintering birds are seen at wetlands adjacent to the coast. **HABITAT:** Shallow freshwater sites, such as lakes with good vegetation cover, nutrient rich ponds and quiet stretches of slow flowing streams. It occurs less often in coastal lagoons and tidal creeks with cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Seeds, buds, roots and stems of aquatic plants. Food is mostly obtained underwater via upending and head dipping. It occasionally grazes on land on sprouting crops and grasses or picks up grain. It sometimes steals food from other species if it can, including ducks and coots. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs in small groups of up to 10, with the largest flock reported in Saudi Arabia containing 90 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 84–95 cm.

To conserve energy over winter, Gadwalls spend 80% of their time asleep, but to avoid predators they need to alternate between waking and sleeping every 2–3 seconds.

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in western USA and southern Europe; migratory populations breed in Canada and USA and from central Europe to northeastern China and winter in USA and Mexico and southern Europe, northwestern Africa, Nile Valley and Iraq to the east coast of China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Uncommon winter visitor. This mottled dabbling duck is an uncommon winter visitor to Saudi Arabia, though it appears to be increasing presumably as a result of the increase in wetlands in the kingdom. Most wintering birds are seen at wetlands adjacent to the coast. **HABITAT:** Shallow freshwater sites, such as lakes with good vegetation cover, nutrient rich ponds and quiet stretches of slow flowing streams. It occurs less often in coastal lagoons and tidal creeks with cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Seeds, buds, roots and stems of aquatic plants. Food is mostly obtained underwater via upending and head dipping. It occasionally grazes on land on sprouting crops and grasses or picks up grain. It sometimes steals food from other species if it can, including ducks and coots. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs in small groups of up to 10, with the largest flock reported in Saudi Arabia containing 90 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 84–95 cm.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN WIGEON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Mareca penelope*

ARABIC NAME: صواياة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

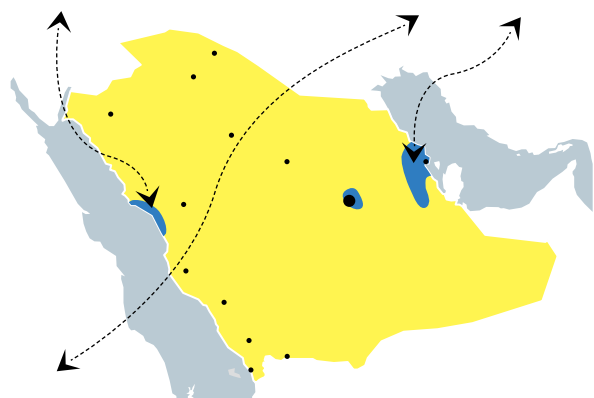
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 45–51 cm / 500–1,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across northern Eurasia and winters 4,000–6,000 km south in western Europe, the Mediterranean basin and Nile Valley to India and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This chestnut-headed duck is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov). It is recorded over winter (Nov–Mar) in the west and east and around Riyadh and has been recorded over summer in Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** Sheltered coastal sites, such as bays and lagoons, as well as inland freshwater wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly stems, shoots, leaves, rhizomes and seeds while feeding on land and algae and seagrass when feeding on the coast. Some invertebrates are taken when they are numerous, such as fly swarms, locusts and crustaceans. It may feed in the water from the surface or just below by dabbling or neck dipping but mainly on land by grazing. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. *Social Behavior:* It is a gregarious species typically seen in small numbers of sometimes up to 30 birds, but flocks of 500–1,000 have been recorded on occasions in Arabian Gulf wetlands. In winter, it sometimes forms tight coordinated flocks, often including other ducks, notably Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 75–86 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **MALLARD**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anas platyrhynchos*

ARABIC NAME: خضاري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

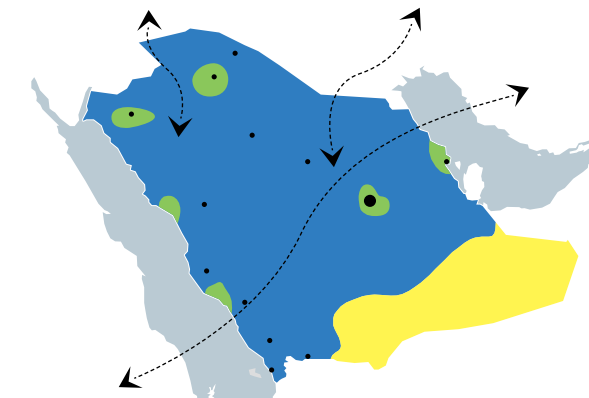
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–70 cm / M: 870–1,800 g; F: 735–1,320 g (25% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in USA, northern Africa, Western Europe and Japan; migratory populations breed in Canada, Greenland, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe to northern Asia and winter 2,000–3,000 km south in Mexico, northeastern Africa and Iraq to China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* The Mallard occurs naturally throughout Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant and winter visitor. Additionally, birds imported

Mallards at the edge of a sleeping flock are most vulnerable to predation, so they sleep with one eye open allowing only half of their brain to enter a sleep state.

to the Kingdom for ornamental purposes have formed feral resident populations with breeding first recorded at the Riyadh River in 1984. **HABITAT:** Breeds at freshwater wetlands, such as shallow soaks with thick marginal vegetation, large reed-fringed pools and slow-moving streams. It winters at various wetlands, including coastal bays, lagoons, treated wastewater ponds, ornamental lakes and streams. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, aquatic plants, crops and invertebrates and occasionally amphibians and fish. It forages by dabbling, head dipping, upending and grazing. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal (feeding at night in winter). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Small flocks, though 300–400 were recorded along Riyadh River. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Generally socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. Pairs may dissolve after breeding and extra-pair copulations are common. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest, incubates and tends the ducklings. The male defends the nest. *Nest:* A hollow in the ground, lined with grass, plant debris and the female's own downy feathers, usually hidden amongst vegetation (occasionally in a tree cavity, building, or disused nest of another species). *Clutch:* 9–13 eggs. *Incubation:* 27–28 days. *Chicks:* Young swim immediately after hatching and fly at 7–8 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 75–100 cm.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN PINTAIL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anas acuta*

ARABIC NAME: بليول شمالي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–66 cm / 735–1,030 g



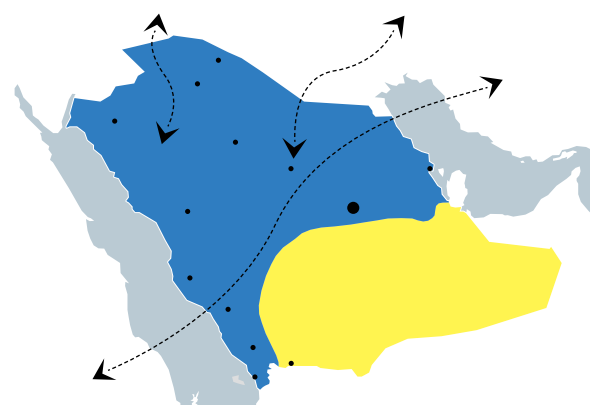
MALE



FEMALE



MALE IN FLIGHT



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout northern North America and northern Eurasia; most winter 3,000–5,000 km south around Mexico, the Mediterranean, much of northern Africa and Iraq east to Southeast Asia and south into Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor, rare and erratic summer visitor.* This chocolate-brown-headed duck is an uncommon winter visitor (Oct–Mar) to Saudi Arabia, but also a broad front migrant that probably passes directly across the Kingdom (even passing across the Rub' al-Khali) on its way to Africa.

HABITAT: Shallow freshwater lakes, marshes and streams with aquatic and fringing vegetation, as well as brackish coastal creeks and ponds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly vegetable matter, including leaves, grasses, seeds, grain, tubers, rhizomes and crop vegetables, as well as aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and fish. Feeds by upending, neck dipping and dabbling. On land it pecks at the surface, or digs with the bill. *Activity:* Diurnal and regularly nocturnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It is sociable and can be one of the most numerous ducks in Saudi Arabia with counts of several hundred occasionally from the Eastern Province and Yanbu' and over 1,000 near Riyadh. It freely mixes with other ducks when feeding and in short flights. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** An elegant, long-tailed duck, it flies in classic "V formation". Its distinctive pintail arises from the elongated central rectrices that extend up to 10 cm beyond the rest of the tail. **WINGSPAN:** 80–95 cm.

This graceful duck gathers in large flocks during the winter with hundreds recorded in the Eastern Province and Yanbu' and over 1,000 near Riyadh.

COMMON NAME: **COMMON TEAL**OTHER COMMON NAME: *Eurasian Teal*SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anas crecca*

ARABIC NAME: حدفة شتوية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 34–38 cm / 200–450 g

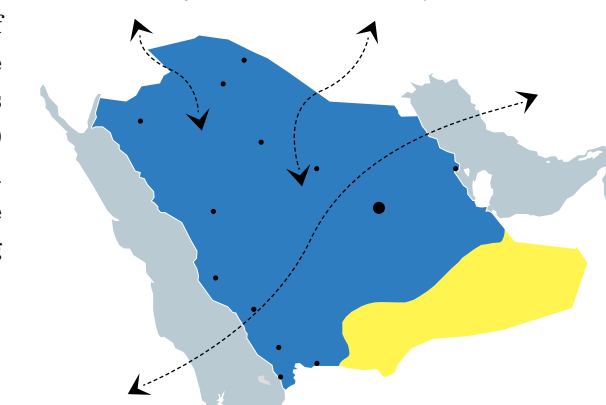


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Canada and northern Eurasia to above the Arctic Circle; most winter 3,000–6,000 km south in USA, Mexico, the Mediterranean, eastern Africa and southern Asia, including Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This pretty little duck is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia both as a broad front migrant (Feb–Mar, Sep–Oct) and over winter (Nov–Feb).

Like many waterbirds, this small and stylish duck often suffers from lead poisoning as a result of eating too many spent bullet cartridges left by hunters.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is the smallest duck in Saudi Arabia and one of the most easily disturbed, springing into the air and then fleeing with a low, erratic flight.

HABITAT: Large shallow vegetation-rich wetlands, as well as small pools or saline coastal lagoons. It occasionally rests on the sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic plant food, such as leaves, grasses, seeds and shoots, as well as invertebrates, including worms, mollusks and crustaceans. Feeds by upending, head dipping or pecking from the surface. Prefers to feed near the edge of deep water. *Activity:* Nocturnal and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in flocks of 10–60 birds. However, highly variable numbers are noted in most locations in spring and autumn with up to 2,000 once recorded on migration near Riyadh.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE GREBE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

ARABIC NAME: غطاس صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

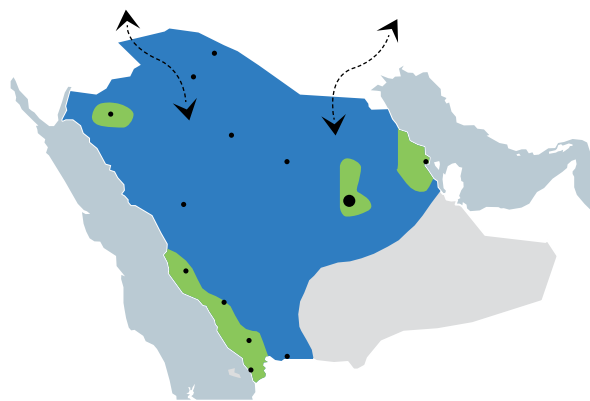
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–29 cm / 130–236 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across Europe, much of Africa and southern Asia (including Arabia) to Japan and New Guinea; migratory populations breed in Eastern Europe, western Asia and northeastern China and winter 1,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, common winter visitor.* This small and endearing grebe occurs patchily throughout Saudi Arabia both as a resident and as a winter visitor (Sep–Mar). **HABITAT:** Below 2,725 m in freshwater wetlands, usually with open water and emergent vegetation, including ornamental ponds, irrigation lakes, reservoirs and wastewater treatment lagoons. It sometimes occurs in brackish coastal waters. It breeds below 2,350 m. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and larvae, as well as mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians and small fish. It feeds by diving to 1–2 m for up to 25 seconds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in small groups, though 124 were once recorded in Dhahran.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Lake Asfar

**BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs with long-lasting pair bonds. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. Adults cover the eggs with nest material before they leave the nest and often carry the young on their backs while swimming. *Nest:* A mound made from aquatic vegetation with a hollow on top, either piled up beyond the water level (in shallow water), or floating while anchored to growing vegetation (in deeper water), typically concealed amongst vegetation. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 20–21 days. *Chicks:* Young swim and dive within hours of hatching and fly at 44–48 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

The chicks of these adorable little birds can swim and dive underwater within only a few hours of hatching.

COMMON NAME: **GREAT CRESTED GREBE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Podiceps cristatus*

ARABIC NAME: غطاس قنبري (غطاس متوج كبير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

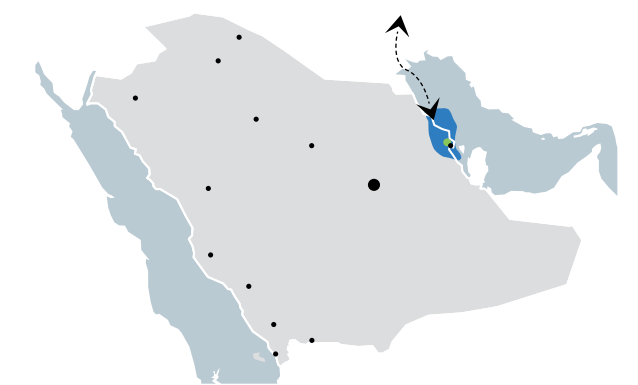
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–61 cm / 596–1,490 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across Western Europe and patchily across Africa, central Europe and east through the Middle East to Australia and New Zealand; migratory populations breed in Eastern Europe to northeastern China and winter 1,000–2,000 km south in the Mediterranean and southern Asia (including the Arabian Peninsula). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor.* This truly majestic grebe is usually found offshore in the Arabian

Great Crested Grebes perform one of Nature's most elaborate and elegant courtship displays, culminating in pairs literally running across the surface of the water in unison.

Gulf (and very rarely in the Red Sea) over winter (Nov–Jan) and has been recorded breeding in Dhahran. **HABITAT:** Breeds in partially reed-fringed treated wastewater lakes with emergent vegetation. It is generally offshore over winter. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish (up to 22 cm long), along with some aquatic invertebrates. Prey is captured primarily during dives lasting 20–30 seconds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages singly, in small groups, or sometimes in groups of 50–100 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. Adults cover the eggs with nest material before they leave the nest and often carry the young on their backs while swimming. *Nest:* A mound made from reeds and sticks with a shallow hollow on top and anchored to reeds. Additional structures nearby are sometimes used for loafing, preening and copulation. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 28 days. *Chicks:* Young swim and dive shortly after hatching and fly at 71–79 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Gulf of Salwa



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-NECKED GREBE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Podiceps nigricollis*

ARABIC NAME: غطاس أدرع (غطاس أسود الرقبة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–34 cm / 265–450 g



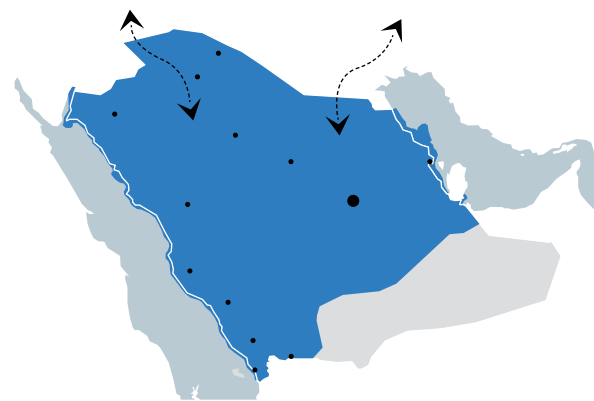
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Mexico, southern and eastern Africa and patchily throughout southern Europe and western Asia; migratory populations breed in North America, Western Europe to Kazakhstan and northeastern China and winter 1,500 km south in Mexico, the Mediterranean, southern China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor, possible breeding resident.* This magnificent grebe with its striking red eye is primarily a winter visitor. It was recorded breeding in the southwest highlands at 2,350 m in 1985 and courtship displays have been noted in wetlands near Riyadh and in the Eastern Province, which suggests it occasionally breeds in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Sheltered coastal waters and occasionally at inland wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic and terrestrial insects and their larvae, along with crustaceans, mollusks, amphibians and small fish. Crustaceans may be particularly important during winter in the Kingdom. It forages mainly by diving

for 10–20 seconds, as well as gleaning foliage and surface feeding. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It is typically recorded in small groups of up to about 10, though counts of over 40 in Half Moon Bay are not unusual. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest,

incubate and tend the young. Adults cover the eggs with nest material before they leave the nest and often carry the young on their backs while swimming. *Nest:* A floating platform of vegetation anchored to reeds. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 20–24 days. *Chicks:* Young swim and dive shortly after hatching and fly at 21 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded.

Grebes sometimes eat their own feathers. This slows food passage rate through the gut, thereby giving the bird more time to digest its tiny aquatic invertebrate prey.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Half Moon Bay

COMMON NAME: **GREATER FLAMINGO**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phoenicopterus roseus*

ARABIC NAME: النحام الكبير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 120–145 cm / 2,100–4,100 g

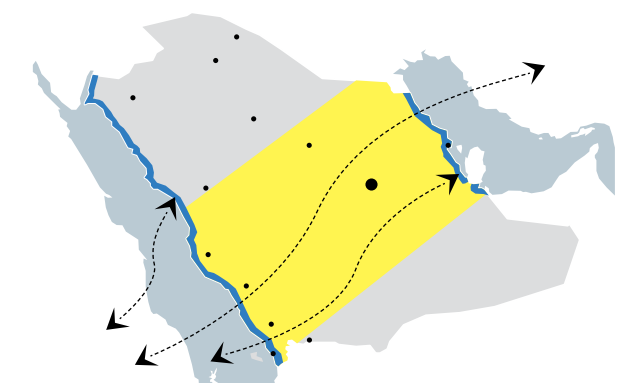


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident, partially migratory and migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean, coastal and eastern Africa and patchily in southwest Asia (including UAE and Iran); migratory populations breed in Kazakhstan; some members of most populations disperse up to 3,000 km to winter in coastal Arabia and from Syria to India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* The most elegant of birds, it occurs in all coastal areas of Saudi

The world famous flamingo feeds by walking steadily along with its head completely underwater while sifting tiny prey through filters in the bill.

Arabia as a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov) and over winter. Most records from the central regions are of immature birds crossing the Kingdom. Some early breeding season behavior has been noted near Jiddah and breeding has been confirmed recently at Jubail, which indicates it breeds erratically in the Kingdom.

HABITAT: Coastal areas, including shallow bays, highly saline or alkaline shallow lakes and lagoons, adjacent to mudflats and mangrove areas. It occasionally occurs inland at shallow invertebrate-rich lakes and settling ponds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic and marine invertebrates (including insects, larvae, worms, mollusks, crustaceans) taken by inverting the head underwater and sifting prey items through filters in the bill. It also filters mud and takes a variety of seeds and parts of aquatic vegetation. It sometimes walks forward with its head and most of its neck underwater and treads on the ground to dislodge prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it tends to feed, rest and fly in groups. Foraging flocks of several thousand are regularly recorded in Jubail over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **WINGSPAN:** 140–165 cm.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **LESSER FLAMINGO**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phoeniconaias minor*

ARABIC NAME: النعام الصغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 80–90 cm / 1,500–2,000 g



Winter visitor, erratic visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and highly dispersive: breeds in large colonies in eastern, western and southern Africa, India and Pakistan; populations wander widely after breeding, including irregularly to southern Arabia (with more than 10,000 recorded once in Yemen) where it occasionally attempts to breed. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor, erratic summer visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This ballet pink bird is a rare and erratic visitor to the Kingdom. The population breeding around the African Rift Valley wanders considerably, particularly over winter, and occasionally enters Saudi Arabian waters in the southern Red Sea. Birds were photographed sitting on nests in March 2019 near Jazan, proving they sometimes attempt to breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Shallow, sheltered bays and khawrs, with muddy, grassy or mangrove edges. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Highly specialized, consisting almost entirely of microscopic blue-green algae, occasionally supplemented with very small invertebrates.

The Greater Flamingo's rare little cousin, it occasionally wanders into Saudi Arabian waters. Over 400 were recorded together near Jazan in December 2018. It feeds like the Greater Flamingo but the bill is usually only partly submerged as it skims food from near the water surface. It walks and swims while feeding and a group may move forward in unison scything their bills from side to side in search of prey. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a highly gregarious bird. Around 110 were recorded foraging together on coastal mudflats near Jazan in January 2018 and over 400 were seen at the same site in December 2018. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding successfully in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** This is the world's smallest flamingo. A satellite-tracked bird flew 1,069 km in a single 16-hour flight from the coast of Mozambique to the western shores of Madagascar. **WINGSPAN:** 95–100 cm.



COMMON NAME: **RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phaethon aethereus*

ARABIC NAME: استوائتي أحمر منقار

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

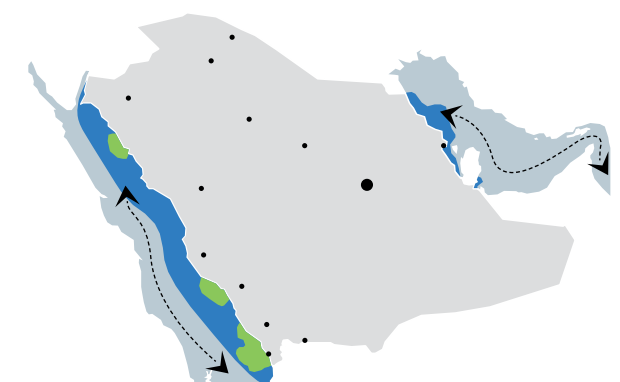
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly decreasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 90–105 cm / 700 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Highly dispersive: breeds on tropical islands in the eastern Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean and wanders in tropical waters generally within 1,500 km of the breeding site. Three subspecies are recognized, including *P. a. indicus*, which is endemic to the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Aden and Red Sea and disperses into the Arabian Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* This remarkable white seabird with its extraordinary scarlet tail streamers that can extend over 50 cm from the rest of the tail occurs in both the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, but breeds only in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Marine, it forages at sea and breeds on undisturbed islands with cliffs, overhangs, caves, cavities, or boulders and beach slabs above the high water mark, avoiding well-vegetated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small fish and squid taken by plunge-diving, while flying fish are often caught in flight. Satellite tracking data reveal it can forage over thousands of kilometers. It often associates with dolphins, tuna and dolphinfish as they bring prey to the surface. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs in loose colonies or less often solitarily. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A cavity in a cliff or on the ground in a crevice (up to 2 m long) amongst rocks on the beach, or occasionally in a rock breakwater. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 42–44 days. *Nestling period:* 80–90 days. *Broods:* Probably single-brooded, perhaps breeding opportunistically throughout much of the year depending on food availability. **WINGSPAN:** 99–106 cm.

This balletic seabird regularly performs a spectacular aerial display with graceful glides and reverse flight while its glorious red tail streamers bend and wave in the wind.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands



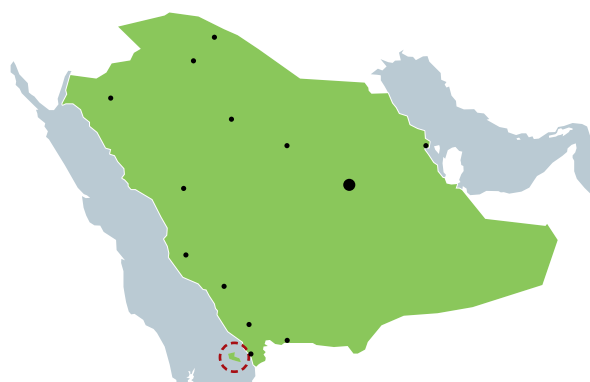
COMMON NAME: **ROCK DOVE**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Feral Pigeon
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Columba livia*
 ARABIC NAME: يمامة برية (حمام جبلي)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 31–34 cm / 180–355 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: native to southern Europe and northern Africa through the Arabian Peninsula to Mongolia and India. The species was domesticated as a food source around 10,000 years ago and subsequently introduced widely and now feral populations exist in almost every city and town worldwide. Nine subspecies are recognized, including *C. l. palaestinae*, which is near endemic to Arabia extending north to Palestine. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This ubiquitous pigeon occurs throughout all of Saudi Arabia except the Rub' al-Khali and Great Nafud deserts, though it does occur in artificial habitats within these hyperarid areas. Truly wild birds predominate in most remote areas, while the feral form has colonized urban areas. **HABITAT:** All but the most hyperarid areas. Especially abundant in urban areas, even recorded at the top of Burj Khalifa (UAE). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Grains, legumes and weeds. Feral populations feed opportunistically on tiny food scraps. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Small groups, or

large feeding flocks in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs in colonies of up to 100 pairs or solitarily. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow platform made of twigs and plant stems placed in a cave or a crevice in a cliff, rock outcrop, well shaft, bridge or abandoned building, or sometimes under a bush on a predator-free island. Unusual sites: offshore wreck, disused machinery. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–19 days. *Nestling period:* 35–37 days. *Broods:* Double- or multi-brooded. **NOTE:** For true wild Rock Dove visit Shedgum Escarpment.

One of the most prolific birds in the world, females can breed at only six months of age and have the astounding ability to produce up to five broods per year.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 750,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any city or town



COMMON NAME: **COMMON WOODPIGEON**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Columba palumbus*
 ARABIC NAME: ورشان (حمام الغابات)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 41–45 cm / 284–690 g

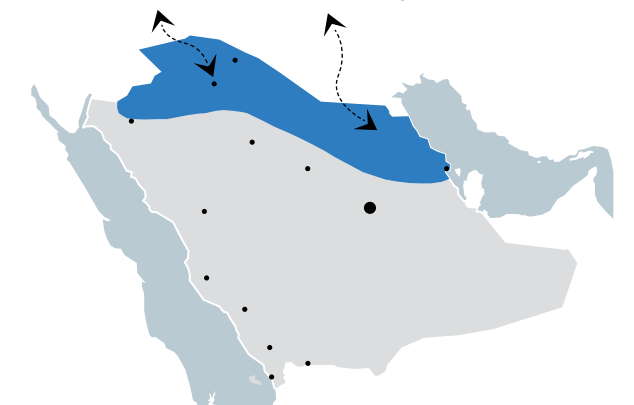


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Western Europe and around the Mediterranean east to Iraq and Pakistan and south into northern Oman; migratory populations breed in eastern and northern Europe to Kazakhstan and winter up to 3,000 km south largely within the resident range or occasionally further south into Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare and erratic visitor.* This bulky and unmistakable pigeon is an erratic visitor to the northeast of the Kingdom. There is one exceptional

Standing up to 45 cm tall and weighing almost 700 g, this is the tallest and heaviest pigeon in Saudi Arabia.

record of breeding near Dhahran in 2002. **HABITAT:** Mixed habitats of large trees and meadows or crop fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly green plant matter, grass, buds, leaves but also berries (such as elb), seeds and grains, including growing green crops (it loves brassicas), cereal crops and stubble fields. It feeds on the ground and in trees and bushes. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Elsewhere it is usually a gregarious species, but in Saudi Arabia it is typically recorded alone or in groups of

up to four, though it is occasionally found in larger groups of up to 50 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Has been recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia only once. **NOTE:** When flushed, it makes a quick escape with a characteristic noisy clatter of wings. On alighting, it usually raises and lowers its tail in an almost ritualistic way. Its predilection for crops combined with its large size means it is persecuted and hunted. Consequently it is very shy and often flies far when disturbed.



Erratic visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN OLIVE-PIGEON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Columba arquatrix*

ARABIC NAME: حمامة زيتونية أفريقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 38–41 cm / 269–429 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs patchily in Africa (South Africa to Eritrea and Somalia) and in southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This rare resident has been recorded at only two sites on the Arabian Peninsula, both in the 'Asir highlands: one was in northwestern Yemen, the other was on Jabal Sawda' in far southwestern Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Above 2,000 m in undisturbed forests of juniper and wild olive on Jabal Sawda'. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fruits of wild olive, juniper and other tree species, seeds, as well as insects and their larvae taken mostly from the canopy of large trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages solitarily or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. *Nest:* A shallow platform made of twigs, lined with leaf stalks and tendrils, usually placed 6–9 m above ground (sometimes 1–15 m) in a fork or lateral branch of a leafy tree. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 20 days. *Nestling period:* 19–20 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered within Arabia due to its very small population size. Very little is known about this species in Arabia. It has only been found at two separate localities and no nests have ever been recorded in the region.

Within Saudi Arabia, this rare and endangered breeding resident has been recorded only at Jabal Sawda' and Rayda Reserve in the 'Asir. No nest has ever been found in Arabia.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 80

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'

COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN TURTLE-DOVE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Streptopelia turtur*

ARABIC NAME: القمري الأوروبي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

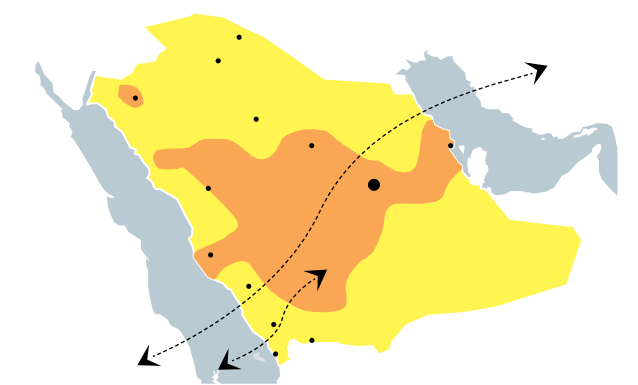
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–29 cm / 99–170 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Europe and northern Africa east across Arabia to western China and winters 1,000–6,000 km south and southwest in the Sahel region of Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, common passage migrant.* This slender dove with its mournful call breeds across much of central Saudi Arabia and occurs widely throughout the Kingdom on migration (Apr–May, Aug–Oct). **HABITAT:** Mainly in the lowlands (but up to 1,000 m in central Arabia) in sheltered sites

This delicate and graceful dove with a lovely fan-shaped tail is rapidly declining throughout Europe. Unfortunately its conservation status within Arabia is unknown.

with clumps of trees, small thickets, plantations, parklands with scattered trees and agricultural areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds and fruits of weeds and cereals, along with occasional invertebrates. Most food is taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages solitary or in pairs, though migrant flocks of 30 or more are regular. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, usually solitary, though several may nest in close proximity. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A flimsy platform made of twigs, sparsely lined with rootlets, fine twigs or grass, placed 2–4 m above ground in a hedge or bush, often in a thorny species, such as acacia, but also tamarisk and palm. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 19–21 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** This species is listed as vulnerable globally due to loss of semi-natural and agricultural habitats in Europe. It is also declining due to hunting in its winter range and on migration, including within Arabia.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,600

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **DUSKY TURTLE-DOVE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Streptopelia lugens*

ARABIC NAME: أنن (قمري نواح)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28 cm / 120–205 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident with local altitudinal migration: occurs in montane areas of eastern Africa (northern Malawi north to Eritrea and Somalia), Saudi Arabia and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This dusky-colored dove breeds in the southwest highlands south from al-Bahah, particularly in the mountains near Abha and probably migrates to the Tihamah foothills for winter. **HABITAT:** Probable altitudinal migrant: it breeds almost exclusively above 2,000 m in montane juniper forest near cultivated areas. Over winter, it probably descends to vegetated wadis in the Tihamah foothills. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Diet: Seeds, cereals, insects and mollusks taken from the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs solitarily or in small groups of up to 10 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:**

Mating system: Socially monogamous breeding pairs. **Parental roles:** The female probably builds the nest, while both adults incubate and tend the young. **Nest:** A loose platform made of twigs, scantily lined with fine rootlets, usually placed 2–3 m above ground (possibly up to 7 m) in a tree, often on a lateral branch of a mature juniper, but also acacia. **Unusual site:** dense vegetation in a well shaft. **Clutch:** 2 eggs. **Incubation:** 20 days. **Nestling period:** Unknown (14–16 days in similar species). **Broods:** Probably double-brooded.

This altitudinal migrant breeds mainly above 2,000 m in juniper forests in the 'Asir Mountains before descending to spend the winter in wadis in the Tihamah foothills.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 30,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Streptopelia decaocto*

ARABIC NAME: فاخنة أوراسية (يمام مطوق)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

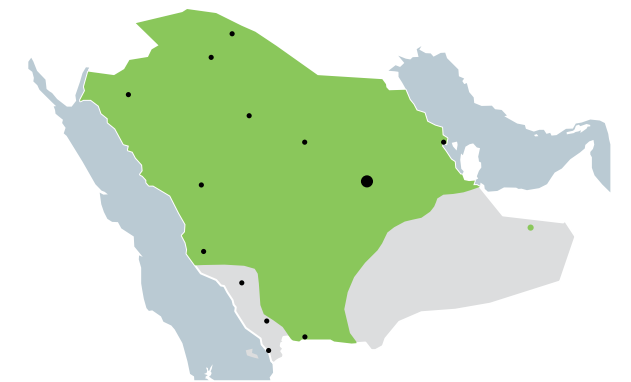
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–32 cm / M: 150–260 g; F: 112–196 g (25% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Western Europe and northwestern Africa east through Arabia to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant breeding resident.* Prior to 1960 this now familiar dove was found in Arabia at only two or three isolated pockets, but it has since rapidly expanded its range southwest and south from Kuwait to reach Jiddah by 1987 and Yemen by 2004. It is now one of the most abundant birds in Arabia and occurs in every state, with 1.5 million pairs breeding annually in Saudi Arabia alone. **HABITAT:** Human landscapes, including parks, gardens and farms. It also occurs in isolated wadis with thick acacia scrub. It is largely absent from the western highlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** **Diet:** Seeds, grain, grasses and other plant matter and occasional small invertebrates taken mostly on the ground. It also takes human food scraps. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is gregarious when not breeding with several records of 500 or more birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:**

Living alongside humans, this dove's range has expanded rapidly since 1960. It is now one of the five most common birds in Saudi Arabia.

Mating system: Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. **Parental roles:** The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. **Nest:** A flimsy platform made of thin twigs, rootlets and plant stems placed 0.4–4.5 m above ground in a tree or bush, or occasionally on a building. **Unusual sites:** on a heap of barbed wire, wrecked car. **Clutch:** 2 eggs. **Incubation:** 14–16 days. **Nestling period:** 15–19 days. **Broods:** Double- or triple-brooded. **NOTE:** Larger than the African Collared-dove, with a longer tail, buffy gray underparts, and buffy brown upperparts. The underwing has a black trailing band only in the primaries and first secondary.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any city or town



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN COLLARED-DOVE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

ARABIC NAME: (بمام مطوق أفريقي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

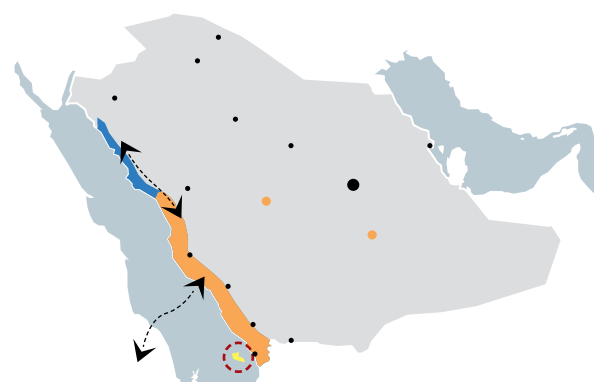
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 26–26 cm / 130–166 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout the Sahel region of Africa; migratory populations breed within 700 km north and south of the main African range and northwest into southern and western Arabia and winter within the resident range in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This rather stout dove migrates across the Red Sea to breed in the southern Tihamah and plains west of the highlands south from Tabuk with hundreds breeding on Umm al-Qamari and Kotumbul islands (off al-Qunfudhah and al-Qahmah, respectively). Some spend the winter (Nov–Feb) in Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Below 1,500 m in open acacia woodland and scrub, often near villages or cultivated areas but also in remote areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small seeds (especially grasses), as well as insects and small snails taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in small groups or flocks of up to 50. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, nesting either

solitarily, in loose groups, or compact colonies. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A thin platform made of twigs, lined with grass or acacia pods, placed either 1–3 m above ground in a tree or bush, or only 30 cm above ground and 30 cm apart in island colonies. The nest is often re-used for subsequent broods. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 15 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded. **NOTE:** Smaller than the Eurasian Collared-dove, with a shorter tail, sandy-brown upperparts, pinkish-gray underparts and head, and white belly and undertail-coverts. The entire underwing has a black trailing band.

Every year, around a million African Collared-doves migrate over the Red Sea to breed in southwestern Saudi Arabia.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Kotumbul (off al-Qahmah)

COMMON NAME: **RED-EYED DOVE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Streptopelia semitorquata*

ARABIC NAME: ساق حر (بمام أحمر العين)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30 cm / 162–310 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa and into southwestern Saudi Arabia and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this large ring-necked dove is restricted to the Tihamah and foothills

Pigeons and doves have large flight muscles comprising up to 44% of their total body weight (compared to 14% in grebes). Consequently they have superb flying abilities.

of the southwest. **HABITAT:** Below 2,100 m in well-wooded areas usually with running water, especially valleys in the lower foothills adjacent to the Tihamah, hillsides, gardens and cultivated areas with trees and shrubs. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, berries, fruit and other vegetable matter, as well as termites and other insects taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or in small groups when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A thin platform made of twigs, usually placed 3–5 m above ground (possibly up to 18 m as recorded in Africa) in thick foliage in a tree (usually an acacia), often above water. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 14–17 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20,000

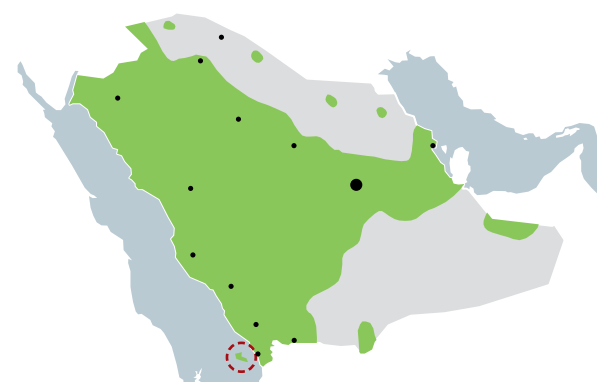
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **LAUGHING DOVE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spilopelia senegalensis*
 ARABIC NAME: دبسي (يمام النخيل)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27 cm / 71–92 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of Africa, east through Arabia to India and north to Kazakhstan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* The breeding range of this familiar dove has expanded significantly in Saudi Arabia since the 1970s, probably as a result of increased farmland and irrigation. It now occurs widely throughout the Arabian Peninsula near virtually every human settlement. **HABITAT:** Any area with trees and bushes, including arid areas and all human settlements, such as gardens, parks and palm groves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small seeds, along with some fruits and insects taken from the ground near shrubs. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in groups of 3–4, though hundreds may occur at waterholes. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A flimsy platform made of twigs or rootlets, lined with grass and stems, placed usually 2–4 m above ground in a tree or bush (but also up to 12 m high on a building). Some nests are re-used for subsequent broods. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and climb out onto nearby branches at 10 days and fly at 14–16 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 800,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any city or town



The repetitive mournful call of the gentle Laughing Dove features often in early Arabic poetry as a symbol of endless yearning for lost love.

COMMON NAME: **NAMAQUA DOVE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oena capensis*
 ARABIC NAME: حمحم (يمام طويل الذيل)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28 cm / 28–54 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding equatorial forests) across Arabia to Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this ornate dove was formerly restricted to the southwest, south from Jiddah mainly in the Tihamah lowlands and eastern edges of the highlands. Around

Over the last 40 years this small dove has undergone a dramatic range expansion in Saudi Arabia due to increasing agricultural development.

1975 it began to expand its range dramatically due to agricultural development and now occurs across most inhabited areas of central Saudi Arabia into the Eastern Province and north to Tabuk. Some birds wander widely during the winter. **HABITAT:** In the southwest it breeds in acacia scrubland and cultivated areas near villages. In central areas it breeds mainly in farmland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small seeds from grasses and herbs taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found singly or in pairs, though several hundred may occur near water or a rich food source. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A thin platform made of twigs and rootlets, lined with finer rootlets and grass and placed 0.2–1.5 m above ground in a bush. Unusual sites: on a straw bale, the roots of an upturned tree. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–16 days. *Nestling period:* 12–16 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 35,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **BRUCE'S GREEN-PIGEON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Treron waalia*

ARABIC NAME: رهطى (الحمامة الخضراء)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

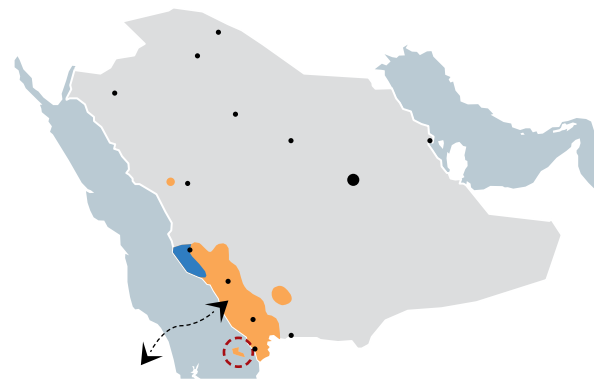
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–30 cm / 251–268 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the Sahel region of Africa; migratory populations breed in Arabia (southwestern Saudi Arabia, western Oman and Yemen) and winter at least 500 km west within the resident range in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant, rare winter visitor.* This beautiful and enigmatic pigeon migrates across the Red Sea to breed in a small area in the southwest Tihamah, foothills and highlands. **HABITAT:** From sea level in the Tihamah, but mostly in the foothills between 1,000–2,700 m in well-vegetated areas with fruit and fig trees, particularly wadis, gardens, plantations and wooded hillsides, often near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fruit, especially figs taken within the canopy. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious at food trees, especially in winter when groups of up to 50 can be found. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults incubate. *Nest:* An unlined, shallow, thin platform made of twigs placed 4–6 m above ground in a leafy outer branch (or less often next to the trunk) of an acacia, juniper or elb tree. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (11–13 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

Every year around 30,000 pairs of this golden-bellied jewel fly across the Red Sea to breed in southwestern Saudi Arabia.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 30,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda

COMMON NAME: **BLACK-BELLIED SANDGROUSE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles orientalis*

ARABIC NAME: جهونية (قطا أسود البطن)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 33–39 cm / M: 400–550 g; F: 300–460 g (20% lighter)

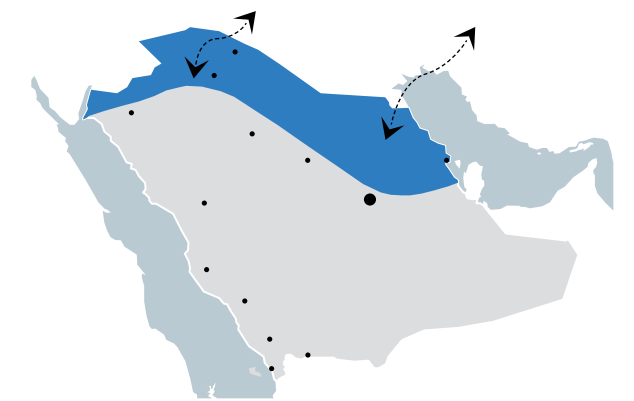


MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in Iberia, northern Africa, the Sinai Peninsula and from Turkey to Afghanistan; migratory populations breed in Kazakhstan and western China south to Turkmenistan and winter 2,000 km south and southwest in Palestine to western India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor.* This large sandgrouse occasionally winters as far south as northern Saudi Arabia, especially in particularly cold northern winters. It is most often recorded from King Salman Protected Area

The largest and most endangered sandgrouse in Saudi Arabia, it migrates to the north of the Kingdom during especially cold northern winters.

(Harrat al-Harrah) east to Dibdibah and south to Thumamah. **HABITAT:** Open grasslands and arid silt plains without heavy bush or tree cover, particularly the treeless plains of northern Saudi Arabia. It also occurs in stubble fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds and grains, as well as leaves, buds and berries and a very few invertebrates, picked from the ground or plucked from vegetation. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Winter visitors to Saudi Arabia are invariably in small groups of up to around 30 and often mingle with flocks of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Flocks travel to water at regular times each day often many kilometers distant. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Breeding pairs maintain a strong bond over winter. Even when flocks fly overhead paired birds are clearly visible. The paired birds fly closer to each other than to others in the group. **WINGSPAN:** 70–73 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered regionally because no sub-population is estimated to contain more than 250 mature individuals. Hunting may be a significant threat in Arabia. Its tendency to concentrate in large numbers at traditional drinking sites makes it a relatively easy target for hunters.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles exustus*
ARABIC NAME: غطاطة (قطا كستناتي البطن)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 31–33 cm / 140–240 g



MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Arish wastewater ponds



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the Sahel region of Africa through Arabia to India. Two of the six recognized subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia, including *P. e. erlangeri*, which is endemic to southern Arabia (south-western Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This small sandgrouse with elongated central tail feathers can be found in the southern Tihamah and on the eastern side of the highlands. **HABITAT:** Below 1,000 m in arid sandy desert or gravel plains often with scattered scrub or trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It feeds during the cooler hours of the early morning and late afternoon and drinks in the first 2–3 hours after sunrise and sometimes also in the afternoon in very hot weather. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, several hundred or even thousands may occur at waterholes. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female incubates during the day, the male at night. Both adults tend the young, which remain with the adults until they are fully-grown. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape on sandy or gravel ground, either in the open or beside a low rock or shrub. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–23 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and follow the parents, but age at first flight is unknown (4–6 weeks in similar species). *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 48–51 cm.

Every morning this beautifully plumed sandgrouse will fly up to 60 km each way to drink from a waterhole.

COMMON NAME: SPOTTED SANDGROUSE
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles senegallus*
ARABIC NAME: كدرية ذنوب (قطا مرقط)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–35 cm / 250–340 g

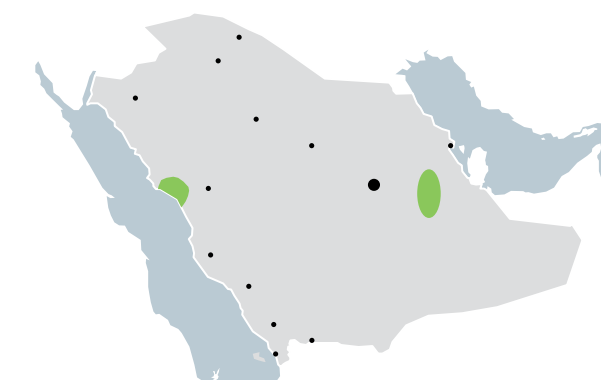


GLOBAL RANGE: Nomadic resident: occurs in northern Africa (from Western Sahara to Somalia and the Red Sea) and from Arabia to northwestern India. Some populations move east to winter in Pakistan and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon and erratic breeding resident.* This warm hued sandgrouse is nomadic. Populations may appear erratically when conditions are suitable.

This pretty sandgrouse is nomadic, appearing where conditions are suitable. Unfortunately its Arabian range has contracted markedly over the last 100 years.

Nonetheless it can be quite regular and often common near Haradh and Hofuf. **HABITAT:** Hard sandy or gravel plains with sparse vegetation near drinking water, especially irrigated cereal fields near Haradh and Hofuf. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small, hard seeds and some green plant matter taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It feeds mostly in the cooler hours of the early morning or late afternoon and drinks in the morning before 8 am. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious. Flocks of several hundred to perhaps a thousand have been recorded drinking in irrigated cereal fields at Haradh.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, but several may nest in close proximity in good habitat. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape on the ground, usually in the open and sometimes beside a low rock. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 29–31 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and follow the parents, but age at first flight is unknown (4–6 weeks in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 53–65 cm.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hofuf



COMMON NAME: **CROWNED SANDGROUSE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles coronatus*

ARABIC NAME: كدرية شائعة (قطا متوج)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–30 cm / 240–300 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across northern Africa (from Western Sahara to the Red Sea) through southern Arabia to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This beautifully patterned sandgrouse was previously recorded thinly across much of Saudi Arabia, but there are few confirmed records since 1984 from the center of the Kingdom. It is unclear if this represents a population decline or sampling bias from a lack of observer coverage. Its stronghold appears to be in Tabuk Province. **HABITAT:** Open sandy or gravel deserts with small bushes or shrubs, with drinking water within daily flying distance. Intriguingly, it does not occur in the apparently suitable habitat of the irrigated cereal fields of central Saudi Arabia. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It drinks before 10:30 am in winter and 9:00 am in summer and may also drink in the evening in very hot weather. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, hundreds may drink together at waterholes. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female incubates during the day, the male at night. Both adults tend the young. The male delivers water to the chicks by returning to the nest with saturated breast feathers. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape on open ground, sometimes with a ring of small stones around the rim. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs.

Incubation: Unknown (22–25 days in similar species). *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and follow the parents, but age at first flight is unknown (4–6 weeks in similar species). *Broods:* Probably single-brooded.

WINGSPAN: 52–63 cm.

Crowned Sandgrouse drink every morning – before 9:00 am in summer and 10:30 am in winter; thus they only occur in areas within daily flying distance of a waterhole.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk

COMMON NAME: **PIN-TAILED SANDGROUSE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles alchata*

ARABIC NAME: قطاة نبطاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

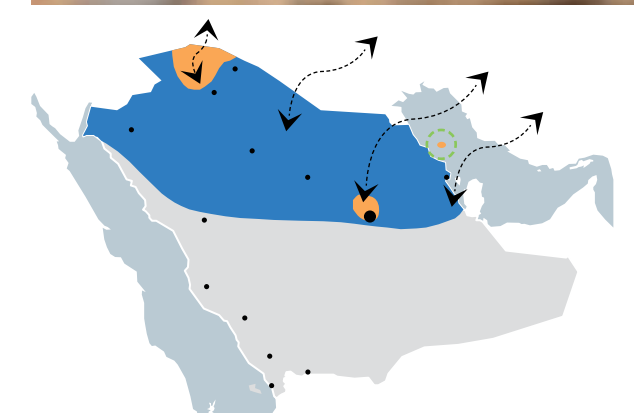
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 31–39 cm / 207–408 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in north-western Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, the Middle East and Afghanistan; migratory populations breed in southern Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan and winter south around the southern Caspian, northwestern India and northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant, uncommon*

While nesting, the male flies to a waterhole to soak its body and then returns to the nest to cool and replenish the chicks using water still clinging to the feathers on his belly.

winter visitor. This handsome sandgrouse occurs in Saudi Arabia over winter, particularly after good rains and a small nomadic population occasionally remains to breed. It is found most often in the far north, notably within King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah) and along the Iraq border, and – oddly – on an island in the Arabian Gulf. **HABITAT:** Open sandy and gravel plains, stony areas with sparse, scattered vegetation and occasionally farmland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, cereal grain and cultivated legumes taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It usually drinks in the morning. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found singly or in pairs during breeding, it typically forms flocks of 15–30 in winter, though flocks of several hundred are also recorded. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, though several may occur in loose association. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. The male delivers water to the chicks by returning to the nest with saturated breast feathers. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape on the ground, either in the open or partially sheltered by a low bush. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and follow the parents and then fly at 4–6 weeks. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 54–65 cm.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50

BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **LICHTENSTEIN'S SANDGROUSE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

ARABIC NAME: كدرية حجازية (قطا مخطط)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–26 cm / 175–250 g



MALE (CENTER) WITH TWO FEMALES

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Africa (from Western Sahara to Kenya and the Red Sea) and from Arabia to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This boldly marked sandgrouse is found in the Tihamah, the western foothills and the eastern fringes of the western highlands. **HABITAT:** Below 1,800 m on dry and rocky hillsides, wadis and gravel plains, especially where acacias are present. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds taken from the ground. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. It drinks after sunset and just before sunrise. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in small parties of 10–15 birds when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. The male delivers water to the chicks by returning to the nest with saturated breast feathers. *Nest:*

A shallow, unlined scrape on the ground, usually beside a rock or low bush. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (22–25 days in similar species). *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and follow the parents, but age at first flight is unknown (4–6 weeks in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **NOTE:** Because of its brilliant camouflage and largely nocturnal habits, this is probably the least known sandgrouse in Saudi Arabia, despite being one of the most numerous. **WINGSPAN:** 48–52 cm.

Though this sandgrouse is mainly nocturnal and little-studied in modern times, the ancient Arabic poets knew it soaked its breast feathers in waterholes over summer.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 11,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Arish wastewater ponds

COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Caprimulgus europaeus*

ARABIC NAME: سبد أوروبي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

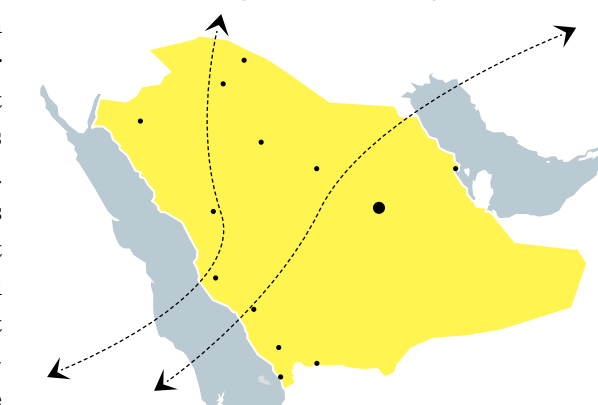
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–28 cm / 51–101 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to Mongolia and winters 3,000–9,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa with a large proportion of the global population passing through the Arabian Peninsula on a broad front. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This migratory nightjar is widespread appearing almost anywhere across Saudi Arabia. It is perhaps more common in spring suggesting it migrates in a loop. Observations are mostly of single birds that often appear very tired and

Nightjars rely on night vision to hunt for insect prey; thus they tend to be more active (and more vocal) during twilight and on moonlit nights.

quite reluctant to fly. Nonetheless, as they are rarely seen on consecutive days they appear to resume their migration quickly after resting. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration, including hyperarid sand dunes, shady gardens in urban areas, amid rocks on the coast and even on ships at sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Airborne insects, including moths, beetles, grasshoppers and dragonflies. It catches prey mid-air in an agile buoyant flight mainly in the hour or so after sunset or just before sunrise. It sometimes hunts around grazing animals or streetlights at night. It occasionally hovers and swoops down after its prey. It drinks in flight by dipping onto the surface. *Activity:* Nocturnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This nightjar is wonderfully camouflaged making it extremely difficult to detect when it is sitting still. If disturbed it departs silently into the night. Given that nightjars are usually found motionless on the ground, it may surprise many to learn that nightjars belong to the order of birds (Caprimulgiformes) as the exceptionally mobile and highly aerial swifts and hummingbirds!



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



COMMON NAME: **EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

ARABIC NAME: سبد مصري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

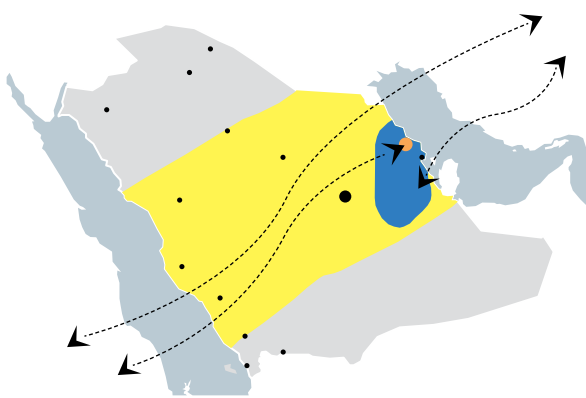
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–26 cm / 68–93 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northwestern Africa, the Nile Delta and from Iraq to Kazakhstan and winters 3,000–4,000 km south and southwest mainly in the Sahel region of Africa, with small numbers wintering in the Arabian Gulf states. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, local winter visitor.* This small nightjar winters locally in the Eastern Province (Oct–Mar) and is a passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep–Oct) through the middle of the Kingdom. Summer records from the Eastern Province (including a group of six juveniles around Sabkhat al-Fasl) indicate a small breeding population probably exists nearby. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration. Over winter it occurs in marshy areas, wetlands, rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Winged insects, including moths, ants, termites, scarab beetles and lacewings, taken in flight, occasionally hovering.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **NUBIAN NIGHTJAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Caprimulgus nubicus*

ARABIC NAME: سبد نوبي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21–22 cm / 46–55 g

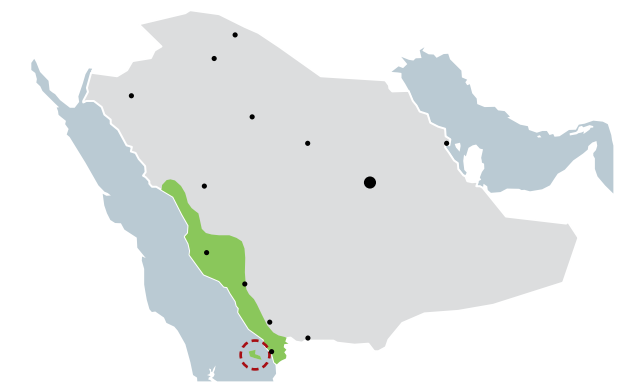


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Africa (from Kenya north to Sudan) and southwestern Arabia north to the Dead Sea. Three subspecies are recognized, including *C. n. tamaricus*, which is near endemic to Arabia, occurring in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and possibly Oman and north to Jordan and Palestine. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This exquisitely camouflaged nightjar occurs in the Tihamah lowlands and foothills of the 'Asir and Hijaz. **HABITAT:** Sandy and stony desert, or semi-desert with grassy tussocks, low scrub and scattered acacias. It also occurs in thickets and open woodland, including acacia, tamarisk and eucalyptus. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Moths, grasshoppers and beetles taken in the air or occasionally on the ground. *Activity:* Nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown (probably monogamous territorial breeding pairs). *Parental roles:* Unknown (in similar species, incubation is mainly by the female and young are fed by both adults). *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground, often at the base of a small thorn bush. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (17–19 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (16–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **NOTE:** The subspecies present in Saudi Arabia (*C. n. tamaricus*) may in fact be a distinct species, though more study is required to confirm or refute this. If the population is confirmed as a separate species, then this would be another species that is near endemic to the Arabian Peninsula.

Being nocturnal, nightjars use their enormous eyes to search for insects at night and their exceptional camouflage to hide amongst leaf litter during the day.

Nightjars are often attracted to roads at night where they are able to see flying insects silhouetted against a moonlit sky.

Activity: Crepuscular and nocturnal. It is most active sunrise and at sunset. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary, though up to ten have been reported together on migration and small feeding flocks have been reported elsewhere. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Incubation mainly by the female; young are fed by both adults. *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–18 days. *Nestling period:* Unknown (16–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **NOTE:** At night it often settles on the road and remains stationary when illuminated by car headlights. During the day it sits quietly out of the sun relying on its superb camouflage to avoid discovery.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,400
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Arish wastewater ponds



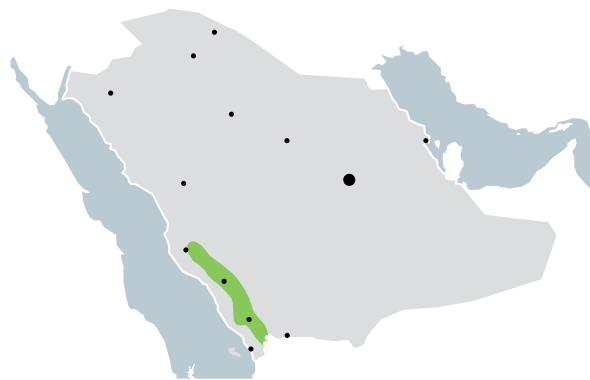
COMMON NAME: MONTANE NIGHTJAR
OTHER COMMON NAME: Abyssinian Nightjar
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*
ARABIC NAME: سبب أرمد الرأس (سبب الجبال)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–24 cm / 37–50 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Africa (from Tanzania north to Ethiopia) and southwestern Arabia. The Arabian population is possibly a distinct (and thus endemic) subspecies, though more research is required to confirm this. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. This dark-colored nightjar can be found in the southwest highlands and foothills, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Altitudinal migrant: above 2,000 m over summer and between 1,200–1,900 m in cold winters. It occurs on slopes with juniper forests and rocky outcrops at the Rayda Reserve, or on open rocky slopes with sparse vegetation and remnant junipers in the northern part of its range. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Moths, beetles, termites and grasshoppers taken by hawking in open areas with trees using fast and agile flight. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. The female incubates during the day, the male at night. *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground or leaf litter, usually in a small clearing at the base of a tree or bush. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (17–19 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (16–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded. **NOTE:** The white spot on the outer part of the wing (visible in flight) is larger in the male.

One of nature's most superbly camouflaged group of birds, the nightjars blend seamlessly with sand, stones and scattered leaves.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: PLAIN NIGHTJAR
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Caprimulgus inornatus*
ARABIC NAME: سبب بهيم (سبب السهول)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–23 cm / 32–61 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Africa (from Mauritania to Eritrea and Somalia) and southwestern Arabia and winters up to 2,000 km south of the breeding range, with all Arabian populations wintering in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant*. This well camouflaged nightjar occurs south from Tayif and migrates across the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Usually between 500–1,000 m (occasionally up to 2,500 m) on dry, rocky, mostly bare hills with some scattered trees and scrub. It also occurs in terraced agriculture and juniper scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly moths, termites, ants, grasshoppers, beetles and other flying insects taken in flight following a brief sally from the ground or a perch or after prolonged hawking.

Nightjar eggs usually hatch during the waxing moon; thus the nestlings will be at their hungriest around the time of the full moon when hunting is at its easiest.

Activity: Nocturnal and crepuscular. By day, it relies upon its excellent camouflage to keep it hidden amongst foliage and leaf litter. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary, though in optimal habitat with a rich prey base it can be locally common with several birds seen close together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Unknown (in similar species, the female incubates and both adults tend the young). *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground, usually near or sheltered by a low bush. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (17–19 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (16–18 days in similar nightjar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 700
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN PALM-SWIFT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cypsiurus parvus*

ARABIC NAME: سماطة نخيل أفريقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly decreasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 10–18 g



NESTING



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This small bird with mesmerizing flight patterns can be found in the Tihamah and in wadis in the lower foothills of the southwest, south from al-Wasqah. **HABITAT:** Generally wherever Doum Palm is abundant. The Doum Palm has closely packed drooping fronds, which provide ideal nesting and roosting sites for the aptly named Palm-swift. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* A wide variety of flying insects, including flies, termites, ants, beetles and bugs taken in the air. It drinks in flight by dipping into open fresh-water. *Activity:* Diurnal and crepuscular.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually forages solitarily or in small loose groups of up to 10–20 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies of less than 5 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A near-vertical pad of feathers and plant down (collected in flight and consolidated with saliva) with a small lip at the base to support the eggs, placed more than 3 m above ground in a Doum Palm, attached to a dead, drooping frond and hidden in a cluster of fronds. The eggs are glued to the nest with saliva. To incubate, the adult clings to the nest and presses itself against the eggs; nestlings likewise cling to the oddly-vertical nest. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 20 days. *Nestling period:* 32 days. *Broods:* Probably multi-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird is very distinctive in flight, even in silhouette, as it darts about changing direction with very fast fluttering wing beats.

This species nests in drooping palm fronds, which means each parent must cling vertically to the palm frond and press its body against the nest to incubate the eggs.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 7,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Baysh



COMMON NAME: **ALPINE SWIFT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tachymarptis melba*

ARABIC NAME: سماطة ألبية (سماطة الصرود)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

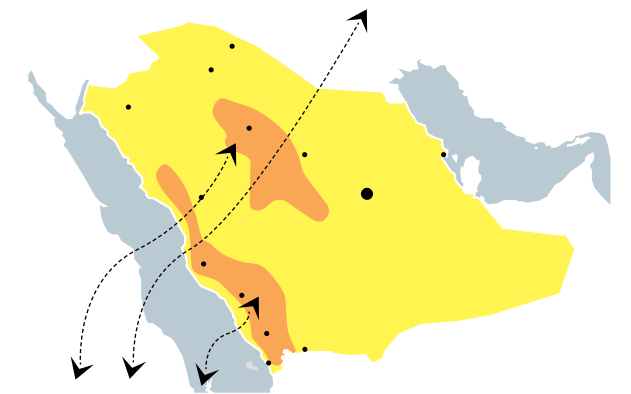
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–22 cm / 104 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in eastern and southern Africa, Madagascar and India; migratory populations breed in northern Africa and southern Europe east across Arabia to the Himalayas and winter 4,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, scarce passage migrant.* This extraordinary swift, the largest in Saudi Arabia, occurs widely in small numbers throughout the Kingdom on migration. Part of the population stays over spring and summer to breed in the southwest highlands and central regions. **HABITAT:** Breeds in rocky areas with cliffs. Feeds aerially above all habitats on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small flying insects, including flies, beetles, aphids, wasps, as well as spiders and cicadas taken high in the air up to 40 m above ground. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. It has been recorded in Saudi Arabia feeding at night both in darkness and around lights.

These truly incredible birds fly continuously for over 200 days and nights without stopping. They forage, copulate and even sleep while flying.

It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in small groups, though it occasionally forms flocks of up to 300. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies of up to 20 pairs. In some places, colony sites can last for centuries. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of plant debris and feathers (collected in flight and consolidated with saliva), usually placed in a crevice in a sheer granite cliff (possibly also in a tall building, bridge or other structure as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–23 days. *Nestling period:* 45–55 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Bani Malik (north of Fayfa)



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE SWIFT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Apus affinis*

ARABIC NAME: سماطة صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

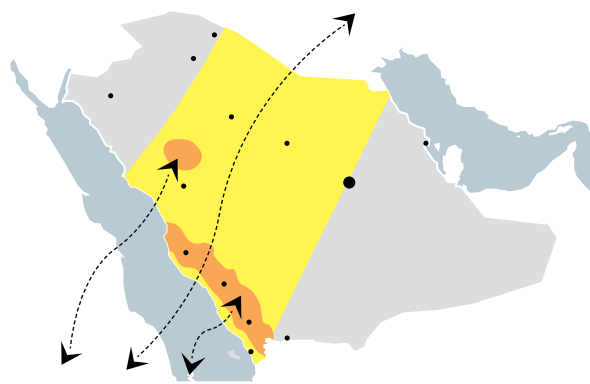
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across much of sub-Saharan Africa, India and southwestern Arabia; migratory populations breed in northwestern Africa and patchily from Palestine to Pakistan and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant, rare passage migrant.* This pudgy swift is a breeding migrant, mainly south of Jiddah, with an outlying colony in a lava tube in Harrat Khaybar. It becomes scarce by November, though some may remain as year-round residents. It is also a rare but widespread passage migrant. **HABITAT:** Nests from the foothills and above (and possibly also on the Tihamah) in cliffs, rock outcrops, cities and towns. It forages aerially above insect-rich wetlands and farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small flying insects, including flies, ants, termites, beetles and grasshoppers taken in flight

often at a great height above ground or low over water. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Highly gregarious, migrating flocks of 500 have been seen in the Tihamah. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies containing usually less than 15 nests (sometimes up to 50 nests), or occasionally solitarily. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An enclosed bowl of grass and feathers (collected in flight and consolidated with saliva), with a narrow slit or short tunnel entrance, placed more than 2 m above ground on the underside of a cliff overhang, cave roof, or ceiling of a building. Several nests are usually attached together as a contiguous mass. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–24 days. *Nestling period:* 36–40 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This lovely little bird nests within the Great Mosque at Makkah, collecting nest material in flight above the worshippers.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 14,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: The Great Mosque at Makkah



COMMON NAME: **PALLID SWIFT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Apus pallidus*

ARABIC NAME: سماطة فاتحة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

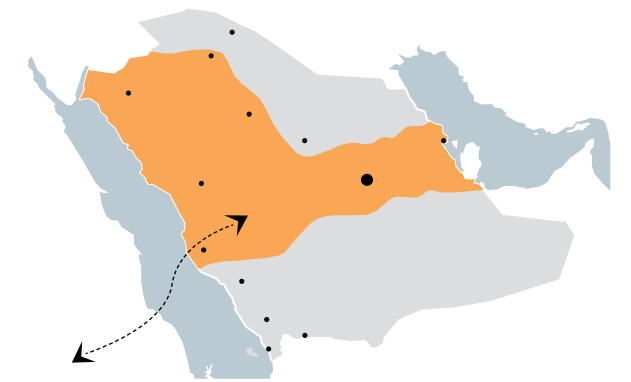
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 42 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Egypt, Chad and Niger; migratory populations breed in southern Europe and northern Africa through Arabia to southern Iran and winter 3,000 km south and southwest in western Africa, from Senegal to South Sudan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, this somewhat enigmatic swift breeds primarily north of al-Bahah. It vacates its breeding areas mostly in June, but its subsequent movements, including its wintering destinations, are unknown. **HABITAT:** Breeds below 2,000 m (or perhaps higher) mainly in urban areas as well as cliff-faces and gorges. It forages in flight above all habitat types. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small flying insects, including ants, termites, flies, mosquitos and beetles taken in the air. It drinks by dipping into a pool in flight. *Activity:* Diurnal and crepuscular. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it often feeds with other swifts. At least 2,000 were recorded at Lake Asfar in early February 2018. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs in colonies usually containing around 10–12 pairs (but 200 pairs were recorded in one colony at Riyadh). *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and feed the nestlings. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of grass, feathers and airborne debris (collected in flight and consolidated with saliva), placed typically in a crevice in a building (under the eaves, next to an air-conditioning unit, on a stone wall), but also in a cliff. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–22 days. *Nestling period:* 47 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

Pallid Swifts eat flying insects, which can vary greatly in number depending on weather conditions; they often delay nesting for many weeks until insect abundance increases.

Activity: Diurnal and crepuscular. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it often feeds with other swifts. At least 2,000 were recorded at Lake Asfar in early February 2018. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs in colonies usually containing around 10–12 pairs (but 200 pairs were recorded in one colony at Riyadh). *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and feed the nestlings. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of grass, feathers and airborne debris (collected in flight and consolidated with saliva), placed typically in a crevice in a building (under the eaves, next to an air-conditioning unit, on a stone wall), but also in a cliff. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–22 days. *Nestling period:* 47 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh



COMMON NAME: **COMMON SWIFT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Apus apus*

ARABIC NAME: سماطة شائعة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

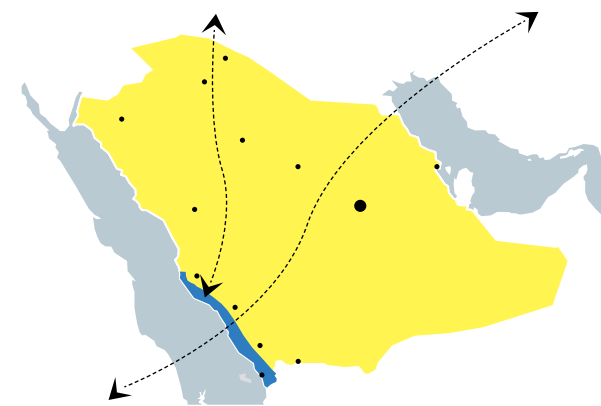
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 31–52 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across northern Africa and all of Western Europe to Siberia and northern China and winters 5,000–11,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* Given its global distribution, a large proportion of the global population is likely to pass through Saudi Arabia every year. Vast numbers migrate across the Kingdom on a broad front (Mar–May, Sep–Oct), with flocks of hundreds recorded in spring, though less in autumn. Regular records on the Tihamah (south from Jiddah) suggest some may spend the winter (Dec–Feb) in the southwest.

HABITAT: Entirely aerial. It can be found wherever flying insects are plentiful, such as wetlands, farms, cities and towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small flying insects taken mid-air and a few spiders. On migration it never comes to the ground or perches; it seems to never rest.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



Astonishingly the adults of this small bird fly continuously for ten months of the year while migrating up to 11,000 km each way. They only stop flying to sit on the nest.

It has complete control of its aerial existence with rapid powerful wing beats, gliding, wheeling, diving, even controlled stalling as it hunts its insect prey. One moment it may be 100 m in the air and shortly after feeding at 1 m above grass-land. It also drinks on the wing by dipping into open water. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in small migrating groups, though it sometimes numbers hundreds and once thousands. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Watch this mesmeric swift and you soon realize it has complete control over its aerial environment as it wheels about the sky with nonchalant ease.

COMMON NAME: **WHITE-BROWED COUCAL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Centropus superciliosus*

ARABIC NAME: صليقاء (وقواق أبيض الحاجب)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 36–42 cm / 160–180 g



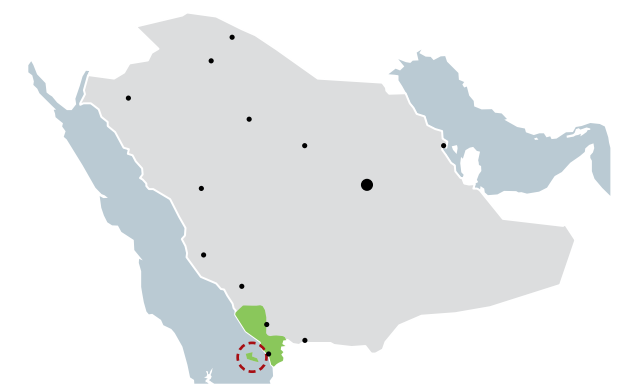
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of eastern and southern Africa and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This striking bird is found on Farasan al-Kabir Island and in the southern Tihamah, south from al-Qunfudhah and Rayda Reserve.

HABITAT: Below 1400 m in thick vegetation cover, often in damp situations or near water, including the edge of reedbeds, dense scrub near streams and tall cultivated crops, such as banana plantations and palm groves.

All members of the cuckoo family deposit their eggs in another bird's nest, except the coucal. It has regained the ability to build its own nest and raise its own young.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects, spiders, snails, crabs and small vertebrates, including the eggs and chicks of small birds – basically anything it can grab and swallow. This secretive bird spends a large proportion of its time skulking in cover where it captures most of its prey. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Forages alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy dome made of dry grass and twigs with an entrance near the top, lined with fine grass and green leaves, usually placed 1–3 m above ground (0–22 m in Africa) in thick cover in a tree or bush. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–16 days. *Nestling period:* 18–20 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded. **NOTE:** Coucal chicks are notoriously quick to prematurely flee their nest if it is approached too closely or for too long. If that happens, the chicks will die.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **JACOBIN CUCKOO**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Pied Cuckoo
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Clamator jacobinus*
ARABIC NAME: وقواق أبقع (الوقواق الرزين)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 34 cm / 66–72 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in sub-Saharan Africa, southwestern Arabia, southern Iran and from India to Myanmar; most winter around the African equator or southern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant.* A small population of this glossy black and white cuckoo arrives in summer to breed in the southern Tihamah before returning across the Red Sea to Africa for winter. **HABITAT:** Usually below 1,000 m in steep dry valleys with scattered bushes and trees in the lower foothills, or in acacia scrub in the Tihamah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects (especially hairy caterpillars, grasshoppers and termites), snails and berries taken from trees, bushes and on the ground. It also occasionally eats the eggs of host birds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small groups of up to six. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Brood parasite, probably promiscuous. Over a ten-week period, each female lays individual eggs in up to 25 nests of bulbuls, babblers and other passerines. Fooled by the cuckoo, the hosts incubate the cuckoo's egg along with their own. The young cuckoo either ejects the host's eggs or young from the nest, or simply monopolizes incoming food. The cuckoo eggs are relatively massive (twice the size of bulbul eggs) with thick shells, making it very hard for the host to eject or destroy the cuckoo egg. *Parental roles:* None. *Nest:* None. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 11–12 days. *Nestling period:* 17–18 days. *Broods:* Up to 25 per season.

With great stealth, the female cuckoo deposits one large egg into the nest of a babbler or bulbul, which then unknowingly raises the cuckoo chick as if it were one of its own.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



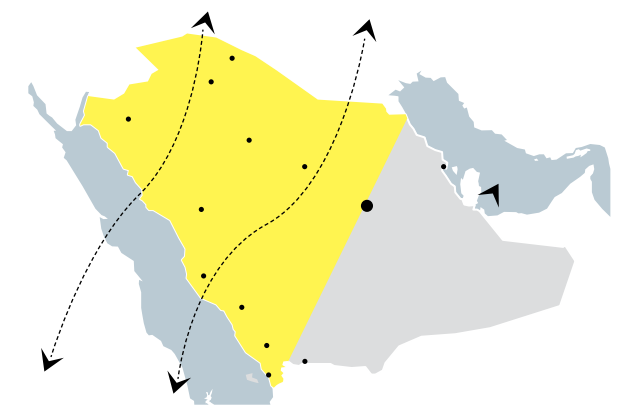
COMMON NAME: **GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Clamator glandarius*
ARABIC NAME: وقواق أرقط كبير
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–39 cm / 124 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in sub-Saharan and eastern Africa; migratory populations breed in southern Africa and from southern Europe east to Iraq and south to Palestine and winter 3,000 km away in tropical Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, possible breeding migrant.* The small population of Great Spotted Cuckoos breeding in Iraq probably passes through Saudi Arabia on migration, especially in spring. It is recorded most often in western regions, from the Tihamah north to Tabuk. It has parasitized nests of House Crow in the Gulf of Aqaba at the head of the Red Sea very close to Saudi Arabia's border, so breeding could occur in the northwest and has been suspected (but has not been confirmed) in the 'Asir foothills. **HABITAT:** Open woodlands, acacia and tamarisk scrub and bushy hillsides, such as the foothills of the southwest. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:*

Although it has not been confirmed breeding in Saudi Arabia, this large cuckoo could dump its eggs in the nests of magpies, ravens and crows in the west.

Caterpillars, especially colonial species, but also a variety of termites, ants, grasshoppers, beetles and a few lizards. It often feeds on the ground but also in bushes and is known to take winged insects in flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It can be gregarious on migration but only single birds have been recorded in Saudi Arabia. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** This cuckoo can be rather skulking in low bushes and then moves off through foliage rather than flying away making it difficult to get a good view of the bird. When perching, it often holds its wings partly open in a drooping manner.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah coastal scrub



COMMON NAME: **KLAAS'S CUCKOO**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chrysococcyx klaas*

ARABIC NAME: وقواق اكلاسي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 26 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: Resident populations occur across much of sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed in southern Africa, the Sahel region and into southwestern Arabia and winter 1,000 km away within the resident range in Africa.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Very rare breeding migrant.* This stunningly pretty bird is found in the southwest, south from around al-Majaridah, and migrates across the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Between 1,300–1500 m in the foothills of the southwest highlands in woodlands and other areas with dense cover. It possibly also occurs in the Tihamah lowlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, especially caterpillars along with butterflies, termites, beetles and small grasshoppers taken from amongst foliage or less often in flycatching flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Rather secretive, it usually forages solitarily or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Brood parasite. Females are probably promiscuous, with a brief pair bond. The female removes a single egg from a host's nest (especially warblers and sunbirds) and lays one of her own. Up to 24 eggs are laid in a season. The cuckoo's egg usually hatches earlier than the hosts' eggs, allowing the young cuckoo to quickly eject the remaining eggs or young. *Parental roles:* None. *Nest:* None. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 11–14 days. *Nestling period:* 19–21 days. *Broods:* Up to 25 per season.

This iridescent cuckoo secretly lays up to 24 eggs per year in the nests of small songbirds, which then either evict or raise the cuckoo's young.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abha



COMMON NAME: **DIEDERIK CUCKOO**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chrysococcyx caprius*

ARABIC NAME: وقواق أخضر ظهر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

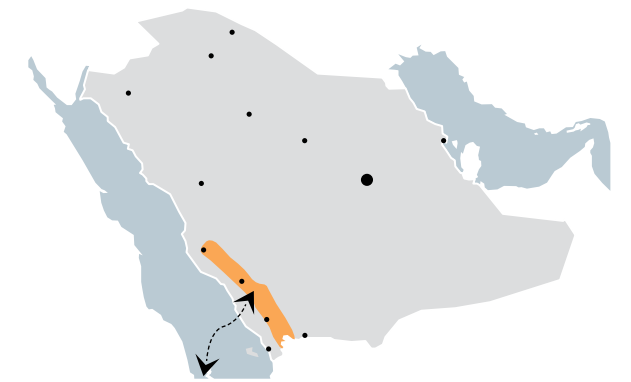
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19 cm / 32 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Africa around the equator; migratory populations breed throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa with isolated populations in southern Arabia (Saudi Arabia, Oman and western Yemen) and winter 3,000 km away within the resident range in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant.* This shimmering jewel migrates across the Red Sea to breed in the highlands south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Above 1500 m in open woodlands, acacia savannah and semi-arid thorn scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, mainly caterpillars along with grasshoppers, termites, beetles and butterflies taken mainly from the canopy but also on the ground. It also occasionally eats the eggs of host birds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages solitarily or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Brood parasite. The female lays individual eggs in up to 25 nests of other species, especially weavers and sparrows. The cuckoo's egg usually develops more rapidly than the hosts' eggs, allowing the young cuckoo to quickly eject any remaining eggs or young. The foster parents often unwittingly raise the young cuckoo, which quickly grows to become larger than the foster parent. *Parental roles:* None. *Nest:* None. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 12 days. *Nestling period:* 19–21 days. *Broods:* Up to 25 per season.

A summer visitor to Saudi Arabia, this lustrous bird lays its eggs in the nests of weavers and sparrows before returning to Africa for winter.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **COMMON CUCKOO**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cuculus canorus*

ARABIC NAME: قوقاق شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–33 cm / 115 g



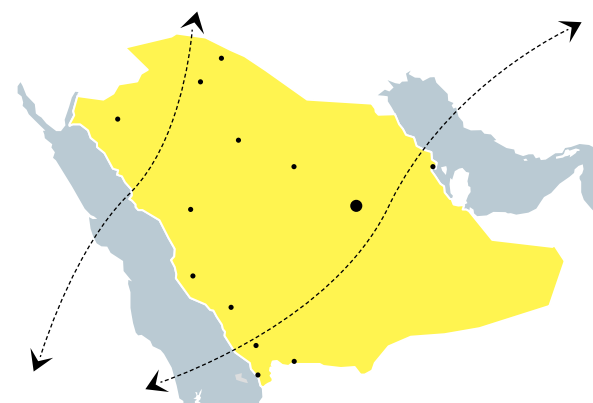
MALE



FEMALE - RUFIOUS MORPH

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across virtually the entire Eurasian landmass and winters 5,000–12,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa, with smaller populations wintering in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This bar-chested cuckoo is a broad front passage migrant across Saudi Arabia with records from every part of the kingdom, with more in spring. However, it is seen surprisingly rarely despite the large numbers that must pass through the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Can occur anywhere on migration, but usually sites with trees and bushes, including ornamental gardens and irrigated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly caterpillars as well as dragonflies, grasshoppers, beetles and spiders. It also eats the eggs and nestlings of small birds and young frogs and toads. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates primarily at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is rather shy in Saudi Arabia often keeping to the undergrowth. With a down-curved bill, pointed wings and rapid wing beats it resembles a falcon and its coloration is also superficially like some hawks. To many small birds it is a potential nest predator and thus they will mob it incessantly on discovery. The female and juvenile can sometimes appear in a rufous (‘or ‘hepatic’) morph.

Breeding across Eurasia and wintering in Africa, a large proportion of the world’s population of this bird must pass through Saudi Arabia every year – yet it is rarely seen.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **WESTERN WATER RAIL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rallus aquaticus*

ARABIC NAME: مرجعة الماء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

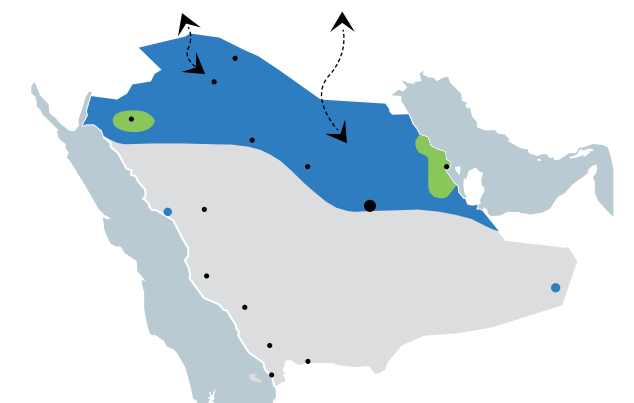
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–28 cm / M: 88–190 g; F: 74–138 g (25% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Western Europe and the Mediterranean to China, with small breeding populations in Arabia; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to Kazakhstan and winter 2,000 km south from the Nile through northern Arabia to Iran and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this adorable, long-legged bird breeds in the Eastern Province and near Tabuk and winters in the north and along the Arabian Gulf coast. **HABITAT:** Fresh or slightly brackish wetlands (usually constructed) with a dense cover of reeds and other aquatic vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Worms, leeches, mollusks, crustaceans, spiders, insects and small vertebrates, as well as a wide array of plant material taken from dry or muddy ground near water, by leaping up to take insects from plants, or by wading in shallow water. *Activity:* Diurnal, though it sometimes calls all night during the breeding season. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary.

Western Water Rail nests built in thicker reedbeds are less likely to be detected and destroyed by their chief nemesis – the Western Marsh-harrier.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, highly territorial when breeding. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most incubation. *Nest:* A bulky cup made of the dead leaves of reeds and waterside plants placed slightly above water and well hidden amongst thick aquatic vegetation. *Clutch:* 6–10 eggs. *Incubation:* 19–20 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly and fly at 7–8 weeks. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 38–45 cm.



Breeding resident, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 80

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abqaiq wetlands



COMMON NAME: **CORNCRAKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Crex crex*

ARABIC NAME: مرجة الحقل

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

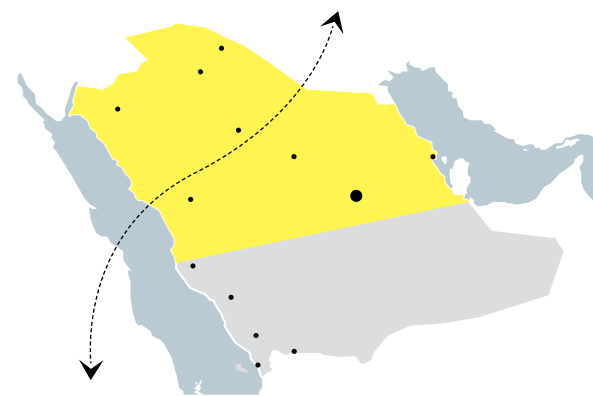
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–30 cm / 129–210 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to western Siberia and winters 8,000–12,000 km south and southwest in southeastern Africa.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Scarce passage migrant.* This lovely autumn-hued bird is a scarce passage migrant through Saudi Arabia, only recorded north of Jiddah and Tayif. Since it usually migrates at low altitude, this northerly route across the Kingdom enables the bird to avoid having to fly over the precipitous southwest highlands. **HABITAT:** Any well-vegetated landscape, including crops, fodder fields, marsh fringes. It avoids true wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, such as worms, mollusks, spiders and insects (like dragonflies, beetles and grasshoppers), as well as seeds and grain. It feeds on the ground and may turn over vegetation litter seeking food items. *Activity:* Diurnal, though it sometimes calls all night during the breeding season and it migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary, though there is one exceptional record of about 30 birds in a loose group in a fodder field at Haradh in September. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** A skulking usually solitary bird, although not particularly timid, it tends to hide in thick vegetation and so is often overlooked. When it flies it looks rather cumbersome with dangling legs but it is capable of strong and direct, albeit low, flight during migration. **WINGSPAN:** 42–53 cm.

Corncrakes migrate 16–24,000 km per year. Because they fly at low altitude, they migrate north of Jiddah to avoid crossing the precipitous mountains of the southwest.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh

COMMON NAME: **SPOTTED CRAKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Porzana porzana*

ARABIC NAME: مرجة رقطاء (سلوى)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

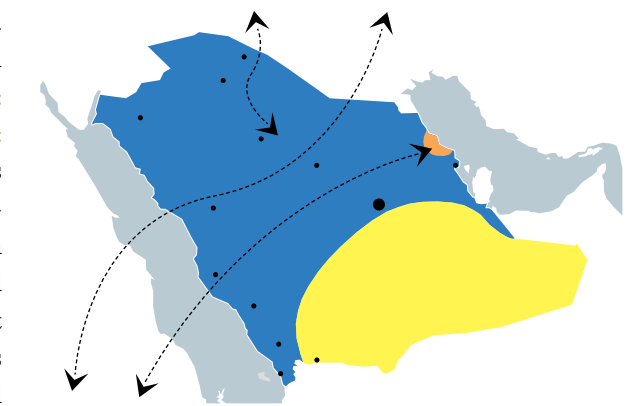
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–24 cm / 57–147 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to Mongolia and south to northwestern Iran with a few pairs nesting in northeastern Arabia and winters 6,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This well-adorned rail occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Oct), with a few spending the winter (Nov–Feb) in wetlands, particularly in eastern and central regions. The increase in artificial wetlands in the Kingdom in recent decades has encouraged a few pairs to occasionally breed in the Kingdom in the Eastern Province and possibly near Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Breeds in extensive, shallow, well-vegetated wetlands with reedbeds, exposed mud and grassy marshy areas. It also visits drainage ditches and small pools with nearby undergrowth. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small aquatic invertebrates and aquatic plants taken from very shallow water or mud.

This rare and secretive bird forages and nests in dense marshy wetlands, often calling for minutes at a time all through the night.

Activity: Diurnal and crepuscular. Most activity occurs in the early morning and late afternoon, though it can call throughout the night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous territorial breeding pairs (with pairs separating after breeding). *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A thick cup made of plant stems and dead leaves, lined with grass and leaves, with nearby vegetation pulled over for concealment, placed in thick vegetation above water, on a tussock or built up from the water (or very occasionally on dry ground). *Clutch:* 8–15 eggs. *Incubation:* 8–19 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly after 45 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 37–42 cm.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE CRAKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Zapornia parva*

ARABIC NAME: مرجعة صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

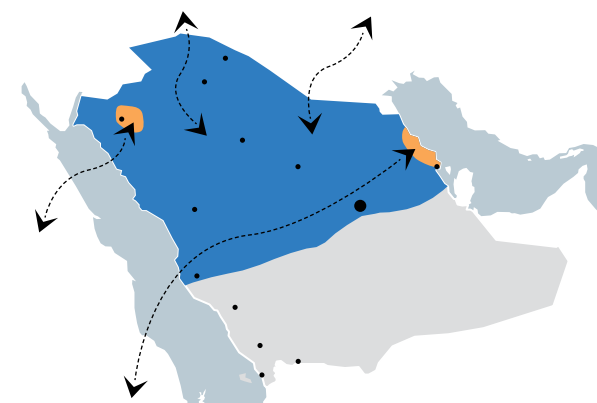
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–20 cm / 30–72 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from central and southern Europe to Kazakhstan, with a small population in northern Arabia and winters 3,000 km south from Kuwait to Pakistan and patchily in Africa and Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This eye-catching crake occurs widely throughout the northern half of Saudi Arabia over winter. The introduction of artificial wetlands has encouraged some birds to breed in the Kingdom over summer with nesting first recorded in 1989 at Tabuk. It now nests primarily in the north and probably in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Constructed wetlands with still or sluggish water, mainly treated wastewater ponds with dense reedbeds and thick marginal vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and other invertebrates and seeds and shoots of aquatic plants taken from water while swimming or wading, or from mud. **Activity:** Crepuscular and diurnal. It is most active at dawn and dusk. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages solitarily, though it has been



Breeding migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 30
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



recorded in large numbers in irrigated grass fields on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous territorial breeding pairs (with pairs separating after breeding). *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of the stems and leaves of rushes or sedges, lined with finer plant material with growing stems pulled over for concealment, placed above water amongst thick vegetation, at the base of reeds, or on a tussock. *Clutch:* 7–9 eggs. *Incubation:* 23 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 45–50 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 34–39 cm.

This attractive but cautious waterbird nests in constructed wetlands. Males hoping to breed are particularly vocal in March just before the start of the incubation period.

COMMON NAME: **BAILLON'S CRAKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Zapornia pusilla*

ARABIC NAME: مرجعة بيلونية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

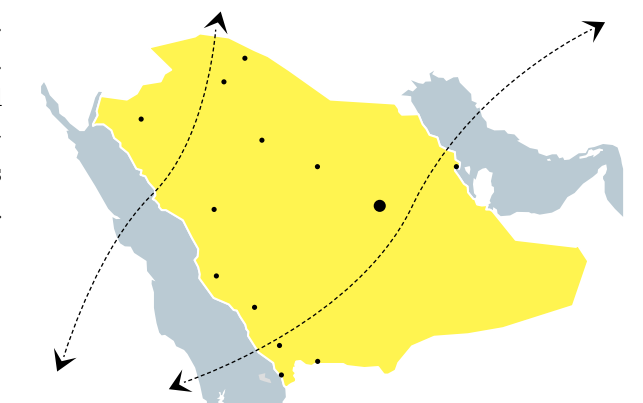
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 17–55 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southern Africa, Australasia and Indonesia; migratory populations breed in Eurasia from Western Europe to China and winter 3,000 km south in Africa, India and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant.* The few records in Saudi Arabia of this colorful bird indicate it is a rare broad front passage migrant with a protracted period of movement. **HABITAT:** Wetlands with a thick cover of vegetation, such as dense reedbeds, as well as saline coastal pools. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* A variety of adult and larval aquatic invertebrates, including worms, crustaceans, mollusks and insects, as well as small fish and some seeds. It probes mud when feeding, pecks from the surface and takes items underwater to the depth of its bill. It also swims and is known to dive but this is more likely to escape a disturbance. It usually forages close to or

This small waterbird has a complex and flexible migration strategy, with unusually large numbers migrating to distant regions in certain years.

within dense cover. **Activity:** Crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This tiny, skulking crake usually keeps in cover but just occasionally allows a good view as it walks across a short patch of mud or floating vegetation between reeds. **WINGSPAN:** 33–37 cm.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **PURPLE SWAMPHEN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Grey-headed Swampen

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Porphyrio porphyrio*

ARABIC NAME: فرفر أرجواني (سحنون)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

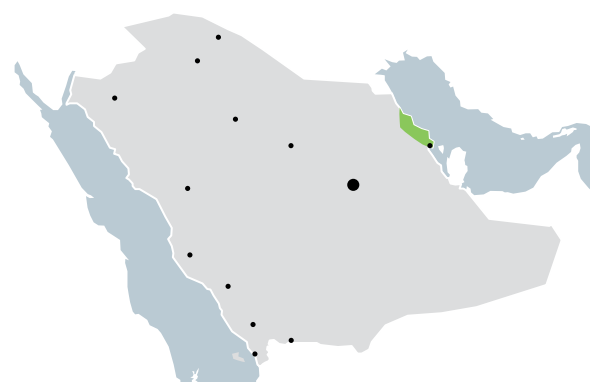
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 38–50 cm / 520–1,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs widely throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula and from India to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This enormous rail was first recorded in the Kingdom in 1983 and is spreading across wetlands in the Eastern Province. Both blue-headed and gray-headed subspecies occur, with the latter (*P. p. poliocephalus*) sometimes regarded as a distinct species (Gray-headed Swampen). **HABITAT:** Fresh and brackish wetlands, usually with reedbeds and some open water, or with a fringe of high dense overgrown reeds.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Aquatic and semi-aquatic plant matter, with occasional invertebrates and small vertebrates. It has been recorded eating dead fish at Sabkhat al-Fasl. It usually forages in or near the edge of cover, sometimes climbing reeds to find shoots, though it can also be seen in pastures and mown grass. **Activity:** Diurnal, crepuscular and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs with chicks. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Complex: territorial, some form socially monogamous breeding pairs, others nest communally with non-breeding helpers; occasional mate sharing occurs with multiple females using one nest. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A cup made of the stems and leaves of aquatic plants, often with a mud-stained ramp, and with nearby stems pulled over for concealment, placed at the base of reeds, on a tussock or very occasionally on dry ground. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 23–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest 2 days after hatching and fly at around 60 days. *Broods:* Occasionally double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 90–100 cm.

With a bulky blue and purple body, long gangly legs and a huge red bill, this somewhat goofy and ponderous rail is surely one of the most comical birds to watch.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **COMMON MOORHEN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gallinula chloropus*

ARABIC NAME: فرفر شائع (دجاجة الماء)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

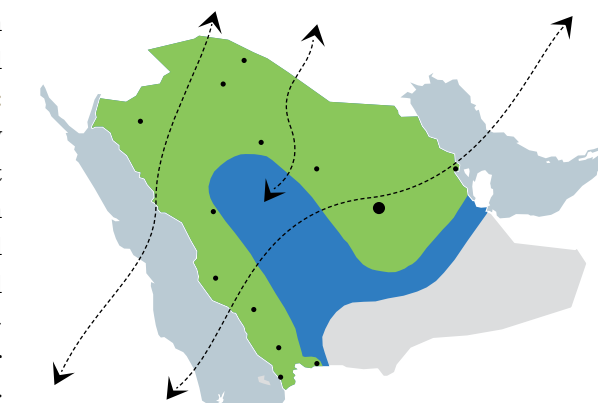
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–38 cm M: 249–493 g; F: 192–343 g (30% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed across much of Africa, western Europe, Middle East and from Afghanistan to Japan and Indonesia, with isolated populations in Arabia; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to Japan and winter 2,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* Benefiting from constructed wetlands, it is likely to be seen at almost every wetland. **HABITAT:**

Common Moorhens have complex mating systems. Often two females will pair with the same male, lay eggs in the same nest and help raise each other's young.

Permanent freshwater wetlands with reeds and dense vegetation. It occasionally occurs at saltwater sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, algae, invertebrates and small fish taken while swimming, walking on floating plants, upending, head dipping and grazing. **Activity:** Diurnal and partly nocturnal (especially on moonlit nights). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs, family groups, or larger associations in good habitat with hundreds recorded at Sabkhat al-Fasl and Riyadh River. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Complex: usually socially monogamous and territorial, others nest in polygynous trios containing one male and two females. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. Young from the first brood sometimes help to feed subsequent broods. *Nest:* A bulky cup made of reeds and plant material, sometimes with nearby plants pulled over for concealment, usually placed on or slightly above water amongst reeds and other aquatic plants, or occasionally on the ground near the water's edge. *Clutch:* 6–13 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–22 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest a few days after hatching and fly at 6–7 weeks. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded. **NOTE:** Its frequent tail flicking communicates concern about potential predators.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **COMMON COOT**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Eurasian Coot

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fulica atra*

ARABIC NAME: غراء أوراسية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

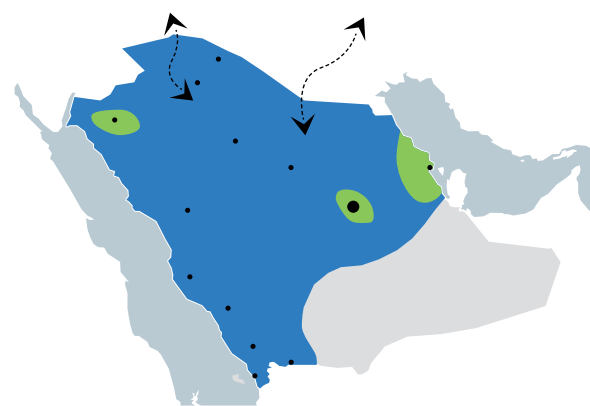
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 36–39 cm / 610–1,200 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur mainly in northern Africa, western Europe, Iran to India and Australasia, with scattered populations throughout the Middle East and Arabia; migratory populations breed in Eastern Europe to Japan and winter 3,000 km south in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor.* This striking waterbird with enormous feet occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia over winter (Oct–Mar) and year-round residents breed at scattered sites across the kingdom.

HABITAT: Open freshwater sites with fringes of dense aquatic vegetation. It can appear anywhere on migration, including Arabian Gulf islands, pools in the Tihamah, highland reservoirs and even hyperarid deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic plant matter and less often invertebrates, small vertebrates and terrestrial plants taken with a wide array of foraging techniques. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal (it sometimes forages on moonlit nights). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious in winter, it is usually found in associations of less than 10 birds; however, flocks of perhaps 500 have been recorded. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, often gregarious. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate, tend the young and aggressively defend the territory. *Nest:* A bulky cup made of leaves and stems of plants, placed amongst aquatic vegetation, built up from the ground in shallow water, or very occasionally in an open situation. *Clutch:* 6–10 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–26 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and swim with the parents at 3–4 days and fly at 55–60 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 70–80 cm.

Coots and moorhens with larger, thicker and brighter frontal shields are healthier birds with stronger immune systems.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **DEMOISELLE CRANE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthropoides virgo*

ARABIC NAME: الرهو

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

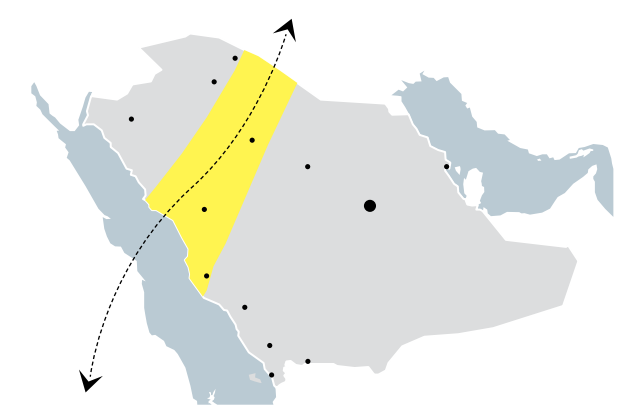
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 90–100 cm / 2,000–3,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on the steppes from Ukraine to north-eastern China and winters 4,000 km south and southwest in Africa (Chad to Ethiopia) and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This very large, very ornate crane is generally an uncommon or rare passage migrant through Saudi Arabia, but it can be locally common, particularly around late March.

Noisy flocks migrate in V-formation high over Saudi Arabia, crossing the Red Sea around Jiddah and moving north over Hayil to Mosul and onwards to Central Asia.

HABITAT: Open desert, irrigated crops, stubble fields and wetland edges where it can glean seeds and invertebrates and rest before resuming its migration the next day. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds and grains and other plant materials, including crops, as well as invertebrates and small vertebrates, such as lizards and frogs. It feeds by walking slowly through grassland. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** This delicate and graceful crane breeds in solitary pairs but outside the breeding season on migration and in winter it is sociable and often forms flocks containing several hundred birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has a distinctive honking sound when migrating that often betrays the presence of birds passing in “V formation” even when very high up. **WINGSPAN:** 150–170 cm.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



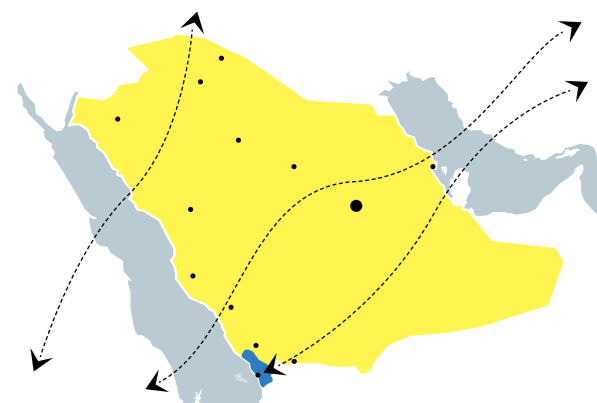
COMMON NAME: **COMMON CRANE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Grus grus*
 ARABIC NAME: كركي شائع
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 115 cm / 4,500–6,100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Turkey; migratory populations occur across northern Eurasia (south of the Arctic Circle) and winter 3,000–4,000 km south around the western Mediterranean, Nile Valley, Iraq, India and southeastern China, with some overwintering throughout the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This colossal bird occurs regularly in Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant (Mar, Sep) and over winter (Nov–Feb), with scattered records during spring and autumn from Jiddah, the Tihamah, Riyadh and Haradh. It occurs regularly in the southern Tihamah over winter. **HABITAT:** Established wetlands or cereal growing areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly vegetable matter, such as grains, roots, seeds, berries, fruit and vegetables, but also invertebrates and small vertebrates, such as frogs, snakes, lizards, fish and rodents taken while walking as it pecks and probes vegetation and the ground.

Standing over one meter tall, weighing up to six kilograms and with a wingspan of up to two meters, this is one of the largest migratory birds in Saudi Arabia.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is solitary when breeding but gregarious in winter and on migration. There have been no very large flocks conclusively identified as the Common Crane recorded anywhere in Saudi Arabia but in winter in the extreme southwest flocks of 40–50 have been seen at Malakiyah Lake and near Hakimah (northeast of Jazan). There have also been groups of up to 12 in winter on wetlands south of Riyadh. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** A very tall bird that appears more sedate and majestic than the Demoiselle Crane, it has a purposeful flight of regular wing beats and glides. **WINGSPAN:** 180–200 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **ASIAN HOUBARA**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Macqueen's Bustard
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chlamydotis macqueenii*
 ARABIC NAME: حبارى شرقية
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Very Rapid Decline
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 55–75 cm / M: 1,800–3,200 g; F: 1,200–1,700 g (40% lighter)

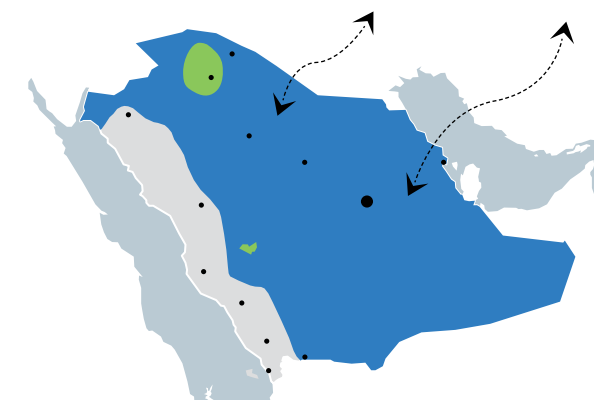


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across the Arabian Peninsula and north to Pakistan and Tajikistan; migratory populations breed from the Caspian Sea to northern China and winter 2,500 km south and southwest from Arabia to India, travelling 270 km per day. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* **HABITAT:** Shallow sandy wadis and depressions in King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah). Multiple reintroduction attempts have occurred in Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area (Mahazat as-Sayd). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Plant matter, invertebrates (grasshoppers, locusts and

The famous Houbara has undergone a very rapid decline in Arabia due primarily to overhunting. A captive breeding program is trying to restore the population.

beetles) and possibly small snakes and lizards taken from or near the ground. It does not drink. Radio-tracked birds have wandered 60 km per day searching for food. *Activity:* Crepuscular, partly diurnal and partly nocturnal (it sometimes forages on moonlit nights). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Exploded lek: males gather loosely at traditional display sites, with each male defending a small territory; females select and copulate with a male, then leave to build a nest nearby, not necessarily within the male territory.

A brood may contain chicks sired by several different males. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest, incubates and tends the young. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape in open ground, often close to a low shrub. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 23–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly around 35 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** Before 1930 this bird was a widespread, common resident and winter visitor, but it suffered a dramatic decline due primarily to overhunting. Reintroduction programs continue in Saudi Arabia and UAE in an effort to reverse the tragic decline.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 30
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN BUSTARD**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardeotis arabs*
ARABIC NAME: حبارى عربية
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Rapid Decline
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 75–100 cm / M: 5,700–10,000 g; F: 4,500 g (40% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout the semi-arid Sahel region of Africa and the coastal Tihamah region of southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Possibly extinct or extremely rare breeding resident.* **HABITAT:** Stony plateaus and small wadis with acacias and grass tufts in the Tihamah coastal plains. Possibly occurs in maize or sorghum fields (as recorded in Yemen).

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Grasshoppers, locusts, beetles, other invertebrates, small reptiles, rodents and nesting birds. Most food is taken from or near the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal, crepuscular and partly nocturnal. It spends 67% of the day searching for food, especially in early morning and late afternoon. It also forages in open fields at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Poorly known: possibly an exploded lek where males gather to display communally and mate with multiple females (as occurs in similar species).

Parental roles: Poorly known. The female probably performs all nest duties. *Nest:* A shallow hollow in the ground, unlined. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 25 days. *Nestling period:* Unknown (similar species leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly after 35 days). *Broods:* Unknown. **CONSERVATION:** In the early 1900s, this bird was common in many areas of the Arabian Peninsula but with habitat loss, hunting and egg collection there are now precious few breeding females with the majority in Yemen. In Saudi Arabia, it was found at twelve sites in a survey from 1987–90, but there has been only one record in the Kingdom since then – a single bird observed on Farasan Island in 2017. Thus this species may be effectively extinct within Saudi Arabia.

This once common bird is now on the edge of extinction in Saudi Arabia. Thankfully one was recorded on Farasan Island in 2017 – the first in the Kingdom for 27 years.



Breeding resident (possibly extinct)
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands?



COMMON NAME: **WILSON'S STORM-PETREL**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oceanites oceanicus*
ARABIC NAME: نوع ويلسوني
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–20 cm / 8–50 g

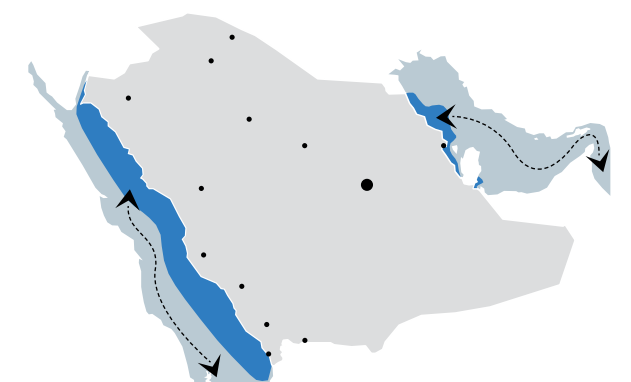


GLOBAL RANGE: Pelagic and highly dispersive: breeds in Antarctica and sub-Antarctic islands; forages around all major oceans (north to Canada, 12,000 km from its breeding range). It is a visitor throughout Arabian seas, common off southern Arabia, but rare elsewhere. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare summer visitor.* These small, downy-plumed, sooty black seabirds have been recorded in Saudi Arabian waters in the southern Red Sea and Arabian Gulf in the summer months. Some individuals have even been recorded north as far as Eilat at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. **HABITAT:** Entirely pelagic in Saudi Arabia. It usually occurs offshore but occasionally it comes close inshore over relatively shallow calm water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Planktonic crustaceans (especially krill), small fish, squid, gastropods and carrion. It feeds mainly on the wing by dipping or pecking at the water, pattering along the surface or by alighting on it, rarely by diving. It never comes to land – to rest it sits on the water. It may be able to detect food by smell. It flutters behind boats, skimming and gliding in and out of the wake and also follows whales and dolphins. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It forages mostly singly or in small, dispersed groups, though elsewhere it has been recorded joining flocks containing thousands of seabirds in feeding frenzies. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is one of the most abundant birds in the world, perhaps numbering a billion individuals; however, since it breeds on remote islands around Antarctica, and spends the southern winter well offshore in the North Atlantic, relatively few people will ever see one. It seems to flutter and dances across the water, tapping the surface with its feet to stir up food. **WINGSPAN:** 34–42 cm.

One of the most abundant birds on earth, yet few people will ever see it. It forages by dancing across the water, tapping the surface with its feet to stir up food.

It feeds mainly on the wing by dipping or pecking at the water, pattering along the surface or by alighting on it, rarely by diving.

It never comes to land – to rest it sits on the water. It may be able to detect food by smell. It flutters behind boats, skimming and gliding in and out of the wake and also follows whales and dolphins.



Summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Island ferry



COMMON NAME: **BLACK STORK**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ciconia nigra*
 ARABIC NAME: لقلق أسود
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 95–100 cm / 3,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in Spain and southern Africa; migratory populations breed from Western Europe to northern China and Siberia and winter 5,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa, India and southern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this large, quite stunning stork occurs mainly as a passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep–Oct) in the western highlands passing south mainly in October (often with migrating soaring raptors) before crossing the Bab al-Mandab Strait from Yemen to Africa. It is also a rare winter visitor (Nov–Feb) to the southern Tihamah and very occasionally around Riyadh, Dhahran, and Abqaiq. Birds have occasionally been recorded visiting in summer months. **HABITAT:** Below 1,500 m in fast-flowing streams in the foothills of the southwest highlands, streams and pools on the Tihamah, or coastal swampy areas. It also occurs in dairy farms, irrigated areas and wetlands south of Riyadh. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish when foraging at a stream, but otherwise it will eat any small creature it can capture, including reptiles, amphibians, small birds, rodents, as well as insects, mollusks and crustaceans, which it may stalk in or near shallow water. This species is unlike the other storks occurring in Saudi Arabia in that it tends to shun humans and human sites, such as rubbish dumps. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is also not as gregarious as the others species, often occurring singly or in small groups of 3–5 individuals, although up to 12 have been seen together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 144–155 cm.

Using thermals to soar high above Saudi Arabia on migration, these glorious birds can pass over desert habitat at 488 km per day without once flapping their wings.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **ABDIM'S STORK**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ciconia abdimii*
 ARABIC NAME: لقلق عابدينبي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 75–81 cm / 1,300 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds mainly in the Sahel region of Africa, with a small population in southwestern Arabia; most winter 800–5,000 km south in eastern and southern Africa (though some Arabian birds, mainly sub-adults, winter in Yemen). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant.* This wonderful, large, glossy bird breeds in the far southern Tihamah around al-Qunfudhah, though mainly south from ash-Shuqayq and migrates across the Red Sea to Africa. **HABITAT:** Usually below 500 m close to water in villages, often near cultivated areas and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large insects, such as swarming locusts, caterpillars and grasshoppers, as well as fish, frogs and toads taken from on or near the ground or shallow water while walking. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in groups of 5–30 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous solitary breeding pairs (perhaps sometimes forming small colonies of less than 6 nests, as recorded in Yemen). *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A large platform (100 cm diameter, 17 cm deep) made of sticks, lined with grass, placed on a tall tower or pylon (possibly also on a tree or building as recorded in Yemen). Nests are used for several years and refurbished annually. *Clutch:* 2–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 28–29 days. *Nestling period:* 8 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

A small population of Abdim's Storks migrates from Africa to nest in Saudi Arabia. The male's plumage becomes glossy purple and green. It is now ready to mate.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Ahad al-Masarha



COMMON NAME: **WHITE STORK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ciconia ciconia*

ARABIC NAME: لقلق أبيض غربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

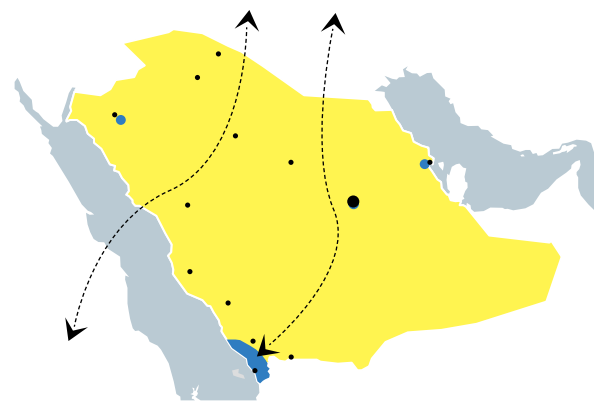
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 100–102 cm / 2,300–4,400 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northern Africa and Western Europe to Iran and Kazakhstan and winters 4,000–6,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, local winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this famous black and white stork is a widespread soaring passage migrant (Apr, Sep–Nov) and regular winter visitor (Dec–Mar) to the southern Tihamah and occasionally in Tabuk, Riyadh and possibly Abqaiq. **HABITAT:** Open habitats, such as grasslands, marshy areas, cultivated fields and, unfortunately, usually rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Essentially any small animal it can catch, including large invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, fish, small birds and mammals. It will also take carrion and human food waste. It stalks or sometimes chases prey, grabbing it with its bill. It also spends a great deal of time each day doing nothing but standing motion-

less on one leg. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally gregarious in winter, it is usually seen in small numbers, though up to 70 have been recorded in Riyadh and Abqaiq, 100 at Abu 'Arish rubbish dump and up to 300 near Yanbu'. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Since it breeds in close proximity to humans over much of its range it is exceptionally tolerant of humans while wintering in Saudi Arabia and may allow close approach while foraging at rubbish dumps and other concentrations. Sadly, individuals become very dirty at these sites, sometimes appearing dark gray and black. **WINGSPAN:** 155–165 cm.

This elegant stork is known as the Mosque Bird in some countries because it often perches on prominent buildings. Up to 300 have been recorded soaring over Yanbu'.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Arish wastewater ponds

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN SPOONBILL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Platalea leucorodia*

ARABIC NAME: ملعقي منقار أوراسي (أبو ملعقة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 70–95 cm / 1,130–1,960 g

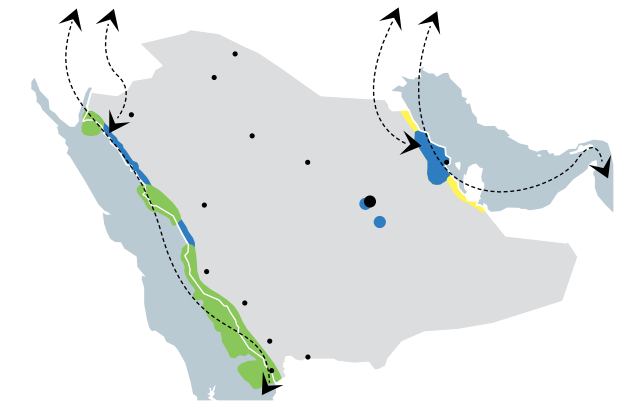


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur along the Red Sea coasts of Africa and Arabia; migratory populations breed patchily throughout Europe and from the Caspian Sea to northeastern China and winter around the Mediterranean, northern India and China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This endearing bird is a coastal passage migrant and local winter visitor (Sep–Apr) and breeds on islands in the Red Sea, though mostly south of Jiddah.

Known in Arabic as Abu Maleaqa (Father of the Spoon), this bird waves its spoon-shaped bill through the water to create vortices that expose prey hiding in the mud below.

HABITAT: Coastal in shallow, sheltered lagoons, mudflats, sabkha and wastewater discharges. Scarce inland except at Riyadh River. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Adult and larval water beetles, dragonflies, flies, locusts, other insects, crustaceans, mollusks, frogs and small fish. It wades through shallow water, systematically sweeping its specialized bill from side to side hoping to feel prey. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small groups of 2–6, but sometimes up to 15. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small, compact colonies typically containing less than 6 pairs (occasionally mixed with egrets and/or herons). Nests are usually close, often touching. Egg laying is synchronous within the colony. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A rough platform made of sticks, lined with stalks and leaves, placed on the ground, on a bush, or less than 6 m above ground in a tree. Ground nests can be up to 1.5 m tall (usually less than 0.5 m). *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 24–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 4 weeks and fly at 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 115–135 cm.

HABITAT: Coastal in shallow, sheltered lagoons, mudflats, sabkha and wastewater discharges. Scarce inland except at Riyadh River. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Adult and larval water beetles, dragonflies, flies, locusts, other insects, crustaceans, mollusks, frogs and small fish. It wades through shallow water, systematically sweeping its specialized bill from side to side hoping to feel prey. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small groups of 2–6, but sometimes up to 15. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small, compact colonies typically containing less than 6 pairs (occasionally mixed with egrets and/or herons). Nests are usually close, often touching. Egg laying is synchronous within the colony. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A rough platform made of sticks, lined with stalks and leaves, placed on the ground, on a bush, or less than 6 m above ground in a tree. Ground nests can be up to 1.5 m tall (usually less than 0.5 m). *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 24–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 4 weeks and fly at 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 115–135 cm.



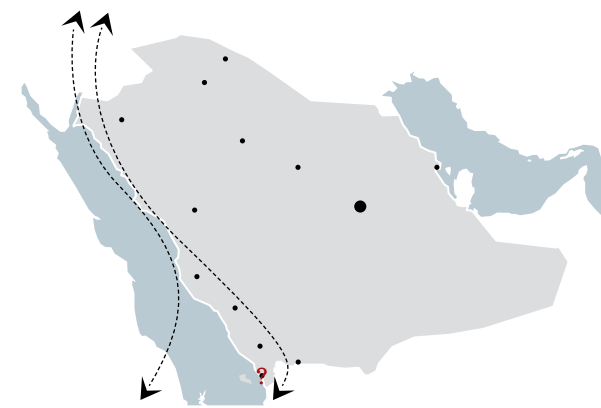
Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan corniche



COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN BALD IBIS**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Geronticus eremita*
ARABIC NAME: أنوق أصلع شمالي (أبو منجل الأصلع)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 70–80 cm / 1,350–1,540 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations (containing only 147 breeding pairs) occur at two sites in western Morocco; a migratory population possibly still breeds at one tiny site in Syria (near Palmyra) and winters 2,800 km south in central Ethiopia. Sadly, however, only one bird was recorded in Syria during the last census in 2013. Thus this population may now be extinct. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare winter visitor, extremely rare passage migrant, possibly extinct.* In summer (Jul–Aug), the Syrian population would fly south along the western highlands and Red Sea coast (up to five were in the ash-Shuqayq–al-Birk area in July 2010), spending the winter in wetlands in the southwest or crossing the Bab al-Mandab Strait (Yemen) en route to Africa. It would then return across the Red Sea to Jiddah (Mar–Apr) on its return north. **HABITAT:** Wetlands and marshy ground, such as dams, reservoirs and wastewater treatment



Passage migrant, winter visitor (possibly extinct)
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Southern Tihamah?

ponds in the southern Tihamah coastal plain. It also occurred at temporary pools adjacent to farmland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large invertebrates, such as beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars as well as small vertebrates like lizards, amphibians, small mammals and fish, found by inspecting grass tufts, rock crevices and waterside debris, or probing vegetation and soft ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually gregarious, feeding with others and roosting and migrating in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 125–135 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This species has declined dramatically. Satellite tracking of juveniles indicated that the main threat to the eastern population is hunting in the Arabian Peninsula. It was quite approachable and was therefore easily shot.

This species once bred in Turkey and Syria before migrating to Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. However, at the last breeding survey in 2013 only one bird remained... just one.



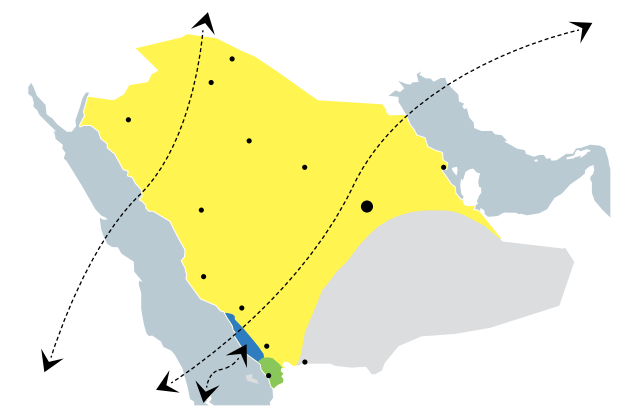
COMMON NAME: **GLOSSY IBIS**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Plegadis falcinellus*
ARABIC NAME: أنوق لمامع (أبو منجل اللامع)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 49–66 cm / 350–840 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across much of Africa, Australia and eastern North America; migratory populations breed in scattered sites across southern Europe and central Asia and winter 2,000 km south mainly in Africa and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This striking, glossy bird occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration and increasingly over winter. It was first recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia in 2010 in

This glossy purple and green ibis is highly nomadic, even dispersing across oceans to find new breeding habitat; thus in 2010 it began breeding in the southern Tihamah.

the southern Tihamah, having self-colonized wetlands near Sabya and Abu 'Arish. **HABITAT:** Shallow fresh or brackish wetlands, including wastewater lagoons with boggy areas, streams, marshy pools. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly adult and larval insects, including aquatic beetles, dragonflies, grasshoppers, flies, other small invertebrates, such as worms, snails, mussels and crustaceans and some small vertebrates taken by probing into mud or picking from the surface. Flocks in Saudi Arabia have also been recorded feeding in flooded fields of Sugar Sorghum. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in small flocks, while groups of up to 40 have been recorded on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in mixed colonies containing egrets and herons. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A platform made of reed stems placed among reedbeds, or of twigs, lined with leaves and placed on a bush or tree that is growing in water. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 21 days. *Nestling period:* 42–50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 80–95 cm.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN BITTERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Botaurus stellaris*

ARABIC NAME: واق أوراسي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

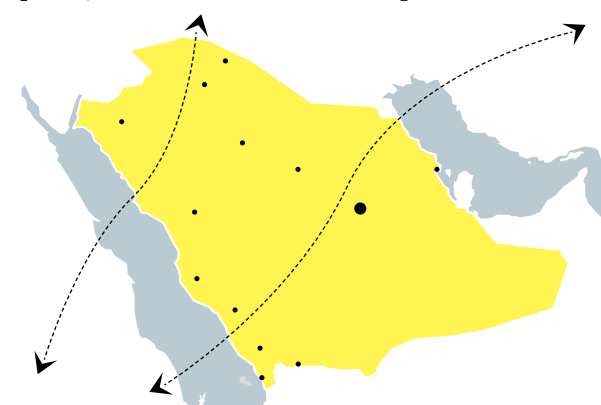
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 64–80 cm / 750–2,060 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds primarily throughout the middle latitudes of Eurasia and winters 1,000–6,000 km south in Africa, Iraq, India, southern China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, possible breeding migrant.* This stealthy bittern is a rare but widespread passage migrant through Saudi Arabia on a broad front. Records as late as December suggest some might spend the winter in the Kingdom. It has been heard giving its characteristic “booming” breeding call several times at Khafrah Marsh (south of Jubail) in March, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Well-vegetated wetlands containing extensive reedbeds with shallow, stable water levels and sheltered pools where it can feed unseen, including ornamental ponds, streams and wastewater lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish, amphibians, lizards, snakes, rodents, small birds and

nestlings, as well as insects, crustaceans and mollusks. When feeding it walks slowly and purposefully through reeds, or it stands motionless waiting for prey to come along. *Activity:* Crepuscular, nocturnal and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Mainly solitary, no more than three have been seen together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** Being a stocky, secretive heron with a skulking nature and a crepuscular and nocturnal activity pattern, this species is one of the most difficult to see. Observation is further impeded by the bird freezing and standing with its neck vertical, making its streaky plumage almost invisible in its reedy environment, but it is well worth the effort. **WINGSPAN:** 125–135 cm.

The mottled stripes of this secretive heron allow it to hide amongst reedbeds as it silently hunts for fish, frogs and insects.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Khafrah Marsh (south of Jubail)

COMMON NAME: **COMMON LITTLE BITTERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ixobrychus minutus*

ARABIC NAME: واق صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–38 cm / 59–150 g

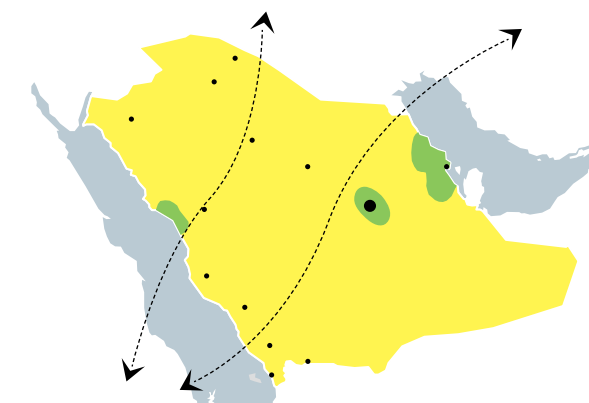


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed from Western Europe east across the Middle East and Arabia to Kazakhstan and northern India and winter 4,000–7,000 km south and southwest with the resident population in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant.* This very beautiful heron occurs widely throughout the

This clever bird sometimes intentionally drops a dead dragonfly or bug onto the surface of the water so it can then feed on the many small fish attracted to the bait.

Kingdom as a passage migrant and breeds mainly in the Eastern Province and near Riyadh, Yanbu' and Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Wetlands containing dense mature reedbeds, often with secondary growth of tamarisk. It also occurs at reed-fringed lakes, ditches, slow-flowing streams and dense mangroves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, frogs and fish

taken at the water margin and in dense vegetation. It stands motionless or walks slowly to pick prey from the surface or emergent vegetation. Some individuals use bait to lure prey. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous solitary breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow platform made of dry stems, lined with dried leaves of reeds, placed less than 1 m above water in a dense stand of mature reeds (or perhaps on a mound of floating vegetation or a low bush growing amongst reeds as recorded in Europe). *Clutch:* 5–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–19 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest after 9 days and fly at around 30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 40–58 cm.



Breeding resident, passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 400

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Nycticorax nycticorax*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون ليل الرأس

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 56–65 cm / 278–1,100 g



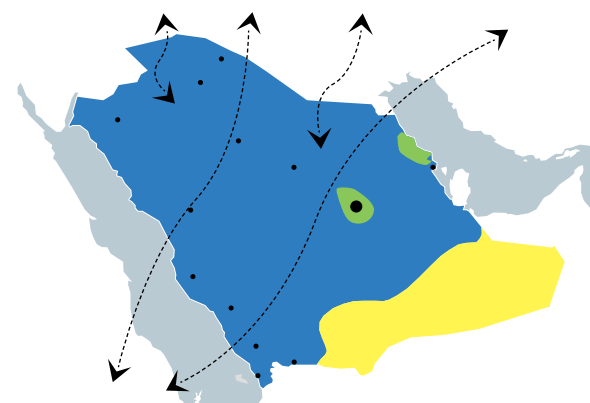
ADULT



JUVENILE

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across much of South America, Africa and Southeast Asia; migratory populations breed across North America and Europe to China and south into Arabia and winter 4,000 km south with the resident populations in Africa, southern Asia and in Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this impressive heron occurs widely on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and increasingly over winter (Dec–Feb) and summer due to the establishment of constructed wetlands, with breeding first recorded in 1991. **HABITAT:** Nests on fresh or brackish wetlands, including ponds, reservoirs, wastewater lagoons, ditches and streams, usually with nearby roosting trees. It can occur in any habitat on migration, even sandy deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Opportunistic, invertebrates and small vertebrates taken with an array of feeding methods. It often stands and waits for prey to pass by. *Activity:* Crepuscular, nocturnal and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages alone, though it can be found in small groups on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, usually nesting in mixed colonies containing other herons. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with material collected by the male) and performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow platform made of twigs or reeds, sometimes lined with fine plant material, placed in a dead tamarisk besides water (perhaps also amongst reeds as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–22 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 3 weeks and fly at 6–7 weeks. *Broods:* Often double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 105–112 cm.

This nocturnal bird is especially beautiful when breeding: the long, white head plumes are fully developed, the legs turn red and the black cap shimmers glossy blue-green.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **GREEN-BACKED HERON**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Striated Heron

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Butorides striata*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون محرز (بلشون أخضر الظهر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

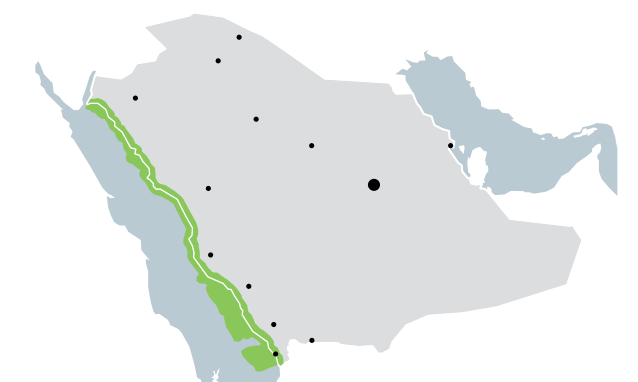
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–48 cm / 125–260 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Mexico and South America, sub-Saharan Africa, India, Southeast Asia and Australia; migratory populations breed in USA and eastern China and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This boldly marked heron occurs widely throughout coastal areas. It is occasionally recorded inland. **HABITAT:** Almost entirely coastal. It breeds mainly in Black Mangroves along the Red Sea and occasionally at inland wetlands. It also occurs where rock and exposed coral provide cover and shade and sometimes at harbors. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small fish, amphibians, reptiles, eggs and chicks of birds and a wide array of aquatic and terrestrial insects and other invertebrates. It forages mainly by waiting motionless then catching passing prey. *Activity:* Crepuscular and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, usually nesting solitarily, though sometimes in loose association or amongst other herons. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow saucer made of twigs and fibrous material from mangroves, placed usually less than 1 m above water amongst mangroves or rocks. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and climb out onto nearby branches at 14–30 days and fly at around 40 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 52–60 cm

Of the 12 species known to use bait to lure fish, five occur in Saudi Arabia: Common Little Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron, Goliath Heron, Little Egret and this species.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Harbor



COMMON NAME: **SQUACCO HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardeola ralloides*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون مذهب (واق أبيض صغير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

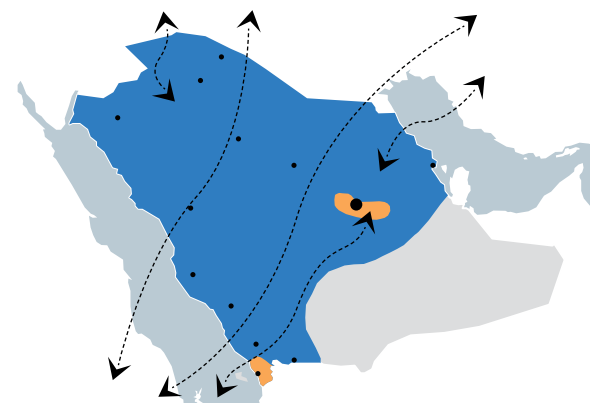
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–47 cm / 230–370 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed around the Mediterranean through Arabia to Afghanistan and winter 4,000 km south and southwest in the Nile Valley and sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This lovely heron occurs widely on migration and over winter and breeds along the Riyadh River, southwestern Tihama, and possibly in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Fresh or brackish wetlands with dense fringing vegetation, including ditches, streams, wastewater lagoons, ponds and marshy areas, as well as mangroves. It nests in trees along Riyadh River and possibly in large, dense reedbeds in the Eastern Province. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insect larvae, along with fish, amphibians and invertebrates taken by hiding in vegetation and standing motionless until prey passes close by. *Activity:* Crepuscular, partly nocturnal and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary, though groups of 40 have been recorded during migration and 400 were observed at Malakiyah Lake one October. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs (pair bonds form at the breeding grounds) with a small nest territory, usually in mixed colonies with Black-crowned Night Herons and Purple Herons. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A platform made of twigs, placed usually less than 4 m above ground (sometimes up to 20 m) in a dead tamarisk, or made of reeds and sedges placed 1 m above water amongst reeds. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest around 32 days and fly after 45 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 80–92 cm.

Like most waterbirds, herons are very sensitive to human disturbance near their wetlands. Too much disturbance causes waterbirds to abandon their nests and eggs.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **CATTLE EGRET**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Bubulcus ibis*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون بقر عربي (أبو قردان)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

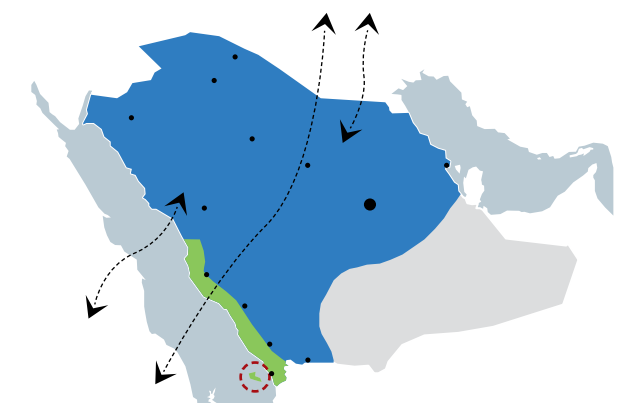
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–56 cm / 250–510 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across Mexico and South America, Africa, Arabia and India to Australasia; migratory populations breed in North America and patchily from Eastern Europe to Japan and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* It occurs widely on migration and over winter, with a large breeding population in the southern Tihamah lowlands. This bird can breed in any month of the year. **HABITAT:** Forages in freshwater marshes, ditches and human-modified sites, including lawns, fodder crops, cattle yards and rubbish dumps and sometimes on the coast. It often breeds near wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, with small vertebrates important after hatching, taken by walking and pecking at the ground, often behind or on cattle, camels and other herbivores, sometimes over 30 km from the nest. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, often in loose flocks up to 30 or roosts of several hundred. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous or promiscuous breeding pairs nesting in dense colonies usually containing 200–400 pairs (sometimes to 1,500 pairs), occasionally mixed with other egrets and herons. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, sometimes lined with grass, placed more than 2 m above ground in a tree or bush (or perhaps a platform of aquatic plants amongst reeds as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–26 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and climb out onto nearby branches at 20 days and fly at around 30 days. *Broods:* Single- or double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 88–96 cm.

In spring, both sexes develop elaborate breeding plumes on their head, breast and back. A female will only mate with a male that has longer plumes than her own.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 6,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **GREY HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardea cinerea*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون أرم

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

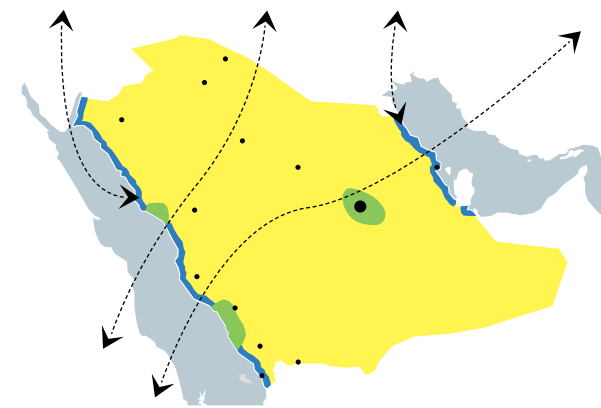
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 90–98 cm / 1,020–2,073 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across much of Africa, Western Europe and Southeast Asia; migratory populations breed from central Europe to Siberia and northern China and winter 1,000–2,000 km south in Africa, the Mediterranean, Middle East, Arabia and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This stately heron occurs widely in winter and on migration. A small population now remains year-round to breed having self-colonized artificial wetlands, primarily around Riyadh River. **HABITAT:** Near shallow water, including coasts and wetlands, including wastewater lagoons, reedbeds, streams, dams and ornamental lakes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish, as well as other small vertebrates and invertebrates, usually taken while walking or by waiting for prey to pass by. It is highly opportunistic, even taking locusts in Saudi



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 15

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

Arabia during mass migration events. *Activity:* Crepuscular, partly nocturnal and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone, but flocks of several hundred have been recorded on migration at Jubail. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies, sometimes with other species, including egrets or herons. Extra-pair copulations are not uncommon. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks or reeds, lined with twigs, leaves or grass, placed in a tree or reedbed, or on the ground or in a low bush on an island. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 23–28 days. *Nestling period:* 42–55 days (young remain near the nest for a further 10–20 days). *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 175–195 cm.

While this fine looking heron usually hunts fish up to 25 cm long, in Saudi Arabia it will also prey on locusts, especially during plagues.

COMMON NAME: **BLACK-HEADED HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardea melanocephala*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون رأس

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 92–96 cm / 710–1,650 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across sub-Saharan Africa with birds wandering to northern Africa, the Mediterranean and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare and erratic visitor, possible breeding resident.* This small, slim heron has self-colonized Arabia from Africa in recent decades. It was first recorded in Yemen in 1962 and Saudi Arabia in 2010. It now breeds in Yemen and possibly Oman and could breed in Saudi Arabia in the near future. In Saudi Arabia, it is currently restricted largely to the Tihamah and coastal lowlands of the southwest, though two were recorded at Yanbu' Creek in 2018 suggesting it may be spreading north. **HABITAT:** Freshwater marshy areas, irrigated farms and especially wastewater settling ponds, sometimes many kilometers inland. It occurs rarely on coastal wetlands and is much less associated with wetlands than most other herons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small fish, as well as rodents, small birds, lizards, snakes and frogs, along with invertebrates, including insects, spiders, worms and crustaceans. It is not an active hunter. Instead it catches its prey by stalking or standing still and waiting for prey to come by. It feeds equally in terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats and may commute more than 30 km between its feeding grounds and its roost. *Activity:* Diurnal and regularly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it may do so in the near future.

Birds wandering from their main range in Africa have recently started breeding in Yemen and are expected to nest in Saudi Arabia in the near future.

the Tihamah and coastal lowlands of the southwest, though two were recorded at Yanbu' Creek in 2018 suggesting it may be spreading north. **HABITAT:** Freshwater marshy areas, irrigated farms and especially wastewater settling ponds, sometimes many kilometers inland. It occurs rarely on coastal wetlands and is much less associated with wetlands than most other herons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small fish, as well as rodents, small birds, lizards, snakes and frogs, along with invertebrates, including insects, spiders, worms and crustaceans. It is not an active hunter. Instead it catches its prey by stalking or standing still and waiting for prey to come by. It feeds equally in terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats and may commute more than 30 km between its feeding grounds and its roost. *Activity:* Diurnal and regularly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it may do so in the near future.



Year-round visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **GOLIATH HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardea goliath*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون عملاق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 135–150 cm / 4,310–4,468 g

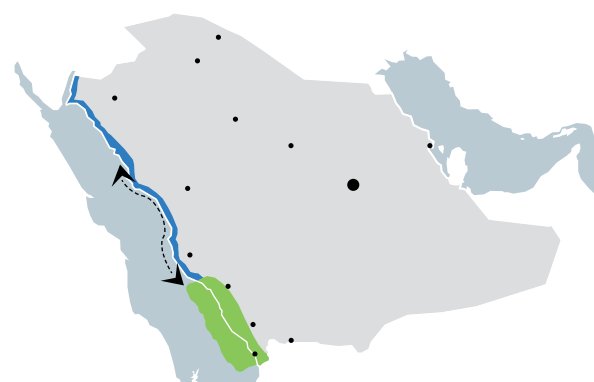


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across sub-Saharan Africa to the Red Sea coast in Egypt, with small populations in Arabia, Iran and Iraq. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this aptly named, very large heron breeds on the Red Sea coast and islands. It wanders north along the Red Sea in winter. **HABITAT:** Extensive stands of coastal vegetation, predominately mangroves. It occasionally occurs in less muddy, open reef habitats. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish, frogs, lizards, snakes, rodents, crabs, prawns and floating carrion. Rather inactive, it spends most of the day motionless, simply waiting for prey to pass by, or it searches for food by walking slowly. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A loose platform (diameter 1 m) made of sticks, lined with twigs or mangrove leaves, placed either on

the ground, or less than 3 m above ground on a bush or tree (especially a mangrove), or on the exposed roots of mangroves (or perhaps amongst reeds as recorded in Africa). Unusual site: atop a disused Osprey nest. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 24–30 days. *Nestling period:* 40–60 days.

Broods: Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 210–230 cm. **CONSERVATION:** The species is listed as endangered regionally due to its small population size with less than 250 mature individuals in Arabia. It is impacted by hunting and collision with overhead wires.

Standing 1.5 meters tall, weighing over four kilograms and with wings spanning 2.3 meters, this magnificent bird is the largest heron in the world.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 60

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands

COMMON NAME: **PURPLE HERON**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardea purpurea*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون أرجوان

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 79–90 cm / 525–1,218 g

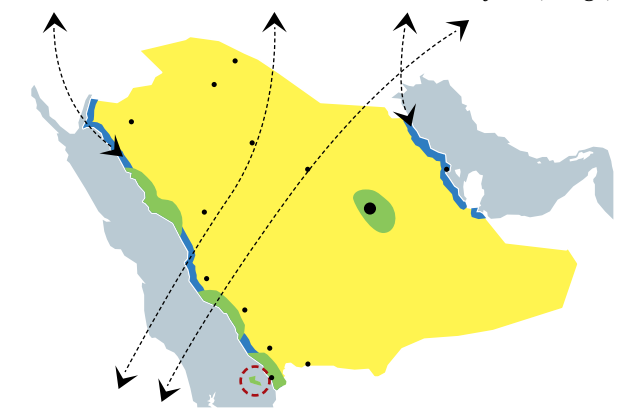


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across sub-Saharan Africa and from Pakistan to Southeast Asia; migratory populations breed from Europe to Kazakhstan and south to the Middle East and Arabia and winter 4,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This beautifully adorned heron occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) and breeds along the Riyadh

Satellite tracking shows that this large bird can migrate 4,000 km in only 5–7 days. Some can even fly non-stop for 5,600 km.

Activity: Crepuscular and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies (often mixed with Black-crowned Night Herons and Squacco Herons), loose groups or solitarily. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, placed in a tree or bush, or made of reeds and placed 1 m above water in a reedbed. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 25–27 days. *Nestling period:* 45–50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 120–150 cm.

River, the Red Sea coast, and possibly in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Well-vegetated freshwater wetlands, including reed-fringed ponds, streams, wastewater lagoons and reedbeds, as well as mangroves along the southern Red Sea coast. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish, frogs, crustaceans and aquatic insects, as well as other small vertebrates. It forages mainly by standing motionless waiting for prey to pass near, or by walking slowly.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 80

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **GREAT WHITE EGRET**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Great Egret

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardea alba*

ARABIC NAME: بلشون كبير غربي (بلشون أبيض كبير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 80–104 cm / 700–1,700 g



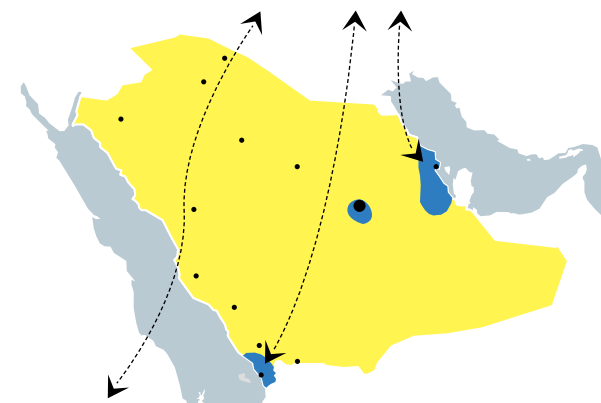
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Mexico and South America, Africa, southern Asia and Australasia; migratory populations breed in USA, eastern Europe, from Afghanistan to China and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, local winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This tall and very graceful heron occurs throughout much of Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and locally common winter visitor (Nov–Feb), being perhaps most numerous on the Arabian Gulf coast and adjacent wetlands. Some wintering occurs near Riyadh and probably also in the southern Tihamah. A small population breeds on the Iran coast; thus, it might also breed in the Eastern Province.

HABITAT: Wetlands, streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, coastal khawrs and mangroves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly fish, but also other small vertebrates and invertebrates. It is not a secretive bird often choosing to be in the open, particularly along wet-

land edges where it waits for or stalks its prey, grabbing it with the bill. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Flocks of 30 passage migrants are reported from the Red Sea coast and 250 have been reported over winter at Sabkhat al-Fasl.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** Despite its large size this bird can still be confused with other white herons in Saudi Arabia when on its own or at a distance. **WINGSPAN:** 140–170 cm.

Walking slowly and stylishly as it searches for prey, this tall and pure white bird is surely the most elegant heron.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **LITTLE EGRET**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Egretta garzetta*

ARABIC NAME: غرنوق أبيض صغير (بلشون أبيض صغير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 55–65 cm / 280–710 g

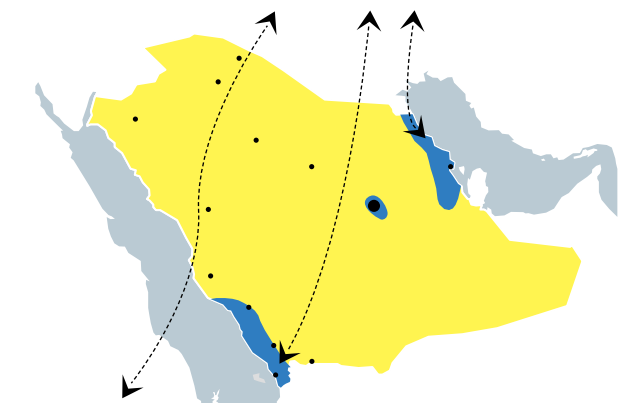


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa and from India to Australasia; migratory populations breed throughout southern Europe east to Kazakhstan and south to Iraq and winter 1,500 km south around the fringes of the Mediterranean, and in eastern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Iran to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN**

Not only can it use bait to attract fish, this small and delicate heron will also stir the water with its foot to flush out any prey hiding in the mud below.

STATUS: *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This small, delicate and active white heron passes through Saudi Arabia (Mar–May, Sep–Oct) on a broad front, especially in the west and some spend the winter (Nov–Feb) at large wetlands. It occasionally stays for the summer at wetlands near Yanbu' and Sabkhat al-Fasl with some individuals in breeding plumage, suggesting it may breed. **HABITAT:** Below 2,000 m at fresh or brackish wetlands, ditches,

wastewater settling ponds, irrigated areas and rich sites like dairy farms with nearby water. It also occurs occasionally at sheltered bays with mangroves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish, amphibians, reptiles and variety of invertebrates, including crustaceans and mollusks. A lively heron often feeds as a group, actively dancing to and fro in shallow water with wings held high, no doubt to dislodge or panic prey into revealing themselves. Also paddles feet to disturb prey. May also wade to body height when foraging. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It can forage solitarily though it usually gathers in loose groups and typically roosts in trees with other herons. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **WINGSPAN:** 86–104 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **WESTERN REEF-EGRET**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Western Reef Heron

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Egretta gularis*

ARABIC NAME: غرنوق صخر هندي (بلشون الصخر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 55–65 cm / 280–710 g



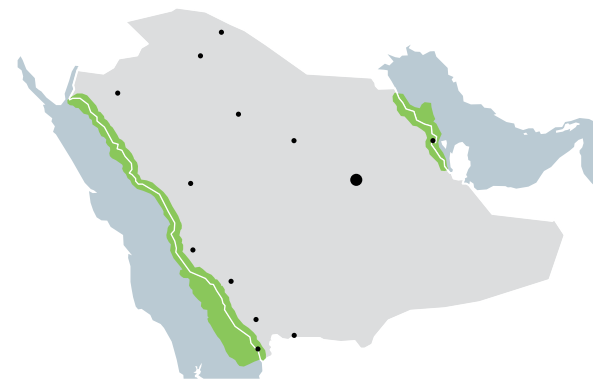
GRAY MORPH



WHITE MORPH

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: resident populations occur along coastal areas of western and eastern Africa, Madagascar and the Arabian Peninsula to India; dispersive populations winter 1,000 km away in eastern Africa, southern Arabia and southern India to Sri Lanka. It occurs widely around the coasts of Arabia and has bred in all states. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This classy looking gray or white egret breeds along the coasts and islands of the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Saltwater habitats, including islands, muddy and shallow bays, sandbars and mangroves. It occasionally occurs inland at wastewater streams, ponds, lakes and reedbeds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, crustaceans and small fish. It hunts actively, often stirring shallow water with its foot to flush prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages solitarily. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies containing up to 150 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks (sometimes also seaweed or algae), placed usually 1–3 m above ground on a bush, or sometimes on the ground, a cliff, or an abandoned building. Ground nests are usually more substantial than those on bushes. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 26–28 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and climb out onto nearby branches at 4 weeks and fly at 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 86–104 cm.

Due to simple genetic variation, this species comes in two very different color morphs (one is pure white, the other is slate gray), which can interbreed freely.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 600

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Arabian Gulf coastline

COMMON NAME: **HAMERKOP**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Scopus umbretta*

ARABIC NAME: مطرفي منقار

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–56 cm / 415–430 g



ADULT

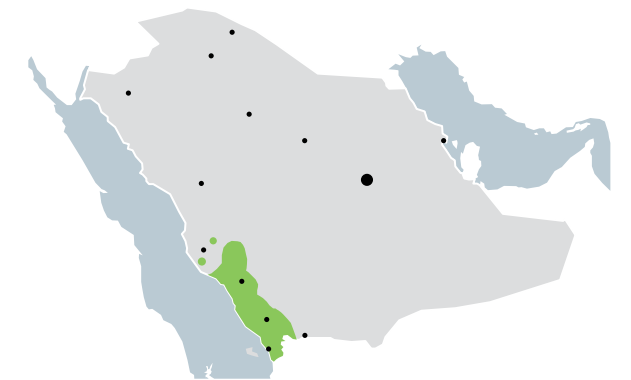
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This truly extraordinary and unique bird can be found in the foothills and highlands of the southwest (south from Tayif). **HABITAT:** Above 250 m in freshwater habitats, including marshy areas, mountain streams, reservoirs, flooded areas and irrigation ditches. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly frogs and tadpoles, small fish, supplemented by crustaceans, worms and other invertebrates taken with the bill while wading in shallow water. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually seen in pairs or small groups, though it may form flocks of less than 30 in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs.

The Hamerkop (meaning "Hammer Head" in Dutch) builds one of the largest nests in the world – a massive structure 1.5 m high, 1.5 m wide and weighing over 200 kg.

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A huge (150 cm tall, 150 cm diameter) domed nest with a low, down-sloping side entrance made of sticks, plant matter, paper and rags, mixed with mud. The internal chamber is plastered with mud, while the base is lined with grass and leaves. The nest is placed 3–8 m above ground on a tree or cliff ledge, usually near water. Pairs often build multiple nests, some of which may never be used, some may be used for several years, or some are built annually, sometimes adjacent or attached to old ones. *Clutch:* 2–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 30 days. *Nestling period:* 50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** The Hamerkop is the only member of its family. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable in Arabia because no subpopulation contains more than 1,000 mature individuals. It may be decreasing due to habitat degradation and disturbance at wetlands.



NEST



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **PINK-BACKED PELICAN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pelecanus rufescens*

ARABIC NAME: بجعة وردة ظهر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

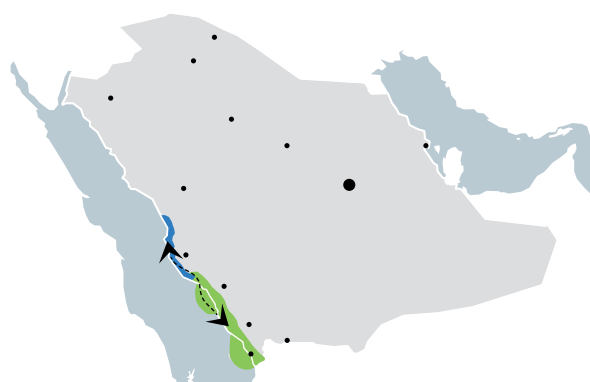
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 125–132 cm / 3,900–7,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. This immense bird with its famously large bill breeds at 10–16 colonies on islands and a few mainland sites off Saudi Arabia (south of al-Lith) and Yemen. It occasionally wanders north along the Red Sea coast in winter. **HABITAT:** Islands at shallow bays and lagoons along the southern Red Sea, breeding in dense mangroves. It occasionally occurs up to 100 km inland at wadis and reservoirs. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish, generally below 300 g but occasionally to 400 g. It often feeds cooperatively with several birds working in unison to corral fish into a tight ring of pelicans. The birds then plunge their beak into the water to catch their prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small loose parties. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies of 12–100 pairs with nests 1–3 m apart. *Parental roles:* The female builds the

nest with material collected by the male. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, lined with twigs and leaves, placed 3–4 m above ground on a mangrove tree or occasionally a low shrub. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 30 days. *Nestling period:* 84 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 216–290 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This species is listed as vulnerable in Arabia because no subpopulation contains more than 1,000 mature individuals. It may be decreasing due to clearing of mangroves for coastal development. It is also susceptible to bioaccumulation of toxins in body tissues, which can impair reproductive success.

This enormous bird nests at the tops of mangrove trees in colonies of up to 100 pairs, with each nest less than three meters apart.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 400
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Corniche



COMMON NAME: **GREAT WHITE PELICAN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

ARABIC NAME: بجعة بيضاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

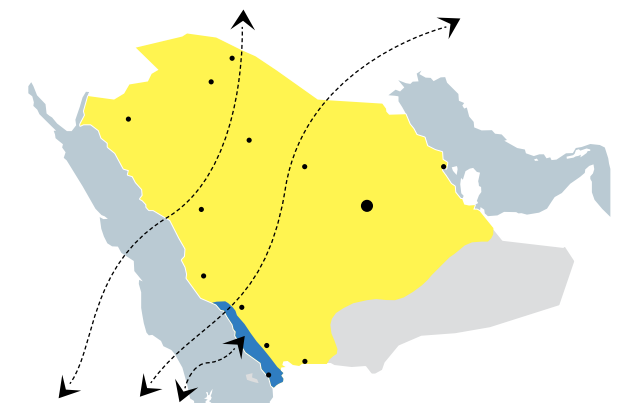
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 148–175 cm / M: 9,000–15,000 g; F: 5,400–9,000 g (40% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in sub-Saharan Africa and northwestern India; migratory populations breed discontinuously from southeastern Europe to Kazakhstan and winter 3,000 km south in Africa, northern India and around the Red Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, local winter visitor*. This flying colossus is a rare passage migrant, more common in autumn (Sep–Nov), that has been recorded in almost every part of the Kingdom except the Rub’ al-Khali. It regularly

This great pelican is the largest flying bird in Saudi Arabia. It is the fourth heaviest flying bird in the world and has the second largest wingspan – this is a big, big bird.

winters in the southern Tihamah up to 30 km inland. Birds have occasionally been recorded visiting the Kingdom in summer months. **HABITAT:** Can appear almost anywhere on migration, though especially at wetlands. It winters in wadis, dams, reservoirs, bays and mangroves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish (up to 600 g) caught in shallow water with a swipe of the great bill. It regularly forages in groups, often using cooperative techniques to maximize the chance of fishing success. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found solitary or in very small groups but flocks of 81 and 275 have been recorded at Tabuk and King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah), respectively. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird has the largest wingspan in Saudi Arabia and close to the largest wingspan of any bird in the world (perhaps second only to the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*). The adult can be distinguished in flight from the Pink-backed Pelican by the white underwings, which contrast heavily with the black flight feathers (these appear white or pale gray in the Pink-backed Pelican). **WINGSPAN:** 226–360 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **BROWN BOOBY**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sula leucogaster*

ARABIC NAME: أطيش بني

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

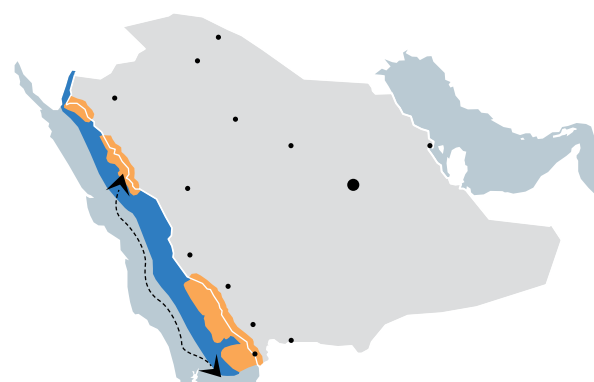
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 64–74 cm / 724–1,550 g. M: 1,077 g; F: 1,491 g (40% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Dispersive: breeds on islands widely distributed in tropical seas and oceans, including around the Arabian Peninsula and forages in surrounding waters. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This dashing seabird can breed in the Red Sea in any month. It has been recorded in the Arabian Gulf though very rarely. **HABITAT:** Marine, it forages at sea and breeds on undisturbed islands in the Red Sea, usually raised sand banks or fairly flat, raised coral rock platforms, others are relatively hilly. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small fish (including flying fish) and squid taken by plunge diving into the sea or by catching fish in flight near the surface. These seabirds embark on foraging trips that can last up to 14 hours taking them over 100 km from shore. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting solitarily or more often in loose colonies containing up to 130 nests with nests either 3–7 m apart (small islands) or widely spaced in a line just above the high water mark (larger islands).

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A scrape on the ground, surrounded by a shallow rim of coral rubble, pieces of seaweed or flotsam. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 43 days. *Nestling period:* 85–105 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** The female usually lays two eggs that hatch asynchronously. The first hatchling kills the younger chick almost immediately after hatching. This is an egg insurance policy – if the first egg fails then the chick from the second egg will likely survive. **WINGSPAN:** 132–150 cm.

Because females are much larger and stronger than males, they can fly faster and further out to sea where they do not have to compete with the males for food.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands

COMMON NAME: **GREAT CORMORANT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phalacrocorax carbo*

ARABIC NAME: الغاق الكبير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 80–100 cm / 1,810–2,810 g

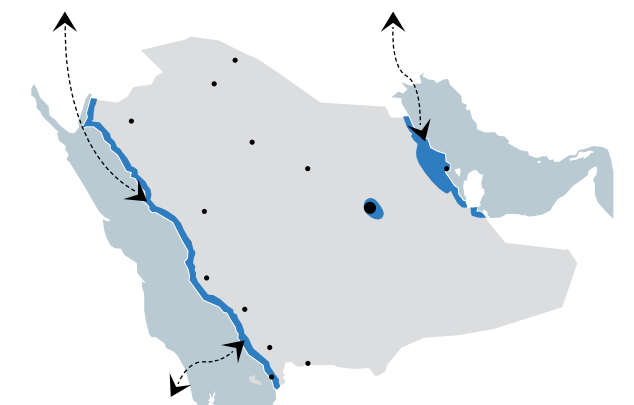


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across southern and eastern Africa, India and Australasia; migratory populations breed in North America, Greenland and Eurasia and winter 2,000 km south around western Europe, the Mediterranean and southern Asia, including much of Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common winter visitor, uncommon summer visitor.* This glossy cormorant is common in the Gulf and nearby wetlands over winter, with small numbers at inland wetlands and along the Red Sea coast. A

After foraging at sea, this bird sits on a prominent perch with its wings spread wide, both to dry its wings and to help warm the large, cold fish it has just swallowed.

few often remain over summer. **HABITAT:** Inshore waters, especially sheltered bays and inlets, but also offshore wrecks and oil platforms. It also occurs at freshwater and brackish wetlands near the coast, especially to drink and bathe and increasingly at inland wetlands containing fish stocks.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly fish (typically 10–15 cm, up to 40 cm) captured with a pursuit dive. It typically dives to around 10–12 m deep (maximum recorded depth of 30 m) and remains underwater for about 45 seconds on average, though some dives exceed 2.5 minutes. It also takes crustaceans and, in freshwater, amphibians. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal (it occasionally hunts at night). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually gregarious, hundreds have been recorded together at Jubail and Sabkhat al-Fasl. Roosts of over 1,000 birds have been reported in trees near Dhahran. Nonetheless it usually fishes solitarily and has not been recorded feeding collectively in Arabia. It does not usually associate with other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Clumsy on land and when roosting in trees, water is its element. It flies well with slow and powerful wing beats. **WINGSPAN:** 130–160 cm.



Winter visitor, summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qatif Bay



COMMON NAME: SOCOTRA CORMORANT

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*

ARABIC NAME: الغاق السوقي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 76–84 cm / Unknown



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: endemic to Arabia. It breeds only on islands in the Arabian Gulf, off southern Arabia and Socotra and forages in waters within 200 km of nesting sites. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* About one-third of the world's Socotra Cormorants breed in Saudi Arabian waters in the Gulf. It is a vagrant to the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Marine, it forages at sea and breeds on undisturbed, predator-free islands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small shoaling fish captured with a pursuit dive (to 24 m deep, lasting 76 seconds). *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in vast feeding flocks at sea and cooperatively in inshore waters. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in dense colonies usually containing 1,000–37,000 pairs with up to 1.5 nests per square meter. Egg laying is synchronized within part or all of a colony. Colonies move between islands, often after using the same site for several years. *Parental roles:* Poorly known, in similar species the female builds the nest with material

collected by the male. Both adults guard the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined hollow in open ground. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Uncertain (about 30 days in similar species). *Chicks:* Young leave the nest around 10 days, form crèches, then fly at about 53 days. Large young occasionally eat small young. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 102–110 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is vulnerable globally because only 13 colonies remain. The Saudi Arabian population declined by 75% between 1980–1992 with ongoing losses due to island development, colony disturbance, egg collection, shooting, feral cats and marine plastic ingestion.

This endemic seabird forms immense feeding flocks sometimes containing over 40,000 birds that plunge repeatedly into the sea and then swim after their frenzied prey.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 35,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Gulf of Salwa



COMMON NAME: EURASIAN THICK-KNEE

OTHER COMMON NAME: Eurasian Stone Curlew

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Burhinus oedicnemus*

ARABIC NAME: كروان أوراسي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–44 cm / 290–535 g

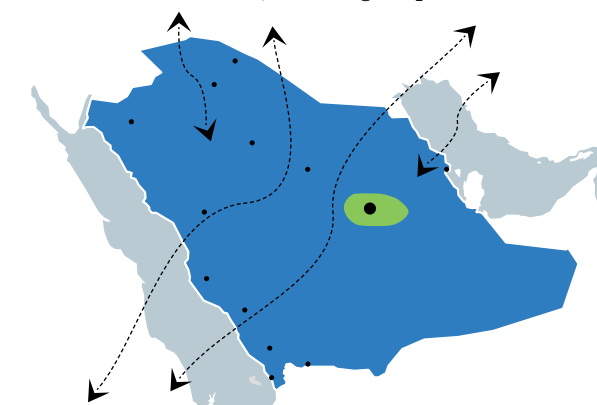


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed around the Mediterranean and Pakistan; migratory populations breed in Western Europe to Kazakhstan and Iran and winter 4,000 km south and southwest in northern and eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Rare breeding resident, scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This big-eyed sandy-colored bird occurs

Nesting directly on the ground in stony areas, this nocturnal bird lays its eggs only in places where the color of the eggs closely matches the color of the ground.

widely as a passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Sep–Nov) and winter visitor (Nov–Feb) breeds around the Riyadh region. **HABITAT:** Bare open country, including desert, usually stony or with stony patches, sometimes with scattered low scrub. It also occasionally occurs at dairy farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates and some small vertebrates (such as lizards and snakes, including the poisonous Arabian Horned Viper) taken from the ground while walking slowly. *Activity:* Nocturnal, crepuscular and partly diurnal (it can be active in the shade of scrub by day using its camouflage to remain undetected). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary while foraging, though about 100 were once recorded roosting together on a plateau near Qarnayn in 1991. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, unlined or sparsely lined with plant fragments, small stones, or mammal droppings, in open stony areas that afford all-round visibility for the incubating birds. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 25–27 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly after 40 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded. **NOTE:** This species is targeted by falconers as prey for their birds. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is decreasing in Saudi Arabia, possibly as a result. **WINGSPAN:** 77–85 cm.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dahna Desert



COMMON NAME: **SPOTTED THICK-KNEE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Burhinus capensis*

ARABIC NAME: كروان أرقص

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–44 cm / 375–610 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa (except the equatorial forest belt) and southern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This distinctively spotty, long-legged, wide-eyed bird is found in the southern Tihamah and lower foothills, south from Jiddah. **HABITAT:** Mainly below 1,000 m (though occasionally to 2,000 m) in flat or slightly undulating areas of arid scrub, particularly open acacia with low bushes and areas of grasses and herbs with bare sandy or gravel patches.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Poorly known. It probably feeds mainly on insects taken by picking from the ground while walking steadily forward. *Activity:* Nocturnal and partly diurnal (it is sometimes active on cloudy days). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages solitarily or in pairs, though it may roost communally with up to 50 birds (as recorded in Oman).

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, unlined or with a few scraps of plant material, among grass and herbs, often in the shade of a bush for part or most of the day. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 4–5 weeks. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.

The large bulbous eyes on the side of the head give thick-knees near panoramic vision, leaving only a 15° blind spot behind the head.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Haematopus ostralegus*

ARABIC NAME: محاري أوراسي (أكل المحار)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–48 cm / 425–820 g

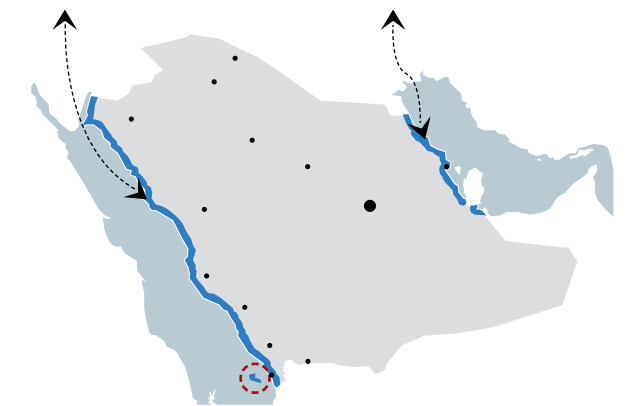


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Eurasia from Iceland to Kazakhstan and in eastern China and Russia and winters 4,000 km south along the shores of Africa, Arabia, India and China. It is a common and widespread winter visitor throughout the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This charismatic little bird is found on both coasts, especially the northern Red Sea. It is occasionally recorded passing over the Arabian landmass, leaving inland observers surprised

Oystercatchers prefer oysters 30–45 mm long: larger oysters are simply too tough to break, whereas smaller oysters are not worth the effort of hammering them open.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually gregarious in Saudi Arabia it is generally encountered in small loose groups, though 214 were recorded once in 'Anik (near Tarut Island) in 1991. It freely associates with other waders when feeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

A few may remain over summer. **HABITAT:** Mudflats, sabkha and sandy or rocky shores. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly mussels and other bivalves but also limpets, whelks, worms and crabs. It uses a variety of techniques to find, dislodge and eat its prey, including hammering, prizing, probing and stabbing with its bill. Because bivalves get larger and tougher with age, individual oystercatchers learn to select prey items that are large enough to provide a decent meal, but not so large that they take too much energy to open. *Activity:* Diurnal.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

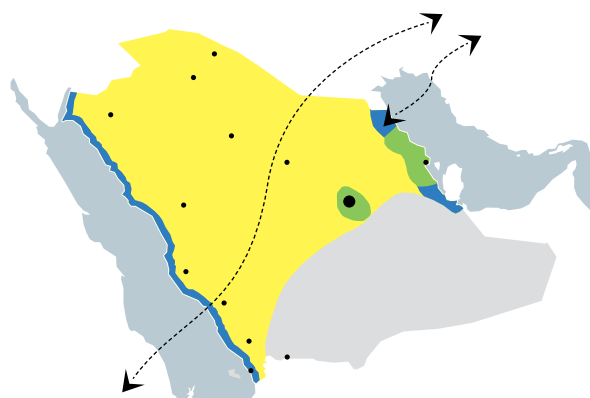
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **PIED AVOCET**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Recurvirostra avosetta*
 ARABIC NAME: نكات أبقع
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–45 cm / 225–397 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in eastern and southern Africa and patchily through Arabia to Pakistan; migratory populations breed from Western Europe across central Asia to northeastern China and winter 3,000 km south in Africa, southern Asia and southeastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* It occurs widely on migration (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct) and over winter (Nov–Feb) and breeds in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Breeds at open shallow wastewater sites with bare banks or damp sabkhah. It winters in shallow, sheltered coastal sites, especially brackish lagoons. Migrating birds can rest at any wetland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic invertebrates taken by picking from shallow water or by scything the up-curved bill through water feeling for prey. *Activity:* Diurnal and often nocturnal.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It forages alone or sometimes in small groups of up to 10, though several hundred have been recorded at Jubail in winter and flocks of up to 40 have been recorded on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs (pair bonds form in late winter) nesting in small colonies of up to 120 pairs, though often containing less than 4 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, unlined or with grass and plant stems, in an open area of bare, dry, mud or sand, or on a low islet, or amongst short, sparse shrubs or sabkhah. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–24 days. *Chicks:* Young run and feed themselves within hours of hatching and fly at 32–35 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

More than 10% of avocet chicks are adopted. Foster parents suffer the costs of raising stray chicks to help reduce predation on their own young. There is safety in numbers.



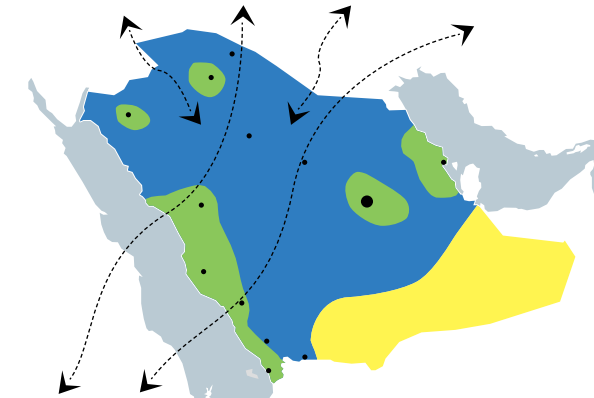
COMMON NAME: **BLACK-WINGED STILT**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Himantopus himantopus*
 ARABIC NAME: طول أجنح (أبو المغازل)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–40 cm / 166–205 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations are widespread across the Americas, Africa, Arabia, the Middle East and from India to New Zealand; migratory populations breed in USA and from southern Europe to Japan and winter 3,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This scarlet-legged stilt is common on passage (Mar–Apr, Aug–Sep) and over winter. It self-colonized Arabia around 1952 and

During the day, this bird actively searches for prey in the water. At night, it blindly sweeps its head from side to side in the muddy sediment hoping to feel prey with its bill.

has spread rapidly since the 1980s with increasing artificial wetlands. **HABITAT:** Fresh or brackish shallow wetlands, particularly treated wastewater lagoons with open settling ponds or near open, swampy ground. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic invertebrates and small fish and eggs taken in shallow water; males hunt slightly deeper. It scythes the bill through soft mud feeling for prey or actively hunts. *Activity:* Diurnal and often nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in loose groups, though 900 have been recorded on a farm near al-Kharj. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs (pair bonds form in early spring) nesting in colonies of 20–50 pairs (sometimes up to 200 pairs) or solitarily. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined scrape on the ground or a platform made of reeds, grass, algae or twigs, placed on an islet, a tuft of plants in water, on mud, or built up from the ground in shallow water. Nests can be widely dispersed or only 4–5 m apart. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 25–26 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest within 2 days of hatching and fly at 28–32 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abqaiq wetlands



COMMON NAME: **GREY PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pluvialis squatarola*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق أرم

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–31 cm / 174–320 g



BREEDING PLUMAGE

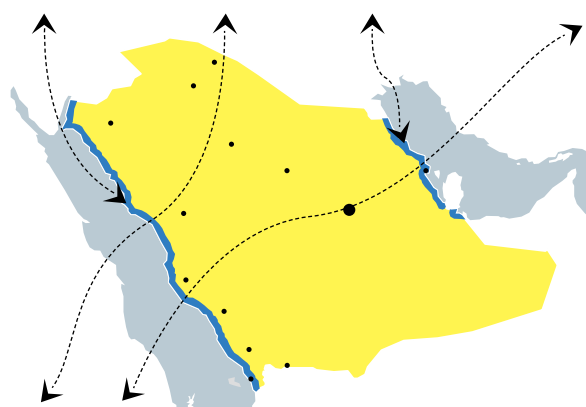


NON-BREEDING PLUMAGE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds along the polar fringes of North America and Eurasia and winters 2,000–12,000 km south along most of the world's temperate and tropical coasts. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This medium-sized, mottled gray plover with black armpits is a common and widespread passage migrant (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) and winter visitor (Oct–Mar) throughout Saudi Arabia. It can be found in all coastal areas, particularly on migration. It probably migrates across Arabia on a broad front, despite only a handful of inland records. Some individuals may spend the summer on either coast.

HABITAT: Coastal areas, especially intertidal mudflats, sandy bays, mangroves and shallow pools. It also occasionally occurs inland at standing water, wastewater pools and other wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known. Probably mainly worms, crustaceans and mollusks on the coast and insects and other invertebrates inland. It forages by probing the mud or sand, picking from the surface and digging with its bill; it also wades into shallow water and even swims. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found alone or in small parties of up to 30 birds. If large numbers occur at a given site, individuals will establish and defend feeding territories throughout the winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is generally shy and wary and when disturbed will fly away swiftly and strongly. In spring careful observers can find many birds in their handsome black and silver gray breeding plumage as they head north to their polar nesting grounds. **WINGSPAN:** 71–83 cm.

Remarkably, this plover spends the summer at its arctic breeding grounds and the winter at its tropical and temperate foraging quarters up to 12,000 km to the south.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN GOLDEN PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pluvialis apricaria*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق مذهب أوراسي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

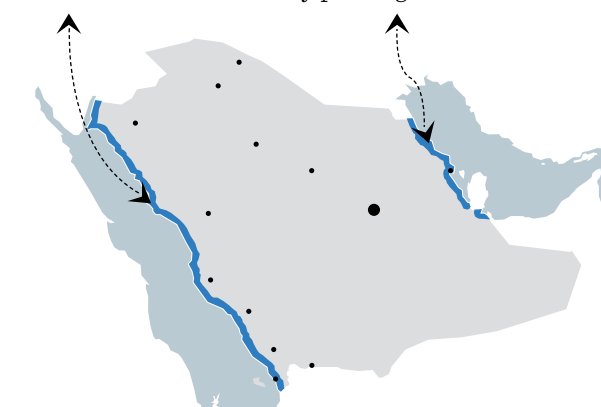
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 26–29 cm / 157–312 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northwestern Europe and the high arctic from Iceland to central Russia and winters 3,000 km south in western Europe, the Mediterranean and southern Caspian. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia is south of its normal wintering range; thus this gold and black plover is only a rare visitor to the Kingdom. The few records are from the coasts of the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea, as well as occasional birds inland with records from Riyadh and Thumamah. Some birds have stayed for several weeks. **HABITAT:** Coastal mudflats and saline lagoons. It also occurs at freshwater habitats, including shallow nutrient-rich pools and the muddy margins of slow flowing watercourses. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* A variety of invertebrates, including insects, worms, spiders, mollusks and crustaceans taken by pecking food from the surface, probing the mud, or running in pursuit of agile prey. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found foraging alone or in very small parties, often mixed with other waders. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Less robust and finer billed than the Grey Plover, it is a shy bird that becomes upright when alarmed. If disturbed it has a rapid, strong flight and may not resettle nearby. **WINGSPAN:** 67–76 cm.

Like many species breeding in northern temperate latitudes, this bird now nests eight days earlier than in previous decades because of recent climate change.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qatif Bay



COMMON NAME: **PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pluvialis fulva*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق مذهب سيبيري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

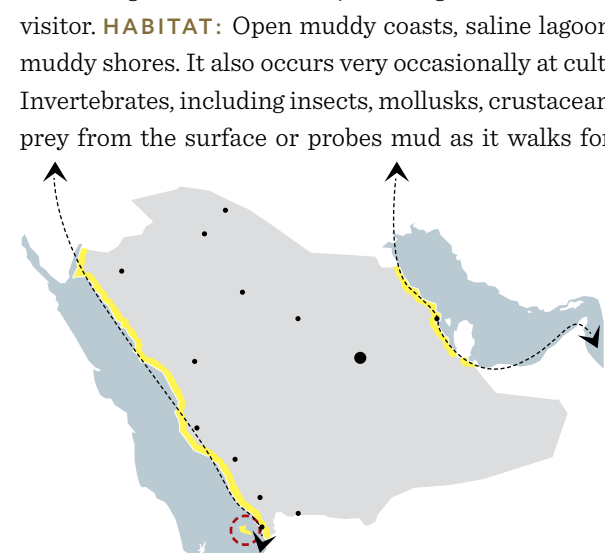
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–26 cm / 100–228 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds above the Arctic Circle from central Russia to Alaska and winters 7,000–13,000 km south from the Horn of Africa through India to Australasia and the Pacific islands. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, rare and erratic visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this rather slender and delicate looking golden plover occurs during migration along probably the entire length of both coasts (including the Farasan Islands) and is rare inland. It possibly occurs in all months as a rare and erratic visitor. **HABITAT:** Open muddy coasts, saline lagoons, inland freshwater lagoons and lakes with muddy shores. It also occurs very occasionally at cultivated fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects, mollusks, crustaceans and worms and occasionally seeds. It picks prey from the surface or probes mud as it walks forward and sometimes runs after more agile



Passage migrant, erratic visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'

After breeding in the Arctic Circle, these incredible birds migrate up to 13,000 km south. Some fly non-stop for three days covering 4,800 km and can exceed 100 km per hour.

Activity: Diurnal and partly nocturnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** A shy species, it tends to keep together in small groups when moving about or resting, but up to 30 have been recorded together near Dammam. It is rare inland, with no more than one or two recorded together. It readily feeds with other waders. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 60–72 cm.



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN DOTTEREL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eudromias morinellus*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق أعبر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

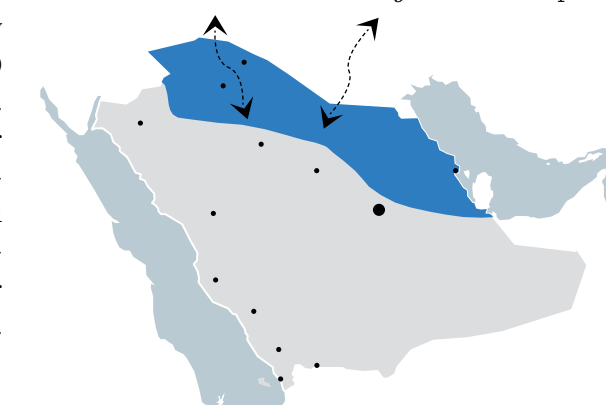
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–22 cm / M: 86–116 g; F: 99–142 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on bare mountaintops and tundra of Eurasia from the British Isles to Alaska and winters 2,000–10,000 km south and southwest in northern Africa through the Sinai to Iraq and northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare and erratic winter visitor.* This bulky and beautifully adorned plover can be locally common as it wanders the northern plains of Saudi Arabia in winter. It is probably nomadic in search of suitable feeding areas. In some years it is absent, while in other years there are hundreds. Presumably it appears during wet years when invertebrate prey is more abundant. **HABITAT:** Bare plains with short sparse vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, including beetles, larvae of flies, butterflies and moth, grasshoppers, as well as snails and crustaceans. **Activity:** Diurnal and partly

In this species, the male provides all parental care while the female competes for male attention. Accordingly, the female is both larger and brighter than the male.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually occurs in flocks in winter with up to 400 recorded one December in Dibdibah. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This wader is sometimes rather tame and tends to be inconspicuous even in its bare habitats. It does not always fly away as soon as it is disturbed; instead it will stand still or gradually walk away and then take off for a fast, low flight in a compact flock, usually pitching several hundred meters away. The female is larger and her breeding plumage is brighter and more ornamented than the male's. **WINGSPAN:** 57–64 cm.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **COMMON RINGED PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius hiaticula*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق مطوق شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

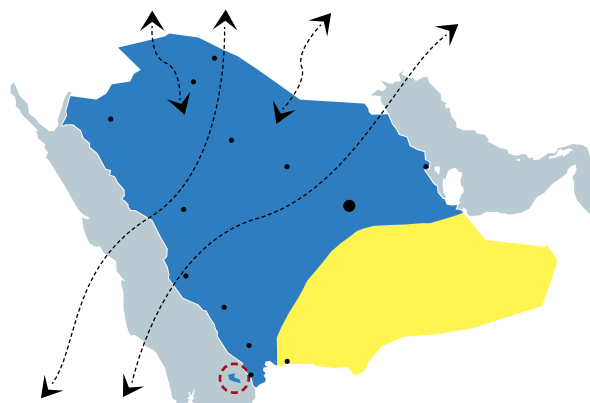
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–20 cm / 42–78 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout the northern coasts of Eurasia and Greenland and winters 4,000–12,000 km south and southwest in western Europe, Africa, Arabia and the Middle East. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This busy little plover is common and widespread throughout Saudi Arabia, both as a broad front migrant (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) and winter visitor (Nov–Mar). **HABITAT:** Wetlands, including coastal mudflats, sandy and rocky shores, saline lagoons, inland wastewater evaporation pools and streams. Passage migrants may also rest at reservoirs and flooded areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, such as worms, crustaceans, mollusks and insects. When feeding it progresses by a variety of slow walks or runs forward a few steps then stops suddenly to pause and look and seems also to listen. It pecks food from the surface and probes mud but also makes sudden lunges at prey. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, but feeding flocks readily spread out and mix with other species. Inland flocks of 50 or more are usually passage migrants. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It can be quite a shy bird in open environments, disturbed easily and standing upright if alarmed. It has a low level rapid flight with glides and a low landing glide that often ends with the bird running on as it touches the ground. **WINGSPAN:** 48–57 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



Over winter, these birds are unable to find enough food during daylight hours; therefore they must continue searching for food into the night or else they will starve.

COMMON NAME: **LITTLE RINGED PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius dubius*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق مطوق صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–17 cm / 26–53 g

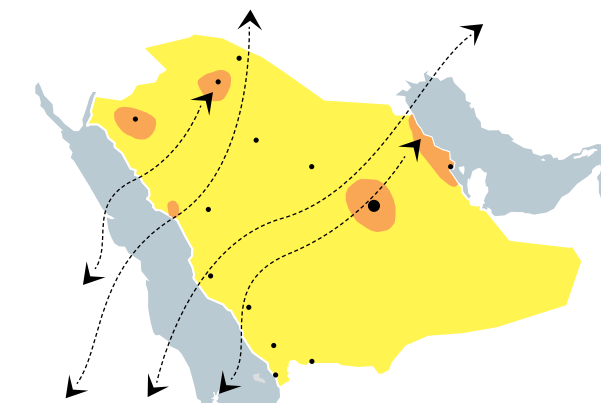


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Pakistan to New Guinea; migratory populations breed in northern Africa and most of Eurasia (below the Arctic Circle) to Japan and winter 4,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa, India, Southeast Asia and Indonesia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant.* This adorable little plover occurs mainly as a common passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Sep–Oct), though some pairs settle within the Kingdom to breed.

The smallest plover in Saudi Arabia, it is unable to defend its nest against predators; instead, it lays camouflaged eggs and pretends to incubate at a fake nest nearby.

Occasionally a third bird helps at the nest, though the relationship of the helper is unclear. *Parental roles:* The male makes several nest scrapes; the female selects one. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape in open ground. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–28 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 24–29 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 42–48 cm.

HABITAT: Inland freshwater sites. It breeds in open areas with sandy or shingle banks close to streams, freshwater and treated wastewater lagoons, dams and sand or gravel quarries. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects taken from dry or moist surfaces and less often in shallow water. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found solitarily or in pairs or in small migrating flocks of 5–6 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Usually socially monogamous breeding pairs (perhaps lasting several years) and highly territorial around the nest site.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 250
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **KENTISH PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius alexandrinus*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق إسكندري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–18 cm / 32–56 g



ADULT



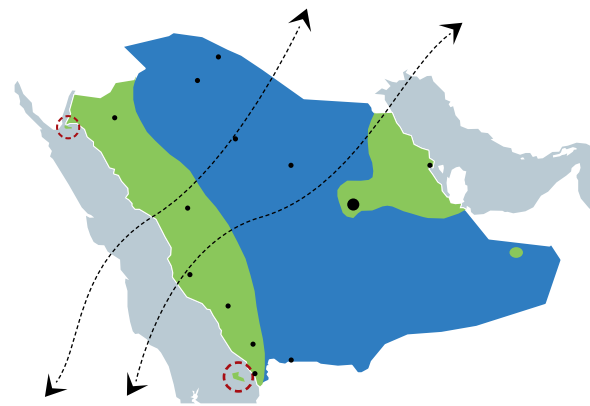
CHICK

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur along the coasts of northern Africa, Arabia to India, as well as China and Japan; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to Japan and winter 3,000 km south in sub-Saharan and eastern Africa and Pakistan to the Philippines.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common breeding resident, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This busy wader occurs widely on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) and over winter (Oct–Feb) and breeds mainly along the coasts. **HABITAT:** Sandy beaches, especially near saline lagoons, or inland at wastewater ponds, farm slurry areas, and reservoirs. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Diet: Crustaceans, worms and mollusks when at coasts or brackish water, or insects, mollusks, spiders and crustaceans when inland. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually groups of 10–15, though 150 were recorded at Haradh in winter and 2,000–5,000 at Sabkhat al-Fasl in summer. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Usually socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in loose groups; however, either the male or female may abandon the nest to establish a new nest with a new partner. *Parental roles:* The female incubates during the day, the male at night. Before leaving the nest, adults may partially bury the eggs to protect them from the sun. Both adults, just the male, or just the female tend the young. *Nest:* A scrape, lined with gravel, shell fragments or plant debris, in the open or amongst scant undergrowth. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 24–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 27–31 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded, sometimes with a different mate. **WINGSPAN:** 42–45 cm.

Both parents incubate the eggs; however, once the eggs hatch, either parent might desert the chicks to start a new nest with a new partner.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 13,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **LESSER SANDPLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius mongolus*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

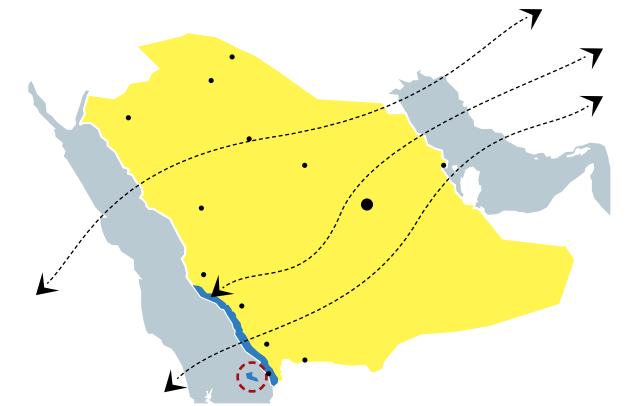
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–21 cm / 39–110 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on the Tibet plateau through northern China to northeastern Russia and winters 1,000–10,000 km south and southwest along the coasts of eastern Africa, Arabia and Pakistan to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, rare summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this little wader is found primarily on the coast mainly as a broad front passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Sep–Oct), more common in autumn and less often as a winter visitor (Nov–Feb). A few individuals may stay for summer. **HABITAT:** Large, open, coastal mudflats or less often at sandy shores. It occasionally occurs inland at freshwater sites on migration, probably to rest. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly mollusks, crustaceans, worms and insects. On open mudflats it stalks prey items, sometimes appearing a little cautious, or makes a sudden run to secure a moving prey. It will also pick from and probe the surface. It wades to the length of the legs. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Birds feed individually but freely mix with other species. It forms compact flocks when it moves or when roosting at high tide, often on dry sandy beach crests. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** As the name suggests the Lesser Sandplover is slightly (15–20%) smaller than the Greater Sandplover, with shorter legs, and a shorter, thinner bill. Further, it tends to stand more upright than its larger cousin, has a rounder head and slightly darker upperparts. The male has a wider and less sharply demarcated rufous breastband than the male Greater Sandplover. **WINGSPAN:** 42–45 cm.

After breeding at altitudes of up to 5,500 m in the highlands of Tibet, this bird migrates 4,000 km to winter in a completely different habitat type – the coasts of Saudi Arabia.

It occasionally occurs inland at freshwater sites on migration, probably to rest. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly mollusks, crustaceans, worms and insects. On open mudflats it stalks prey items, sometimes appearing a little cautious, or makes a sudden run to secure a moving prey. It will also pick from and probe the surface. It wades to the length of the legs. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Birds feed individually but freely mix with other species. It forms compact flocks when it moves or when roosting at high tide, often on dry sandy beach crests. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** As the name suggests the Lesser Sandplover is slightly (15–20%) smaller than the Greater Sandplover, with shorter legs, and a shorter, thinner bill. Further, it tends to stand more upright than its larger cousin, has a rounder head and slightly darker upperparts. The male has a wider and less sharply demarcated rufous breastband than the male Greater Sandplover. **WINGSPAN:** 42–45 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **GREATER SANDPLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius leschenaultii*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق كبير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

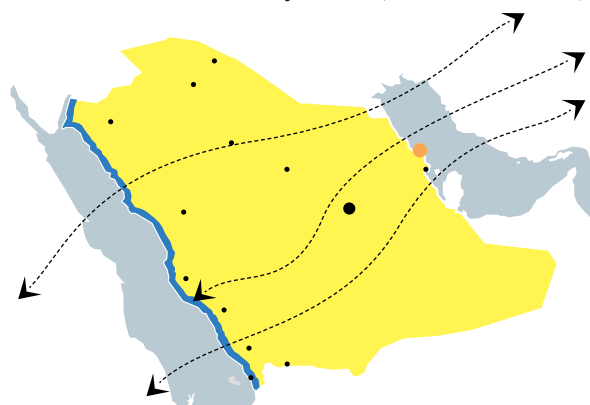
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–25 cm / 55–121 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Turkey to Mongolia and winters 1,000–10,000 km south and southwest along the coasts of northern and eastern Africa, Arabia and Pakistan to Australia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This medium-sized plover occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Feb–Apr, Aug–Sep), especially on the coasts and can be found in coastal areas over winter (Oct–Feb), while some birds remain over summer and breed irregularly. **HABITAT:** Breeds near saline or brackish water, usually at or near sea level, in open, flat, treeless areas with scattered low shrubs. It also forages on mudflats, sandy and rocky beaches, low coastal dunes and saline creeks over winter. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly beetles, as well as snails, worms and crustaceans taken from intertidal mudflats and sabkha. *Activity:*



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay



COMMON NAME: **CASPIAN PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Charadrius asiaticus*

ARABIC NAME: زقزاق قزويني

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

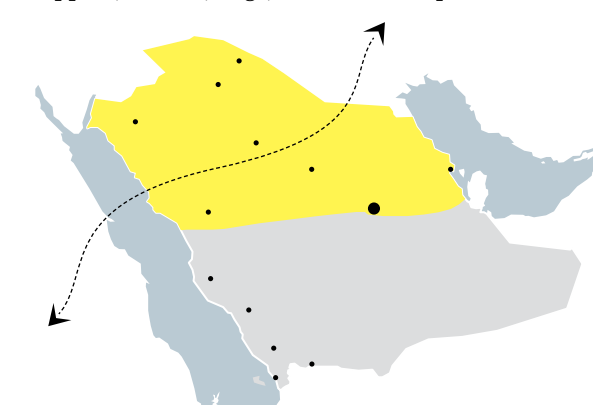
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–20 cm / 60–91 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on the steppes of central Asia (from the Caspian sea to western Mongolia) and winters 4,000–8,000 km southwest in eastern and southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* This elegant upright desert plover with a rusty breast band is a scarce but regular and sometimes locally common migrant through Saudi Arabia, especially in northern open sandy areas in spring. After breeding, most birds presumably pass to the north of the Kingdom before heading south

Instead of migrating directly between Central Asia and Africa, this bird first flies west through northern Saudi Arabia to avoid the Kingdom's most arid regions.

through Africa. **HABITAT:** Sandy hollows with grass tussocks and other vegetation, sometimes at irrigated areas. It occasionally stops near pools to rest and feed. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known. Mainly insects, such as grasshoppers, beetles, bugs, ants and caterpillars and other larvae. It feeds by dipping to peck from the surface. When it visits water it does not wade. *Activity:* It may be a nocturnal feeder as it never appears to be very active in the desert during the day. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Spread out over wide deserts areas and at times there can be several hundred present in a region comprised of small flocks of no more than 20 birds. Flocks of up to 500 have been recorded on migration. In spring most sightings are of pairs, presumably these are mated pairs returning to the breeding grounds together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is quite approachable when located, often merely walking away rather than taking flight. If it does fly it is usually for a short distance pitching down nearby with an exaggerated run on after landing. **WINGSPAN:** 55–61 cm.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN LAPWING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vanellus vanellus*

ARABIC NAME: قطقاط شمالي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

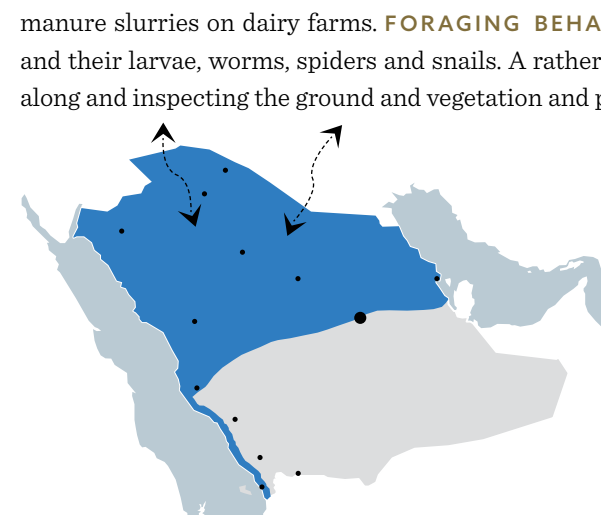
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–31 cm / 128–330 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles, Western Europe and Turkey; migratory populations breed from central Europe to northeastern China and winter up to 3,000 km south around the Mediterranean and to China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common winter visitor.* This proudly plumed lapwing is a widespread and regular winter visitor to Saudi Arabia, particularly north of a line between Dammam, Riyadh and Jiddah, though it occurs in unpredictable numbers. **HABITAT:** Productive sites like wastewater settling ponds, pools near rubbish dumps and farmland, especially fodder fields and manure slurries on dairy farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects and their larvae, worms, spiders and snails. A rather confiding nature, it feeds quietly by walking along and inspecting the ground and vegetation and pecking off items. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, usually found in small parties of 5–10 birds, though flocks of over 100 have been recorded at several sites, including 425 at Haradh in February. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This wader is unmistakable with its black and white plumage and fine crest. The broad wings make it a very agile flyer that is able to turn in flight almost on the spot and sweep up suddenly in straight flight. **WINGSPAN:** 82–87 cm.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



Saudi Arabia is around the southern limit of this bird's wintering range; thus individuals that spend the winter here probably arrive late to their distant breeding grounds.

COMMON NAME: **SPUR-WINGED LAPWING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vanellus spinosus*

ARABIC NAME: قطقاط أشوك

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

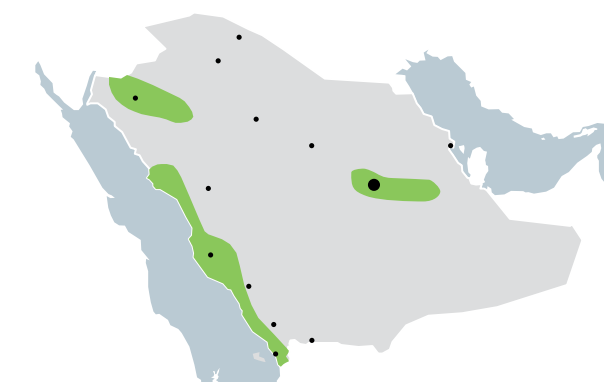
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–28 cm / 127–177 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Africa (Nile Valley and from the Sahel region to just south of the equator) and patchily through Arabia to Syria; migratory populations breed in Turkey and Cyprus and winter 3,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This bird has self-colonized Saudi Arabia's artificial wetlands. It bred first in Jiddah in 1982 and now occurs in the Tihamah, the northwest, and dairy farms around Riyadh. Some birds from the eastern Mediterranean may winter in Saudi Arabia and residents may wander. **HABITAT:** Freshwater sites in the Tihamah, including wadi pools, reservoirs, wastewater ponds and rubbish dumps. It also occurs at shorelines, brackish pools, slurry pools at dairy farms, and spill pools near irrigation pumps around Riyadh. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and larvae, especially beetles taken with slow movements followed by a quick stab with the bill. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs or small loose groups, though a feeding flock of over 150 wintering birds was recorded at Haradh. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitary or in loose aggregations. *Parental roles:* The male makes the nest hollow, which the female lines. The female performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow hollow in the ground (often in drying mud), lined with plant stems, leaves, pebbles, or dried mud flakes, in open areas near water. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 7–8 weeks. *Broods:* Usually double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 69–81 cm.

This bird has a sharp spur on the leading edge of each wing. It is larger in males and used in territorial displays and, if necessary, as a weapon in combat.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 600

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **RED-WATTLED LAPWING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vanellus indicus*

ARABIC NAME: قطقاط أحمر لخد

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–35 cm / 110–230 g

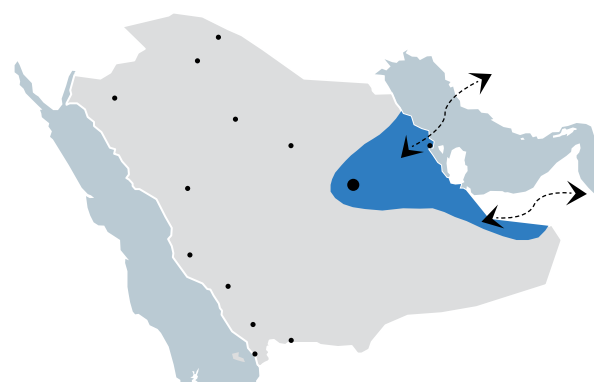


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from Iraq, Oman and UAE through India to peninsular Malaysia. It has greatly increased its Arabian range in recent years and has started to breed in Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain in the last 15 years. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Possible breeding resident, scarce winter visitor.* This boldly marked lapwing is becoming more frequent as a winter visitor in the Eastern Province and appears to have self-colonized Saudi Arabia with breeding suspected near Shaybah in the Rub' al-Khali. **HABITAT:** Irrigated green areas, including roundabouts, ornamental parks, farms, wastewater lagoons, animal pens and date plantations. It breeds in open areas with shallow pools of fresh, brackish or stagnant water, including ditches, rubbish dumps, water treatment ponds, or irrigated agricultural areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including ants, beetles, butterflies and grasshoppers, as well as caterpillars and other larvae, spiders, mollusks and crustaceans taken by searching the edges of marshy areas and green vegetation for prey and picking items from the ground

and plants. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually seen singly or in very small numbers, although 24 were seen at Shaybah in February 2017. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or with several pairs in the same general area.

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on open ground, unlined or lined with small stones, pieces of earth and scraps of plant material, often near water. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 26 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly after 38 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 80–81 cm.

This plover appears to have recently self-colonized Saudi Arabia from neighboring Gulf countries and is suspected to breed in the Kingdom.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Gulf of Salwa



COMMON NAME: **SOCIABLE LAPWING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vanellus gregarius*

ARABIC NAME: قطقاط تجمعي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–30 cm / 150–260 g



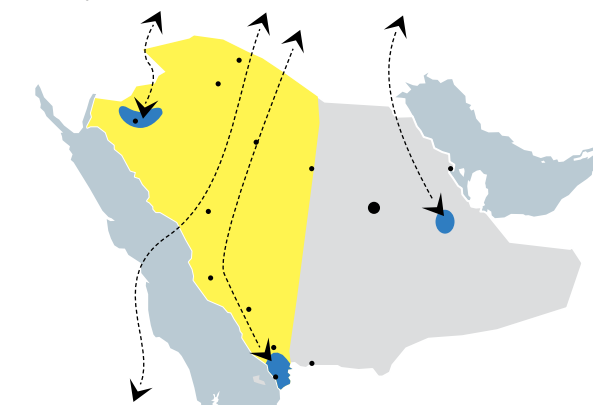
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds almost exclusively in the steppes of northern Kazakhstan and winters 5,000 km south and southwest primarily in Sudan, but also northwestern India, Pakistan, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This critically endangered lapwing is now rare in Saudi Arabia. The main migration from Kazakhstan to Africa appears to pass through the northwest corner of Saudi Arabia. Recent surveys have demonstrated that this very

A significant percentage of the global population of this critically endangered plover migrates through the northwest of Saudi Arabia en route between Kazakhstan and Sudan.

rare bird winters regularly at Haradh and a few also spend the winter on farms in the north of the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** On migration, it occurs in irrigated areas or sparse tussocks of grasses and vegetation on the northern plains. Over winter, it occurs in irrigated cereal crops, stubbles and fodder fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, spiders and other small invertebrates

with a small amount of plant material taken by picking items from the ground in between taking short runs. It is tall and needs to dip deep to feed. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is

usually found in small groups 1–5 but 16 have been recorded at Haradh in February 2016 and once a flock of 45 were present on the extreme northern plains in March. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 70–76 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This species is listed as critically endangered globally. Optimistically only 16,000 individuals remain. It has declined precipitously due to loss of steppe habitat and hunting pressure along its migration route, including within Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

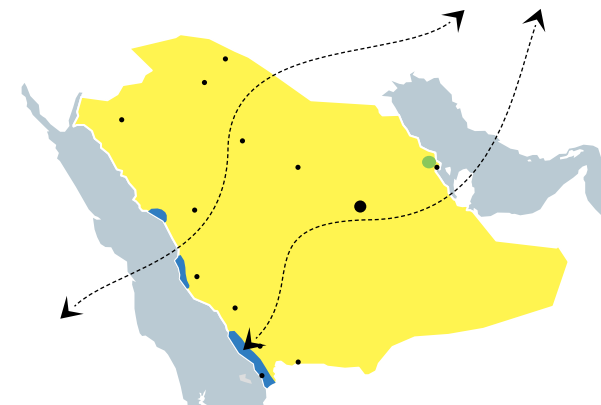
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-TAILED LAPWING**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vanellus leucurus*
 ARABIC NAME: قطقاط أبيض
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 26–29 cm / 99–198 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Iraq to Pakistan; migratory populations breed from Turkey and Jordan to southern Kazakhstan and winter 4,000 km south and southwest in Sudan, Pakistan, India and increasingly Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, scarce winter visitor, scarce passage migrant.* This long-legged lapwing occurs widely throughout the Arabian Peninsula as a broad front migrant (Feb–Apr, Sept–Nov), and is a scarce winter visitor on the southern Red Sea coast. A few pairs bred in Saudi Arabia near al-Khobar in 1992–93, but there have been no breeding records since. **HABITAT:** Brackish coastal pools, shallow tidal inlets, rain pools and wastewater lagoons. It once bred at a freshwater marsh with bare mud and tall reedbeds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known. Probably insects and other invertebrates taken from the ground



Breeding resident, winter visitor, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

by picking from the surface and by dabbling with the foot in shallow water or probing in mud. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found singly or in pairs or occasionally up to seven over winter and up to 20 on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on open ground, lined with tiny snail shells, shell fragments, small pebbles and a few plant stems, near water. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly after 30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 67–70 cm.

This slim and graceful lapwing usually passes through Saudi Arabia on migration, but a few pairs have been recorded breeding near al-Khobar.



COMMON NAME: **GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rostratula benghalensis*
 ARABIC NAME: شنقب ملون
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–28 cm / 90–200 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the Nile Delta and from India through southern Asia to Japan and Indonesia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident.* This fascinating bird was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 2010, with breeding first proven in 2013. To date, it has been found only in the southern Tihamah at

This bird exhibits sex role reversal: the female is much larger and more colorful than the male and has multiple mates. Her male partners perform all nest duties alone.

Malakiyah Lake and at wastewater lakes near Sabya where it bred. **HABITAT:** Breeds at wastewater lakes near Sabya within earthworks and surrounded by boggy areas with low vegetation and some acacia. It may also breed in swamps, reeds and flooded ground dotted with low scrub (as recorded in Africa). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects, worms, snails and crustacean and seeds taken by probing the ground. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or 2–3 birds found together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Polyandrous with reversed sex roles: that is, the brightly-colored female displays and mates with 2–4 males, which then nest within her territory and perform all nest duties. *Parental roles:* The male builds and defends the nest, incubates and rears the young. *Nest:* A shallow hollow or depression in the ground, lined with plant stems and leaves, hidden in low dense marsh herbage. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 19 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 30–35 days. *Broods:* Multi-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 50–55 cm.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **WHIMBREL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Numenius phaeopus*

ARABIC NAME: نهقة آجام (كروان الماء الصغير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

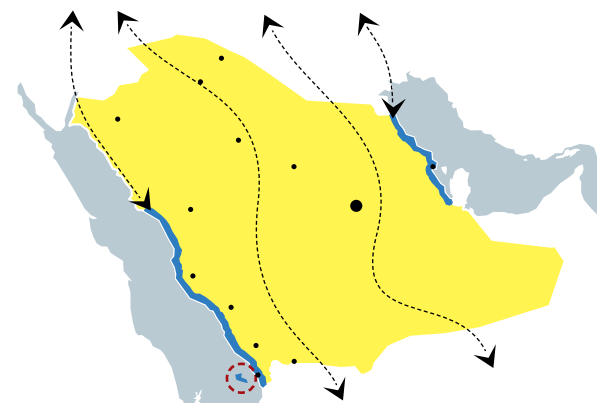
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–46 cm / M: 268–550 g; F: 315–600 g (10% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across the northern regions of Eurasia and North America and winters up to 12,000 km south mainly along the world's tropical and temperate coasts. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, local winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this medium-sized curlew is widespread throughout all coastal areas, passing through the Kingdom on a broad front. Peaks of migration have been identified as March and October at Yanbu' and April and August in the Gulf. It also winters (Nov–Feb) regularly on the southern Red Sea coast, though less often further north and in the Arabian Gulf. Some are present in the summer months, especially in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Coastlines, especially mudflats. It also occurs at rocky or sandy shores and mangroves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects and their larvae, crustaceans (especially crabs), mollusks and worms. It feeds by pecking at the surface or probing the burrows of mudflat dwellers. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal (it also feeds on moonlit



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay

nights). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a large, gregarious wader that is usually found in groups of 3–10. It roosts socially, sometimes in the branches of mangrove bushes. Birds establish and defend winter foraging territories. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** At least two of the nine recognized subspecies pass through Saudi Arabia, including the critically endangered *N. p. alboaxillaris* or 'Steppe Whimbrel'. This subspecies had not been seen for decades and was declared extinct in 1994. Fortunately it was rediscovered in 2016. Saudi Arabia appears to be an important part of its migratory route. **WINGSPAN:** 76–89 cm.

This bird holds the world record for the fastest migration by a shorebird over an ocean: flying at 86 km per hour, it travels over 5,000 km without stopping.

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN CURLEW**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Numenius arquata*

ARABIC NAME: نهقة أوراسية (كروان الماء)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

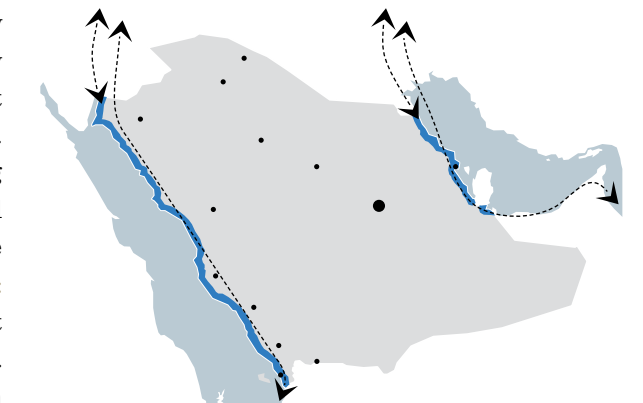
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–60 cm / M: 410–1,010 g; F: 475–1,360 g (30% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles; migratory populations breed from northwestern Europe to northeastern China and winter up to 10,000 km south mainly along the coasts of Africa, the Mediterranean and from Arabia through India to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This large curlew is primarily a passage migrant along the coasts, but there are no marked seasonal movements. Records more than 100 km

Easily the largest wader in Saudi Arabia, the female uses her long bill to probe for mollusks and crabs, while the male uses his shorter bill to catch worms.

inland are rare, though it has occurred at Riyadh, Tabuk and Khamis Mushayt. **HABITAT:** Coastal mudflats, muddy bays and open wetlands near the coast. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, including insects, worms, crustaceans, mollusks and occasionally fish, amphibians, lizards and small rodents. On dry land, it takes a variety of insects, berries, grain and other vegetable matter. It feeds by pecking small prey from the surface, jabbing the bill rapidly into mud, or making longer probes almost the entire bill length to find deep prey. Prey is sensed and grabbed by the bill tip and is often washed before being swallowed whole. Larger prey is conveyed to the gullet by backward head jerks. Females tend to forage more on intertidal flats, whereas males forage more often on cultivated farmlands. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It tends to be social in small groups in Saudi Arabia but it may spread out widely to feed as individuals when foraging on mudflats at low tide flocks. It is especially gregarious at roosts and flocks of several hundred have been recorded on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 80–100 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **BAR-TAILED GODWIT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Limosa lapponica*

ARABIC NAME: قوق موشم، ذنب (بقويقة مخططة الذيل)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–41 cm / M: 190–400 g; F: 262–630 g (50% heavier)



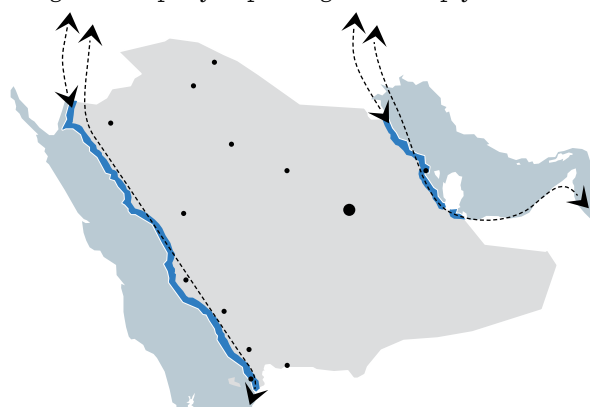
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the high Arctic of Eurasia and Alaska and winters 2,000–12,000 km south on the coasts of western Europe, Africa and Arabia to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, rare summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this long-distance migrant is common on the coasts during the main migration periods (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and over winter (Nov–Feb). Very few passage migrants are recorded inland. Some immature birds stay for the summer, sometimes in large numbers in the Arabian Gulf. **HABITAT:** Open intertidal mudflats and sheltered bays, or less often on sandy shores and mangrove-fringed lagoons. It occasionally roosts on rocky shores and headlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Bivalves, crustaceans, worms and other invertebrates. It tends to feed along the edge of pools or in the intertidal zone, pecking from the surface, stitching the ground rapidly or probing more deeply. It also wades to feed and may run after individual prey items. Females are larger and have

a significantly longer bill and thus tend to feed in deeper water. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It is a highly gregarious species outside of the breeding season and almost invariably seen as a group, very often in gatherings of several hundred. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has

a rapid flight with fast wing beats and a sense of urgency. It glides often and is also quite acrobatic with tight turns and direction changes even when in a flock. **WINGSPAN:** 70–80 cm.

This species holds the world record for the longest non-stop migratory flight: it can travel an astonishing 11,960 km without stopping.



Passage migrant, winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay

COMMON NAME: **BLACK-TAILED GODWIT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Limosa limosa*

ARABIC NAME: قوق أشعل (بقويقة سوداء الذيل)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 36–44 cm / M: 160–440 g; F: 244–500 g (25% heavier)



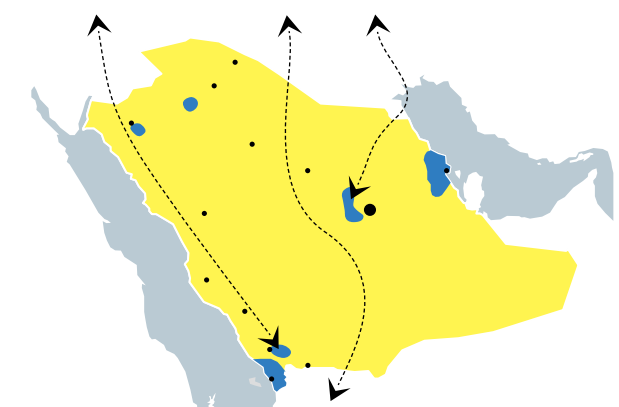
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Iceland east to Mongolia and northeastern Russia and winters 1,000–7,000 km south around the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and India to Australasia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This tall and graceful godwit occurs

Satellite-tracking shows that birds nesting alongside each other can migrate to vastly different places for winter, before returning to once again breed as neighbors.

widely in Saudi Arabia, particularly during peak migration (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov) and especially in autumn. Some remain for the winter and a few stay over summer. **HABITAT:** Freshwater habitats, especially large and productive inland wetlands, such as wastewater lagoons, watercourses with surrounding low grass, animal farms with fodder fields and slurry

ponds. It is also found occasionally on the coast. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, especially insects and larvae, also crustaceans, mollusks, spiders, as well as amphibians and their larvae and some seeds and berries. It probes forward with its long straight bill, or picks from the surface. It is known to foot tremble in shallow water to dislodge or disturb its prey. Its long legs allow it to wade freely. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is often gregarious in winter and flocks of up to 20 (and exceptionally over 100) have been recorded, though it is also found solitarily. Birds may stick close whilst feeding, working together through a particular patch of marsh all within a few meters of each other. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** A very capable and strong flyer, it can turn abruptly and has a slow glide when intending to land. Its legs and feet trail behind when flying. **WINGSPAN:** 70–82 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **RUDDY TURNSTONE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Arenaria interpres*

ARABIC NAME: قنبرة الماء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

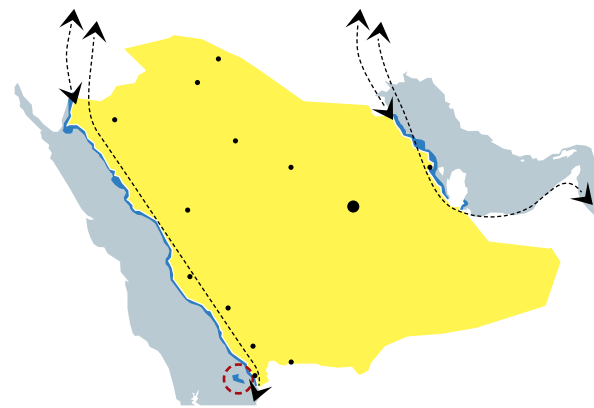
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21–26 cm / 84–190 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds along the northern fringe of North America and Eurasia and winters up to 12,000 km south around the world's tropical and temperate coasts. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, rare summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this stocky shorebird is found in all coastal areas and some inland sites as a broad front passage migrant (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) and in all coastal areas (including islands) over winter. A few remain along the coasts over summer. **HABITAT:** Over winter, it occurs in coastal mudflats, saline lagoons, rocky shores and at beaches with flotsam and seaweed. On migration, it occurs at any inland wetland, even rain pools and small, damp ditches. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and larvae, small crustaceans, mollusks and worms, as well as scavenged discarded human food and carrion. It forages by scurrying over rocks, pecking,

prying and probing debris and by turning over stones (hence its name) and other items to expose animal prey underneath, which it may chase to secure. It also digs and may even land on the water's surface and swim. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a rather bustling, short-legged, social wader that feeds as a loose group. It roosts and flies as a group and 230 were counted together once on Farasan Islands. It may feed on migration while on the coasts, but apparently not while passing through the center of the Kingdom; instead it stays just long enough to rest and gain strength to continue. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 50–57 cm.

Every year, this bird undertakes a 27,000 km round trip from its Arctic breeding grounds to its wintering sites around the world's coastlines.



Passage migrant, winter visitor, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay

COMMON NAME: **GREAT KNOT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris tenuirostris*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوى كبيرة (الدريجة الكبيرة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

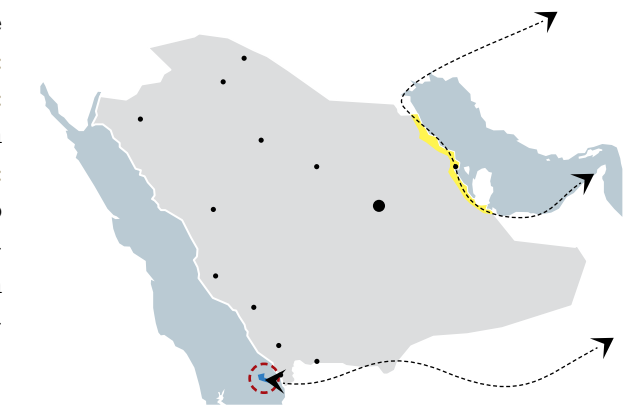
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 26–28 cm / 115–248 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in far northeastern Siberia and winters 9,000 km south and southwest in coastal areas of eastern Arabia, Pakistan and Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare passage migrant, very rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this large shorebird is a very rare passage migrant (mainly in spring) on the Arabian Gulf coast on its way to regular wintering sites in Oman and UAE, and may also winter in small numbers around Jazan. **HABITAT:** Remote and extensive intertidal mudflats or sheltered sandy bays. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Bivalves, gastropods, crustaceans, worms, insects and other invertebrates. It feeds by probing the mud or pecking the surface. **Activity:** Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is often found in groups and associates with other species, especially the Bar-tailed Godwit, which is almost always close by in the same habitat. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The largest member of its genus this is a medium to large sized wader with a rather slow wing beat, which appears long winged in flight. **WINGSPAN:** 58 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as globally endangered due to its very rapid population decline caused primarily by development of stop-over grounds on its migratory route, particularly in the Yellow Sea between China and the Korean Peninsula. It also suffers from a loss of mangrove habitat throughout its range, including in Saudi Arabia.

After breeding in far northeastern Russia, some birds migrate southwest for 9,000 km then head southeast along the Arabian Gulf coast to spend winter in Oman.

Activity: Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is often found in groups and associates with other species, especially the Bar-tailed Godwit, which is almost always close by in the same habitat. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The largest member of its genus this is a medium to large sized wader with a rather slow wing beat, which appears long winged in flight. **WINGSPAN:** 58 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as globally endangered due to its very rapid population decline caused primarily by development of stop-over grounds on its migratory route, particularly in the Yellow Sea between China and the Korean Peninsula. It also suffers from a loss of mangrove habitat throughout its range, including in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay



COMMON NAME: **RUFF**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris pugnax*

ARABIC NAME: أَعْرَج (حجالة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

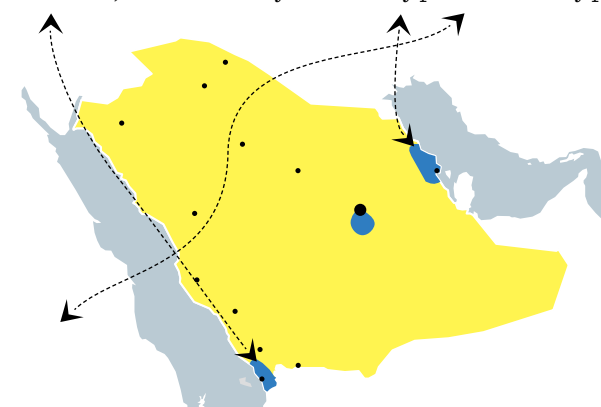
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–32 cm / M: 130–254 g; F: 70–170 g (40% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout northern Eurasia and winters 4,000–7,000 km south in the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, Nile Valley and along the coasts of Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant, local winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this extraordinary bird is very common as a broad front passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep–Nov) and locally common in winter, with a few wanderers occurring in summer. It is scarce on the coasts. **HABITAT:** Any freshwater site, especially wastewater settling ponds and marshes, as well as dairy farm slurry pits and nearby pastures. It also occurs in streams with muddy banks, ditches and even temporary desert ponds.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

In spring, the male molts into one of three strikingly different plumage types, each with very different body size, ornamentation, aggressiveness and mating behavior.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, including crustaceans, spiders and worms, as well as amphibians and some seeds. It feeds by vigorously probing the ground for prey items or by picking from the surface. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It usually forages in tight groups, often among other waders, that feed almost on top of each other when prey is plentiful. It is frequently recorded in migrating flocks of several hundred and over 3,000 spent the winter at a dairy farm near Riyadh. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** In spring several males will appear in their unusually variable and gaudy ruffs. They can occasionally be seen sparring together, as a prelude to their elaborate breeding rituals later in the season. **WINGSPAN:** 48–58 cm.

COMMON NAME: **BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris falcinellus*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي شذقاء (طيطوي عريضة المنقار)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

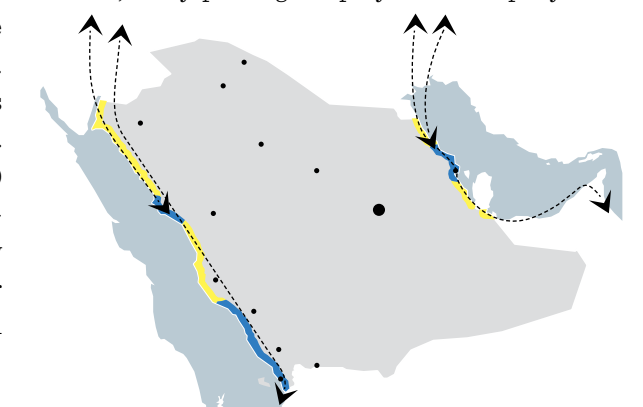
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 26–68 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Scandinavia, far northern Russia and eastern Siberia and winters 6,000 km south on the coasts of Kenya and Arabia to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this small sandpiper with a downcurved bill tip occurs mainly as an uncommon coastal passage migrant (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) along the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf coasts and a local winter visitor (Oct–Mar). There are a few records from Riyadh, which suggests migrants might also pass over the Kingdom on a broad front. **HABITAT:** Muddy coastal shores, shallow saline lagoons and open mangrove forests. It also occurs in nutrient-rich coastal wetlands, such as wastewater lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:*

Birds that spend the winter on the coasts of Saudi Arabia fly to Ukraine in May to briefly refuel before continuing northwest to their Scandinavian breeding grounds.

Invertebrates, including insects, worms, crustaceans and mollusks. It feeds by walking rather quickly and pecking the surface from side to side, or by probing for prey with its eponymous broad bill. It holds the head to one side appearing to listen. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It usually occurs in small, loose groups of less than 10 birds. Occasionally larger groups of up to 70–80 are recorded, both in winter and on passage (with 162 counted once at Tarut Bay in August). It sometimes feeds with other species, particularly with other small *Calidris* waders. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 34–37 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay



COMMON NAME: **CURLEW SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris ferruginea*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي نهقية (طيطوي مقوسة المنقار)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

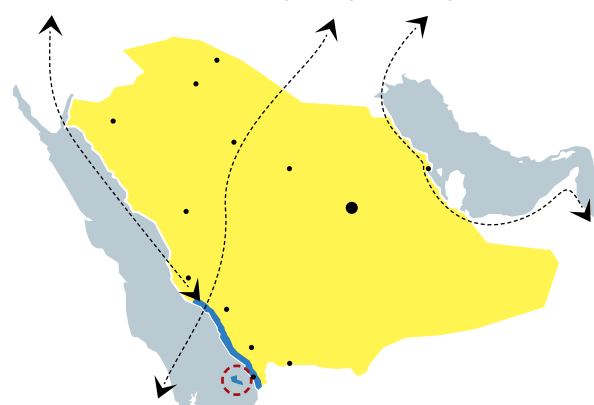
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–23 cm / 44–117 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Arctic Siberia and winters 7,000–12,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa and coastal regions from Arabia and India to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant, local winter visitor, uncommon summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this long-distance migratory shorebird is a very common passage migrant (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) especially on the coasts with relatively small numbers in other months. It appears to winter regularly around Jazan (Oct–Mar) and a few immature birds are present in summer. **HABITAT:** Coastal mudflats, saline lagoons and muddy, open mangrove stands. It occasionally occurs inland at freshwater sites with mud or short vegetation, especially treated wastewater lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects, crustaceans, mollusks and worms. It is an active feeder that walks rapidly with the bill pointed down, wading freely, pecking from the surface or probing for prey in soft mud or sand. It

has been recorded occasionally washing worms. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It mixes with other waders when feeding and roosting, especially other *Calidris* species. It forages in small groups or solitary and likewise migrates in small flocks of 10–20, but several flocks of 100 or more have been recorded, including over 500 at Sabkhat al-Fasl. Similarly, 600 were once recorded over winter on Farasan Island. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 38–41 cm.

This sandpiper breeds in Siberia. When the Lemming population crashes, the Arctic Fox switches to sandpiper chicks, reducing the number of birds arriving in Arabia that year.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Island

COMMON NAME: **TEMMINCK'S STINT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris temminckii*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي تمنكية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

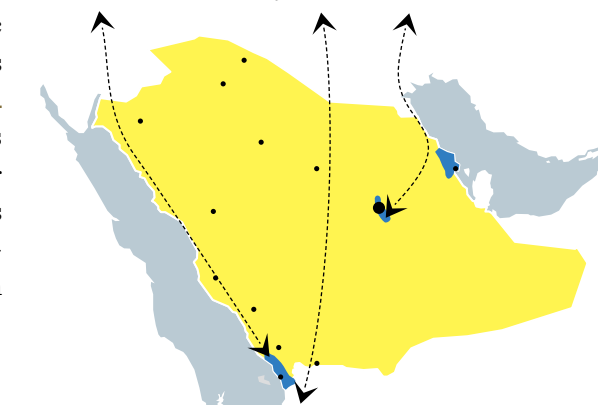
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 15–36 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across northern Eurasia above the Arctic Circle and winters 6,000 km south below the Sahel region in Africa, Nile Valley and Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this tiny wader with short pale legs is common on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Nov) and over winter (Nov–

Feb) at wetlands in the Eastern Province, on the southern Tihamah and near Riyadh. HABITAT: Inland freshwater sites with shallow productive pools, including farm slurry ponds and wastewater evaporation lagoons. It sometimes occurs in coastal mudflats in sheltered situations. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly beetles and flies and their larvae but also small crustaceans and mollusks. It feeds by picking from the mud or water surface. It does not usually probe mud but has a deliberate picking action unlike the rather frenetic food hunting of the Little Stint and is less prone to run. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Unlike most waders it is rather solitary, but does freely mix with others waders, especially other *Calidris* species. It typically occurs in ones and twos but sometimes groups of 20 have been recorded on migration and occasionally some extensive winter sites may hold up to 50 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 34–37 cm.

After breeding in the Arctic, this bird migrates in a series of short skips, resting for up to four days at a time, before crossing the vast deserts of Africa or Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **SANDERLING**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris alba*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي بيضاء (مدروان)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

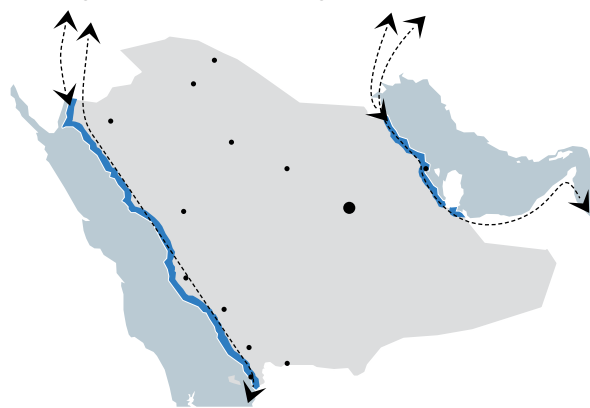
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–21 cm / 33–110 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the high Arctic of North America and Eurasia and winters up to 15,000 km south along the world's temperate and tropical coasts, including the entire southern hemisphere. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this small pale wader that runs along the beach like a clockwork toy is common on both coasts during migration (Apr–May, Sep–Oct) and occasionally inland, especially in spring. Winter flocks are widespread but probably more frequent in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Open sandy beaches with waves, or occasionally muddy shores and saline lagoons. On migration it also occurs at freshwater inland sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Crustaceans and mollusks taken from along a retreating wave on the beach. It also takes insects and larvae from the edge of pools and lagoons. It is very energetic, typically a whole group chase a receding wave in close formation to a point where small invertebrates might be

exposed; they then rapidly peck and probe before the next wave forces the group to run back up the beach. They then repeat the routine with the next receding wave. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, typically in groups of 10–20 but flocks of up to 60 are reported. It keeps in tight flocks at all times, including when flying and roosting. It rarely stays more than a few hours at inland sites on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 35–39 cm.

Despite standing only 20 cm tall, this small wader migrates up to 15,000 km from its Arctic breeding grounds to the same coastal wintering sites year after year.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay

COMMON NAME: **DUNLIN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris alpina*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي دراجة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–22 cm / 33–85 g



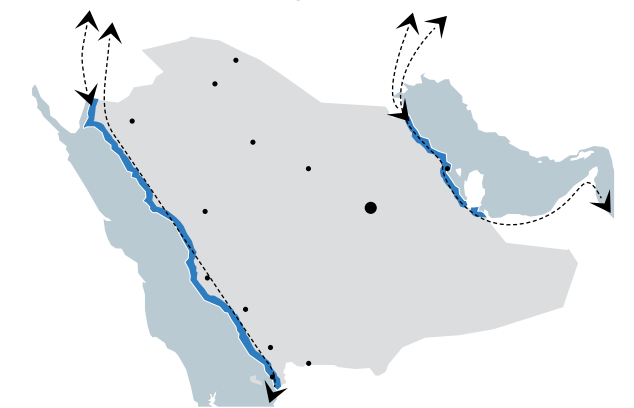
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across North America and Eurasia above the Arctic Circle and winters up to 6,000 km south mostly in coastal areas north of the equator. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this small, short-legged wader is very common along both coasts on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) and in winter

Dunlins prefer to eat bivalves, but these close quickly if they sense vibration. Dunlins that are poor at hunting bivalves have to prey on mud snails, but these are less nutritious.

(particularly the Gulf), but is uncommon inland. **HABITAT:** Intertidal muddy areas and algal mats in shallow coastal bays containing gastropods. It occurs less often inland at flooded sabkhas and productive pools with muddy edges. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly crustaceans and mollusks, as well as worms and probably insects and larvae at freshwater sites. It feeds by rapidly probing and pecking the surface, sometimes with short runs and lunges. It sometimes washes the worms it captures before eating them.

Activity: Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** This bird is gregarious in winter and on migration and freely mixes with other small waders. Gatherings of up to 2,000 have been reported from the shores of the Arabian Gulf in winter. On mudflats, large flocks break down into smaller groups, which tend to feed close to each other. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

WINGSPAN: 33–40 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE STINT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calidris minuta*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

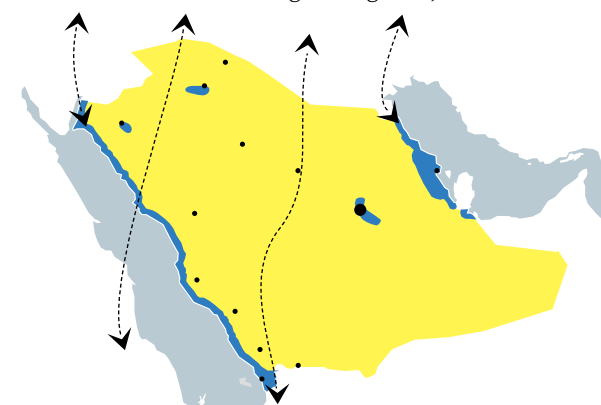
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–14 cm / 17–44 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Scandinavia and Russia above the Arctic Circle and winters 5,000–12,000 km south in the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, Nile Valley and from Arabia to India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This tiny stint is probably the most widespread and numerous wader in Saudi Arabia. It passes through the Kingdom (Mar–May, Aug–Sep) *en masse* with reports of over 2,000 in autumn. It can occur on the coast but more often inland and is one of the few waders seen at ponds in the Rub' al-Khali. It winters at large inland wetlands and on the coast near Jazan. **HABITAT:** Productive wetlands, such as wastewater lagoons and dairy farm slurry pools. It also occurs at shallow pools with muddy edges, including temporary rain pools in the desert. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small invertebrates, especially insects, such as flies, ants and larvae taken from the edge of lagoons, as well as mites, spiders, worms, crustaceans and mollusks.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

It is seemingly always active, feeding with rapid pecking from the surface. When feeding it often has a hunched, almost mouse-like creep, but it can also run. It prefers to feed in open mud rather than vegetated ground and is not keen to wade. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, flocks regularly intermingle with other waders. It winters in small numbers, but gatherings of 2–300 are regular at large inland wetlands. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Underweight individuals forage for longer intervals at stopover sites; however, this increases the risk of being killed by a falcon. **WINGSPAN:** 28–31 cm.

Do not underestimate this little bird – although it is the smallest wader in Saudi Arabia, it nonetheless migrates up to 24,000 km per year. How extraordinary.

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN WOODCOCK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Scolopax rusticola*

ARABIC NAME: دجاجة غاب (ديك الغاب)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

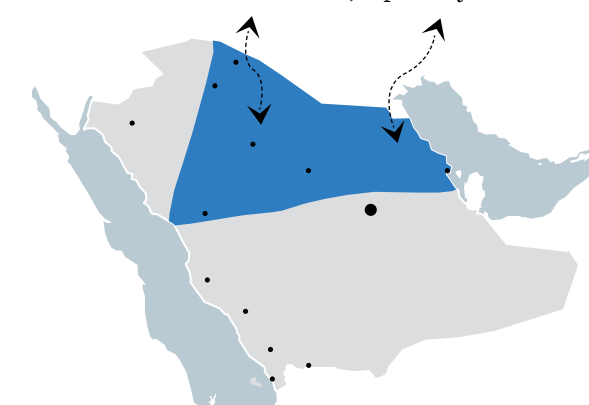
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 33–35 cm / 131–420 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in the British Isles and western Europe; migratory populations breed from central Europe through the middle latitudes of Eurasia to Japan and winter up to 4,000 km south around the Mediterranean and

Unlike most other waders, which forage for marine organisms along coasts, this species forages in woodlands where it hunts for earthworms, beetles and spiders.

patchily to Southeast Asia, with Arabia at the southern edge of its winter range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare winter visitor.* This superbly camouflaged bird is a very rare winter visitor to Saudi Arabia where it has been recorded at al-Jawf, Dhahran, near Riyadh, Tayma and Yanbu'. Indeed it is so rare that it may perhaps be regarded as a vagrant. **HABITAT:** Wet ground with good cover and shade, such as dense Date Palm plantations, heavily wooded parks with undergrowth and in cover beside streams. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, especially earthworms, insects and larvae and spiders as well as seeds and cultivated grains. It feeds by pecking from the surface or probing deeply into soft muddy soil or leaf litter. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is rather awkward on the ground. Its shy and secretive manner means that it is rarely detected on the ground, the first view is often the last as it leaves the ground with a noisy clatter of wings then twists off through the trees to alight again out of view. **WINGSPAN:** 56–60 cm.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa



COMMON NAME: **GREAT SNIPE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gallinago media*

ARABIC NAME: شنقب كبير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

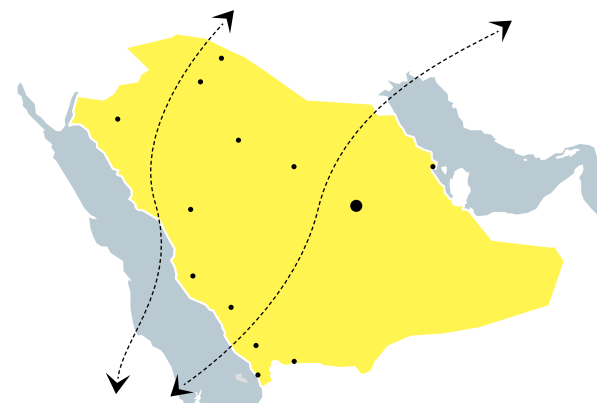
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–29 cm / 140–260 g



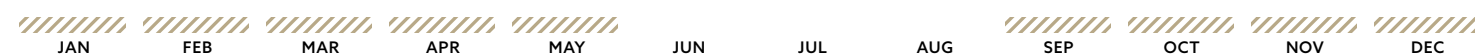
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northern Scandinavia to central Russia and winters 7,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare passage migrant.* This bulky, boldly marked snipe is a very rare passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Feb–May, Sep–Nov) with records only from Abqaiq, Dhahran, Jubail, Riyadh, Tabuk and Yanbu'. It has been reported wintering at Riyadh. Given that Saudi Arabia lies midway between its eastern breeding grounds and its African wintering grounds, either many more birds pass over the Kingdom than are currently recorded, or eastern populations take a significant detour to avoid the deserts of Arabia. **HABITAT:** Marshy or reedy wetlands, such as overgrown wastewater lagoons and slow moving streams. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including mollusks, insects and larvae. It feeds by probing soil with the bill, or picking up surface crawlers like crickets, beetles, flies and ants and some seeds. It is a secretive bird that rarely forages out in the open. *Activity:* Crepuscular and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In Saudi Arabia it has only been recorded in ones or twos. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The first indication of this bird's presence is it lifting from vegetation while uttering a rather gruff croak. It flies off low, only a short distance, with slow and heavy wing beats. To get a good view try to locate it where it lands without disturbing it again. **WINGSPAN:** 47–50 cm.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



This bird can fly over oceans and deserts at 90 km per hour for over 5,500 km without stopping. It probably passes through the Kingdom far more often than we realize.

This bird can fly over oceans and deserts at 90 km per hour for over 5,500 km without stopping. It probably passes through the Kingdom far more often than we realize.

COMMON NAME: **COMMON SNIPE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gallinago gallinago*

ARABIC NAME: شنقب شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

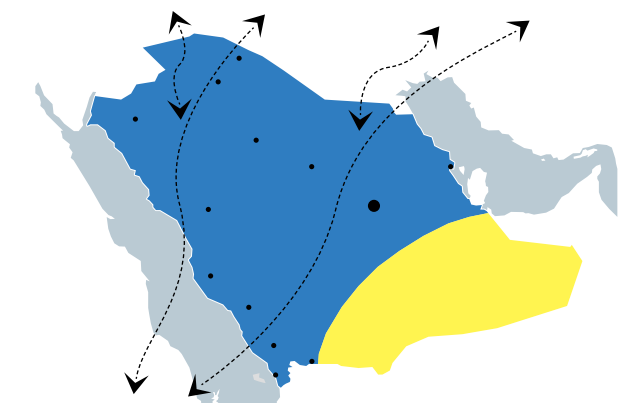
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–27 cm / 72–181 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles; migratory populations breed across northern Eurasia and winter up to 6,000 km south in southern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and from Arabia to Japan and Malaysia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This long-billed snipe is a common and widespread passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Aug–Oct) and winter visitor throughout Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Freshwater wetlands with muddy or waterlogged ground and low vegetation cover, especially wastewater lagoons, overgrown ditches, streams and ornamental pools in city parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects and larvae, mollusks and crustaceans taken from under the surface in wet marshy ground with deep vertical probes of the bill, often to its full length. It also searches leaf litter and picks up surface prey and a few seeds. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It often feeds and rests in small groups that crouch in low vegetation to avoid predators. Indeed 58 were recorded recently at Sabkhat al-Fasl in October 2019. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When one is disturbed close underfoot others in the group further away may also take to the air with a noisy screech and a rapid low zigzag escape flight. The group may then tower up high into the sky before plummeting back to earth with wings closed about 100 m away. Interestingly, Common Snipe with more black plumage under their wings are higher quality birds in better physical condition and with stronger immune systems. **WINGSPAN:** 44–47 cm.

In this species, birds with longer, pointed wings have more efficient flight and thus migrate more rapidly and use less fuel than those with shorter, rounded wings.

logged ground and low vegetation cover, especially wastewater lagoons, overgrown ditches, streams and ornamental pools in city parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects and larvae, mollusks and crustaceans taken from under the surface in wet marshy ground with deep vertical probes of the bill, often to its full length. It also searches leaf litter and picks up surface prey and a few seeds. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It often feeds and rests in small groups that crouch in low vegetation to avoid predators. Indeed 58 were recorded recently at Sabkhat al-Fasl in October 2019. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When one is disturbed close underfoot others in the group further away may also take to the air with a noisy screech and a rapid low zigzag escape flight. The group may then tower up high into the sky before plummeting back to earth with wings closed about 100 m away. Interestingly, Common Snipe with more black plumage under their wings are higher quality birds in better physical condition and with stronger immune systems. **WINGSPAN:** 44–47 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **JACK SNIFE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lymnocyptes minimus*

ARABIC NAME: شنقب صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

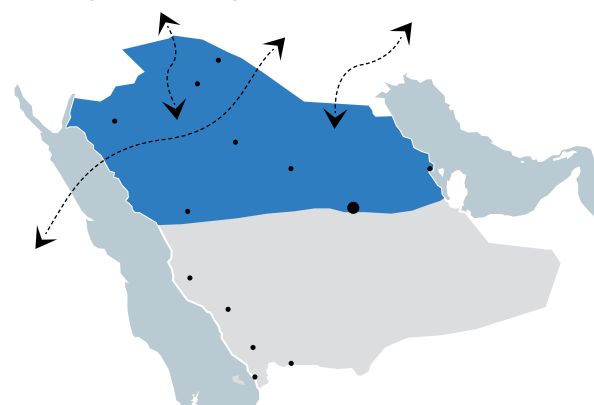
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 35–73 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Eurasia from Scandinavia to Siberia and winters 1,000–6,000 km south and south-west in the Sahel region of Africa, Western Europe and the Mediterranean to Vietnam. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this small, relatively short-billed snipe is usually found north of a line between Hofuf, Riyadh and Yanbu' both as an uncommon passage migrant (Apr, Sep–Oct) and scarce winter visitor. Despite limited records, many presumably pass over the Kingdom on migration. **HABITAT:** Freshwater marshy areas with a good cover of short grasses and halophytes, including overgrown wastewater ponds, heavily grazed areas near wetlands and inundated fodder crops. It also occurs at coastal sabkha with low vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Adult and larval insects, gastropods and some seeds. It feeds by probing with the length of its bill up and down in mud and vegetation or by pecking from the surface. It never forages in the open. **Activity:**

Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Not particularly gregarious but where conditions are right 5–10 may congregate at the same place. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It tends to crouch immobile when threatened and only gets up with a start and with surprisingly audible wing beats for such a small bird and sometimes a short squeak, before escaping fast and more direct than Common Snipe, but drops to earth again quickly. **WINGSPAN:** 38–42 cm.

Like many waders, the Jack Snipe uses its straight bill to repeatedly probe sabkha and mudflats in search of hidden insects and gastropods.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **RED-NECKED PHALAROPE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phalaropus lobatus*

ARABIC NAME: فلرب أحمر رقبة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

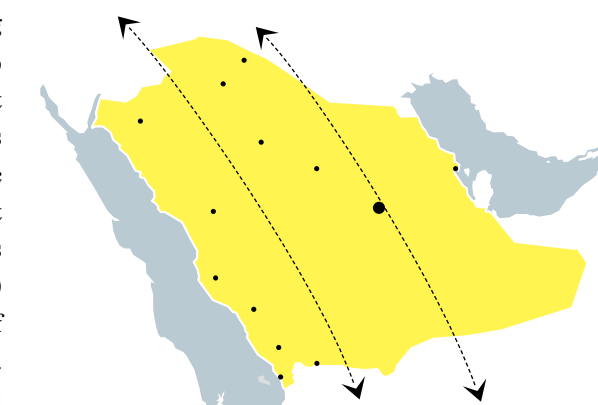
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–19 cm / 20–48 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Arctic North America and Eurasia and winters in 6,000 km south in waters off the west coast of South America, the Arabian sea and the Malay Archipelago. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* Scandinavian populations of this needle-billed bird pass through the Arabian Peninsula, forming flocks of thousands in the Arabian Sea. It can be found inland across Saudi Arabia on migration (Apr–Jun, Jul–Oct), especially in spring, but is more commonly reported in the Arabian Gulf. It is absent from the Red Sea coast. **HABITAT:** Arabian Gulf waters, shallow inland freshwater pools, especially wastewater lagoons, or saline coastal pools. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Planktonic crustaceans in the Arabian Sea, or flies, ants, bugs and other small insects inland. It regularly swims and spins on the water and pecks from the surface and sometimes feeds over shoals of small fish being attacked by larger species below. It also forages by wading and walking, pecking at prey on water, mud or vegetation. It lunges its head into the water to capture aquatic invertebrates or snatches flying insects. It seems buoyant on the water but appears fragile on land. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Inland this widespread passage migrant is usually found in small groups of less than 20 but once 150 were recorded at Abqaiq. Large flocks occur in the Arabian Gulf on migration including a flock of 10,000 in March at 27°N, east of Abu 'Ali. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird exhibits reversed sexual dimorphism: the female is far more colorful than the duller, gray-brown male. **WINGSPAN:** 31–34 cm.

The Scandinavian breeding population of this beautiful bird winters in the Arabian Sea. A flock of 10,000 was once recorded passing through the Arabian Gulf.

It regularly swims and spins on the water and pecks from the surface and sometimes feeds over shoals of small fish being attacked by larger species below. It also forages by wading and walking, pecking at prey on water, mud or vegetation. It lunges its head into the water to capture aquatic invertebrates or snatches flying insects. It seems buoyant on the water but appears fragile on land. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Inland this widespread passage migrant is usually found in small groups of less than 20 but once 150 were recorded at Abqaiq. Large flocks occur in the Arabian Gulf on migration including a flock of 10,000 in March at 27°N, east of Abu 'Ali. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird exhibits reversed sexual dimorphism: the female is far more colorful than the duller, gray-brown male. **WINGSPAN:** 31–34 cm.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **TEREK SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Xenus cinereus*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي رمليّة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–25 cm / 50–126 g

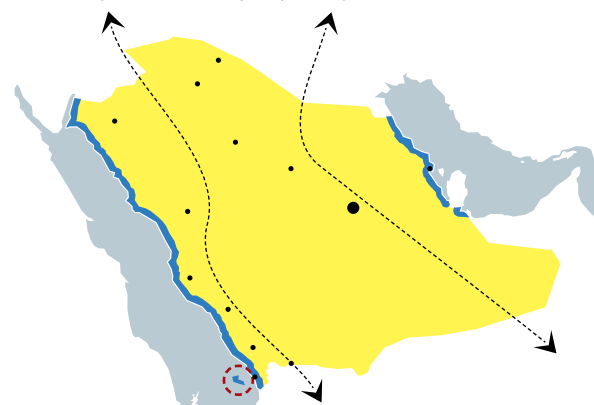


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across most of Russia and winters 5,000–10,000 km south along the coasts of southern and eastern Africa and Arabia to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This small sandpiper with its distinctive up-curved bill is a common broad front passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia (Apr, Aug–Sep), with individuals resting at inland wetlands. It winters in all coastal areas and a few non-breeding birds remain over summer. **HABITAT:** Open intertidal mudflats, sandy beaches and enclosed mangrove stands. On migration it also occurs inland at almost any kind of wetland, including those in the Rub' al-Khali. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and larvae with a preference for midges and small flies, as well as mollusks, crustaceans, spiders and worms, all usually taken at low tide. Prey is taken by pecking at the water or ground surface and from vegetation, or by scything the surface of water with the bill. At Yanbu' it has been recorded feeding on invertebrates on the trunks

and roots of mangroves. **Activity:** Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It tends to feed in scattered groups of up to 20 birds and often associates freely with other waders. It is especially numerous at coastal sites with flocks of up to 500 recorded in the Arabian Gulf. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has a strange manner on the ground often running and walking briskly with abrupt changes of direction, also bobs tail and flies low over the water like a Common Sandpiper. **WINGSPAN:** 57–59 cm.

Modeling shows that birds like Terek Sandpiper and other waders that forage near shorelines will be significantly impacted by any future sea level rises.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay

COMMON NAME: **COMMON SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Actitis hypoleucos*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي شائعة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

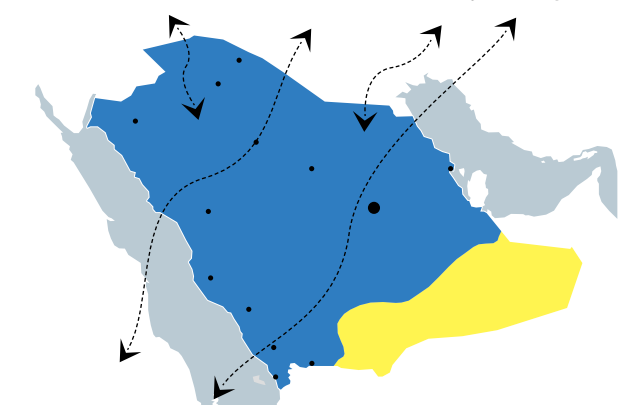
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–21 cm / 33–84 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds over almost all of Eurasia north of Arabia and winters around the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa and from Arabia to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This common wader is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia both on passage (Mar–Apr, July–Sep) and over winter. **HABITAT:** Fresh or saline wetlands, including running water, wastewater lagoons, reservoirs and ornamental lakes, as well as rocky shores, harbors and mangroves, but rarely at sandy or muddy sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, such as insects, larvae, spiders, crustaceans and mollusks and occasionally amphibians and their larvae. It feeds not by probing the mud but by pecking prey from the surface, occasionally chasing prey with considerable agility, or pulling items from crevices. It walks in a determined manner, jumping confidently between boulders and waterside obstacles as it forages, all the while bobbing its head and tail. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary but there may be several at each wetland. Migrating flocks of up to 250 have been observed in early autumn (Jul–Aug) landing at a barren dam near Riyadh in the late afternoon to rest before continuing their passage shortly after sunset. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has a peculiar flickering wing beat with wings bowed as it flies low over water when disturbed, invariably calling loudly. **WINGSPAN:** 38–41 cm.

Like many waders, the Common Sandpiper is now migrating to and from its breeding grounds significantly earlier in the year due to warmer annual temperatures.

Activity: Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary but there may be several at each wetland. Migrating flocks of up to 250 have been observed in early autumn (Jul–Aug) landing at a barren dam near Riyadh in the late afternoon to rest before continuing their passage shortly after sunset. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has a peculiar flickering wing beat with wings bowed as it flies low over water when disturbed, invariably calling loudly. **WINGSPAN:** 38–41 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **GREEN SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa ochropus*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوي خضراء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

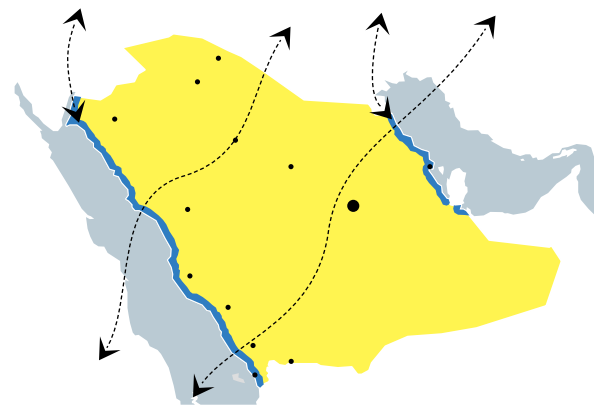
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21–24 cm / 53–119 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout middle latitudes of Eurasia from Western Europe to Siberia and winters 1,000–8,000 km south in the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa and from Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* More gray-brown than green, this sandpiper is ubiquitous on passage in inland Saudi Arabia (Feb–Apr, Aug–Nov) and widespread over winter. A few are present in summer. **HABITAT:** Freshwater wetlands, including tiny pools, temporary floods, wastewater lagoons, lakes, reservoirs and streams. It occasionally occurs in mangrove thickets. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, including crustaceans, spiders, insects and larvae, especially flies, beetles, dragonflies and moths. It catches prey by pecking the surface or subsurface of water and from the ground and vegetation. It wades but rarely probes. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL**

BEHAVIOR: It is usually found in ones or twos and is often the only wader at very small wetlands. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is a graceful bird but a little secretive and when disturbed it erupts into the air with piercing calls and a panicky zigzag flight only to plummet to the ground after a short distance. It habitually wags its tail while foraging. **WINGSPAN:** 57–61 cm.

Green Sandpipers tend to return to the same wintering site each year where they spend 80% of the day – and part of the night if necessary – actively searching for food.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **SPOTTED REDSHANK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa erythropus*

ARABIC NAME: حمراء ساق رقطاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 29–32 cm / 97–230 g

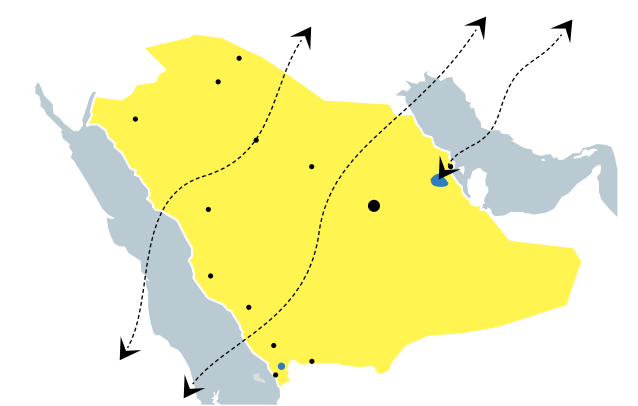


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds near the Arctic Circle across northern Eurasia and winters 3,000–8,000 km south around the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, India, Southeast Asia and occasionally in Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This tall and elegant wader is an uncommon broad front passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Mar–May, Sep–Oct), with a few birds present over winter at favored sites, such as Abqaiq wetlands and Malakiyah Lake. **HABITAT:**

Like many migratory birds, Spotted Redshanks play an important role in dispersing any seeds and invertebrate spawn that survive passage through the digestive system.

Fresh or brackish wetlands, such as treated wastewater pools, as well as swampy vegetated areas, muddy shorelines and sabkha. On migration it may rest beside almost any pool. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, including insects and larvae, worms, mollusks and crustaceans, as well as small fish and amphibians. It feeds mainly by pecking at prey items on the surface or by probing soft ground, but it may also immerse its whole head and neck in water to catch prey, including while swimming. It sometimes also secures prey after a short dash. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious and known to feed cooperatively with small groups wading through water together scything their bills from side to side. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is almost entirely black when breeding. **WINGSPAN:** 61–67 cm.

BEHAVIOR: It is usually found in ones or twos and is often the only wader at very small wetlands. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is a graceful bird but a little secretive and when disturbed it erupts into the air with piercing calls and a panicky zigzag flight only to plummet to the ground after a short distance. It habitually wags its tail while foraging. **WINGSPAN:** 57–61 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **COMMON GREENSHANK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa nebularia*

ARABIC NAME: خضراء ساق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–35 cm / 125–290 g

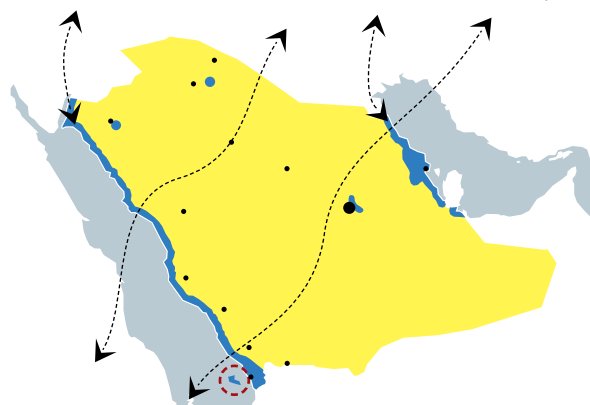


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across northern Eurasia below the Arctic Circle and winters 3,000–10,000 km south mainly in tropical and southern temperate areas from Africa to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this quite large wader with dull green legs and a slightly up-curved bill is found mainly along the coasts and nearby wetlands as a broad front passage migrant (Mar–May, Aug–Sep) and winter visitor. **HABITAT:** Intertidal mudflats and open wetlands, including freshwater streams and lakes.

On migration it can occur at almost any surface water, even puddles. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, such as crustaceans, mollusks, worms, insects and larvae, as well as some small fish and amphibians. It walks steadily or runs erratically pecking at surface items and probing for prey. It also sweeps the water surface with its bill. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is not very gregarious in Saudi Arabia, but sometimes concentrations of 50 or more can be found on migration or in winter spread out over a large feeding area in coastal regions. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

NOTE: This bird is somewhat shy and takes flight noisily at some distance. **WINGSPAN:** 68–70 cm.

Large numbers of foraging waders have been shown to deplete the invertebrates at a site by as much as 86% in less than two weeks.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake

COMMON NAME: **COMMON REDSHANK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa totanus*

ARABIC NAME: حمراء ساق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–29 cm / 85–155 g

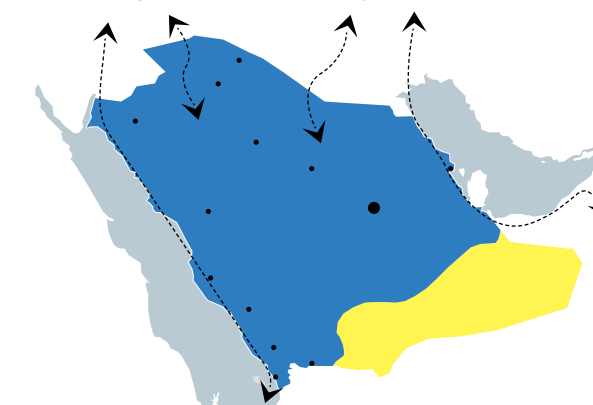


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles and southern Europe; migratory populations breed from Iceland to northeastern China and winter up to 6,000 km south in Africa, the Middle East and Arabia to northern Australia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this compact, red-legged wader is common as a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct), primarily along the coasts, and less numerous as a winter visitor. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas, especially mangroves and areas of exposed and productive mud. It occasionally occurs inland at surface water, including rain pools, wastewater ponds, marshes and irrigated farmland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, particularly swarms of flies seasonally found on stagnant salty pools and occasionally small fish. It feeds by pecking from the water or ground, or by probing wet ground and vegetation, or by turning over debris. It wades and occasionally swims when feeding and sometimes washes food before swallowing it. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Not especially gregarious but flocks stay close together during migration and when roosting. Flocks of 300 have been reported on or near both coasts during migration. Groups break down to forage individually, though often in the company of other waders. Individuals can be temporarily territorial when feeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Always vigilant, this is the first bird to raise the alarm of human presence declaring itself with a loud raucous call alerting all other species to danger as it flies off. It also has a “chip” call as it bobs with agitation at an intruder. **WINGSPAN:** 56–66 cm.

As a result of increasing annual temperatures, the breeding range of this and many other migratory waders has shifted up to 120 km north over a 20-year period.

It feeds by pecking from the water or ground, or by probing wet ground and vegetation, or by turning over debris. It wades and occasionally swims when feeding and sometimes washes food before swallowing it. *Activity:* Diurnal and nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Not especially gregarious but flocks stay close together during migration and when roosting. Flocks of 300 have been reported on or near both coasts during migration. Groups break down to forage individually, though often in the company of other waders. Individuals can be temporarily territorial when feeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Always vigilant, this is the first bird to raise the alarm of human presence declaring itself with a loud raucous call alerting all other species to danger as it flies off. It also has a “chip” call as it bobs with agitation at an intruder. **WINGSPAN:** 56–66 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



COMMON NAME: **WOOD SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa glareola*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوى أجمية (طيطوى الغياض)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–23 cm / 34–98 g

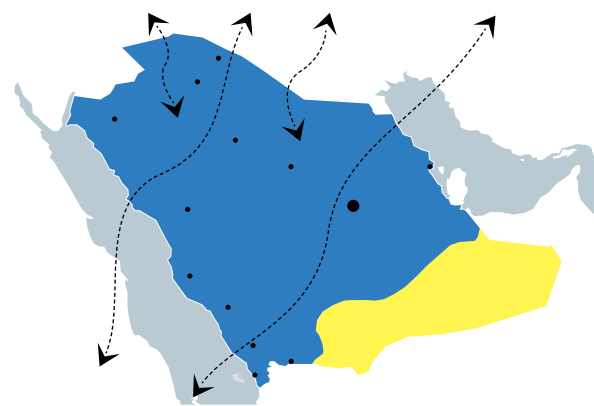


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across northern Eurasia and winters 3,000–10,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and from Arabia to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this finely streaked sandpiper is one of the most common and widespread freshwater waders, occurring in all regions (including the Rub' al-Khali) on migration (Feb–May, Aug–Oct) and over winter.

HABITAT: Freshwater wetlands, such as lakes, streams and wastewater lagoons, as well as other open muddy areas. It occurs rarely at coastal or saline sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aquatic invertebrates, including crustaceans, mollusks, worms, insects and larvae, but also small fish and amphibians. Food is obtained by pecking and probing the water or ground or by sweeping shallow water with its bill. A delicate bird, it appears rather graceful when feeding.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious and tends to feed, roost and flee when disturbed as a group and it freely mixes with other species. It has been recorded in flocks of 100–200 birds on migration. Flocks are rather skittish. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is an agile flyer, when disturbed it can accelerate very quickly away from the area although it might soon return after circling. **WINGSPAN:** 34–37 cm.

To fuel its long-distance migration, this sandpiper increases mass by 50% prior to departure. Once its stores are depleted it stops to eat, regaining mass at 10% per day.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **MARSH SANDPIPER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tringa stagnatilis*

ARABIC NAME: طيطوى مستنقعية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–26 cm / 43–120 g

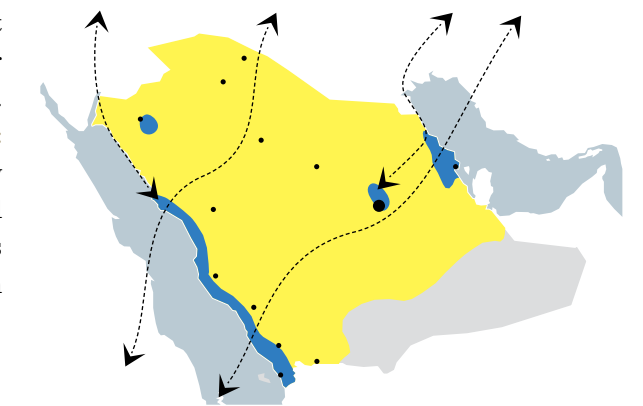


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Ukraine to northeastern China and winters 4,000–10,000 km south mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and India to Australasia, with a few wintering sites around Iraq, Iran and Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this long-legged sandpiper occurs mainly as a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct) and as a winter visitor (Nov–Feb) in variable numbers. **HABITAT:** Freshwater lagoons, swampy areas and especially open wastewater pools. It also occurs occasionally at sheltered tidal sabkha.

Many waders breed in arctic tundra and exposed seashores where few infectious pathogens exist, which helps offset the considerable costs of long distance migration.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** On migration it is usually rather solitary but in winter it is often found in small groups of 3–6 and will associate loosely with other waders. It also roosts as a group and with other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 55–59 cm.

It feeds by picking from the surface of water or the ground and from plants. It also runs to grab prey and sometimes scythes the water with its bill but probes less often than most waders of its size. It sometimes follows larger species to find food disturbed by them. It often wades to leg height but does not swim. The legs of this wader are longer than most and trail in flight.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **COMMON BUTTONQUAIL**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Small Buttonquail

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turnix sylvaticus*

ARABIC NAME: بتراء صغيرة (سمان الشجر الصغير)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

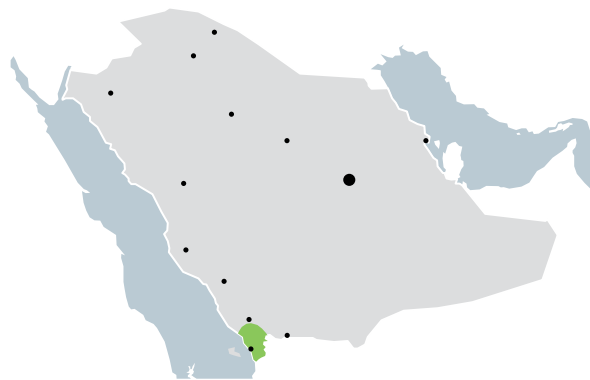
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–16 cm / M: 32–60 g; F: 39–70 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa and from India to the Philippines, with a small population in southern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this intricately patterned ground bird is confined to lowlands in the southern Tihamah. **HABITAT:** Cultivated fields and crops, including maize and sorghum, as well as scrubby areas of Shrubby Sea-blite. It presumably breeds in grasslands, bushy areas and neglected and fallow cultivated fields (as recorded in Africa). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Ants and other invertebrates, as well as seeds, especially grasses taken after scratching the ground. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs or occasionally in small loose groups in winter.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Sequential polyandry with sex role reversal: that is, the brightly-colored female calls to attract a male, which performs most of the nest duties while the female mates with other males. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest. The male incubates and tends the young alone. *Nest:* A shallow hollow or depression on the ground, scantily lined with grass, sometimes with tall stems pulled over the nest to form a loose canopy. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest within four hours of hatching and fly at 7–11 days. *Broods:* Multi-brooded. **NOTE:** The female is more colorful than the male. She can lay over 100 eggs per season with multiple mates. Meanwhile the relatively drab male performs all nest duties alone.

This tiny buttonquail is notoriously difficult to see. It skulks in low vegetation, flushes at the last moment, flies low, and settles quickly amongst plants, perfectly camouflaged.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **CRAB-PLOVER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Dromas ardeola*

ARABIC NAME: حنكور

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

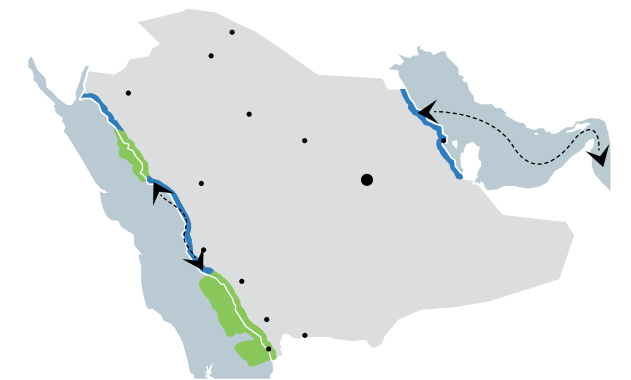
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 38–41 cm / 230–325 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: breeds along the coasts of Somalia, Eritrea, Iran and Arabia; non-breeding birds range along the east coast of Africa, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Arabia comprises 72% of its global population. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* It forages along the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf coasts, but breeds only in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Breeds on open sandy areas on undisturbed islands in the Red Sea. It also forages on coastal mudflats. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Crabs and other crustaceans, small mollusks and occasionally fish taken by probing, picking and stalking. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in burrows in colonies containing up to 100 pairs, with burrow entrances 1–2 m apart. *Parental roles:* Presumably both adults excavate the nest burrow. Incubation is achieved largely by the burrow's warm and constant ambient temperature and humidity. Additional incubation is provided by the female alone and conducted in short bouts. Both adults feed the chicks for up to six months after fledging (even post-migration). *Nest:* A chamber at the end of a tunnel (60–300 cm long; 18–20 cm wide) excavated into a sand bank. *Clutch:* 1 egg (65 mm: very large relative to the size of adult). *Incubation:* 32–33 days. *Nestling period:* 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** The Crab-plover is the only member of its family. **WINGSPAN:** 66–78 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird has decreased by more than 10% in three generations due to egg collecting, nest predation by cats and rats and coastal development and is thus listed as vulnerable regionally.

One of the world's most curious birds, it lays a single huge egg in an underground nest chamber and relies on the warm sand and stable humidity to incubate the egg.

Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,400
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan Bay



COMMON NAME: **CREAM-COLORED COURSER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cursorius cursor*

ARABIC NAME: دراج شائع (كروان عسلي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–24 cm / 102–119 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in patches from western Africa east through Arabia to Pakistan; migratory populations breed in northwestern Africa to Afghanistan and winter 1,000–2,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa, northern Arabia and around northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this pale, sandy-colored bird with a bold black eyestripe can be found mainly in the north and east. **HABITAT:** Extensive flat open areas of sand and gravel steppe deserts, sometimes with sparse, low scrub. It often winters in irrigated fields, especially stubble and occasionally in urban parks and golf courses. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Adult and larval insects, other invertebrates and occasionally small lizards taken from the ground after a run or by digging. Its cream-colored plumage provides excellent camouflage against the sandy terrain. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary, in pairs or small family groups, it often disperses

after breeding to form larger flocks sometimes containing dozens of birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground or a shallow scrape, in bare, open areas of sand and gravel that afford good visibility for the incubating birds. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 18–19 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 26–28 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 51–57 cm.

This unusual bird is essentially a wader that has adapted to living and breeding in desert areas. It feeds during the day by running across the hot sand to capture prey.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 35,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **COLLARED PRATINCOLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Glareola pratincola*

ARABIC NAME: يسر مطوق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–25 cm / 60–95 g

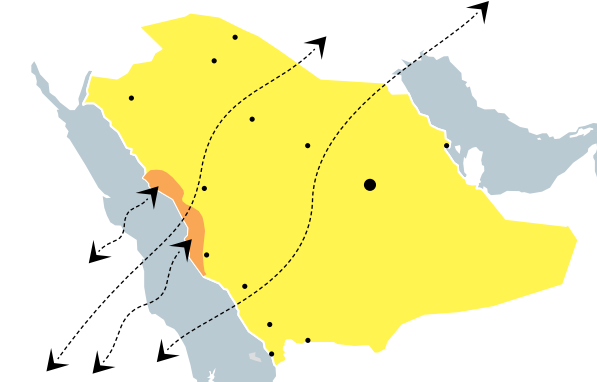


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur widely throughout sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed from northern Africa and southern Europe to northwestern India and Kazakhstan and winter 4,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant.* This good-looking pratincole occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Apr–May, Aug–Oct), particularly in the west. Some are present throughout the

This species needs water – it nests along the great rivers and lakes of Africa, western Asia and the Mediterranean and forages at wetlands on migration.

year and it has been recorded breeding near Jiddah, Yanbu’ and possibly Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Flat open areas near surface water, including irrigated farmland, freshwater pools, edges of marshes and treated wastewater lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, including locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, flies and termites taken primarily in flight, or less often on the ground following a run. *Activity:* Crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In the west it usually forages in flocks sometimes containing 100–150 birds, while in the east most records are of 1–3 birds or occasionally small groups.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Seasonally monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small loose colonies. *Parental roles:* Both adults defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow hollow or depression in the ground, unlined or sparsely lined with dry plant fragments, in the open. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 17–18 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 2–3 days and fly at 25–30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded, opportunistic.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Glareola nordmanni*

ARABIC NAME: يسر أجنم

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–26 cm / 84–105 g

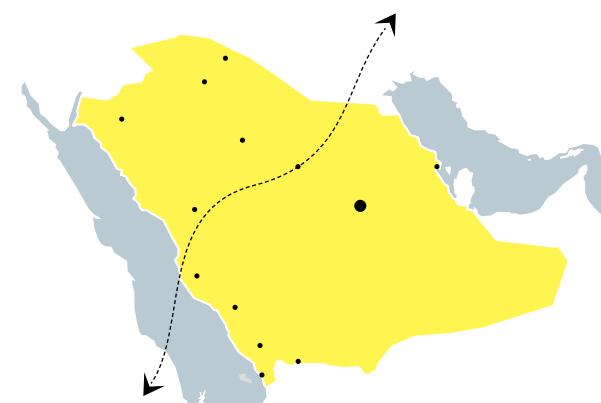


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the Black Sea to eastern Kazakhstan and winters 8,000 km southwest in tropical western Africa and southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant*. Despite Saudi Arabia's geographic position midway between this bird's breeding and wintering grounds, surprisingly few pass through the Kingdom on migration (Apr–May, Aug–Sep).

Presumably most birds migrate north of Saudi Arabia before travelling south into Africa, or alternatively they might cross the Kingdom largely undetected by traversing remote and arid areas at high altitude in unbroken flight. **HABITAT:** Wherever flying insects are plentiful, especially freshwater wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Almost any aerial insect, including locusts, grasshoppers, crickets, dragonflies, bees, wasps, termites, and so on taken mainly on the wing. The forked tail of this Pratincole is common in birds that require great agility to catch aerial insects in flight. It also feeds on the ground by running quickly after prey. *Activity:* Crepuscular and diurnal. It migrates by day. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually recorded in ones or two, but there are records of flocks of 14 and 40. The large group was observed actively feeding on the ground in an arid, sandy part of a large irrigated farm, spread out searching for insects and other invertebrates. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

This bird uses its forked tail when pursuing insects.

A fork depth equal to about half the total length of a bird's tail provides optimal turning ability.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **BROWN NODDY**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anous stolidus*

ARABIC NAME: أبله بني

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 38–45 cm / 150–272 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Dispersive: breeds on tropical and subtropical islands throughout the world; forages in tropical seas. Five subspecies are recognized, including *A. s. plumbeigularis*, which is endemic to the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant*. In Saudi Arabia, this pretty, sooty seabird breeds on 19 islands in the Red Sea off al-Qunfudhah and Farasan and forages generally south of Jiddah and into the Arabian Sea. It probably disperses throughout the Indian Ocean in winter. There are no records from the Arabian Gulf. **HABITAT:** Marine, it forages at sea and breeds on undisturbed islands with thick vegetation cover, usually areas of Shrubby Sea-blite but also stands of Black Mangrove. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small fish and squid taken by hovering then dipping or picking from the surface. It regularly forages up to 50 km (or sometimes 200 km) from its breeding colony and disperses throughout the Indian Ocean when not breeding. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** usually roosts in groups and often associates with other seabirds over schools of predatory fish and dolphins. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies with nest density determined by nest site availability. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A fragile pad of twigs and leaves, placed up to 10 m above ground on a branch 1–2 cm thick on a bush or mangrove tree, or less often on the ground, amongst rocks or on cliffs. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 28–37 days. *Nestling period:* 8 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 75–86 cm.

This attractive chocolate-brown seabird breeds on undisturbed islands in the Red Sea and forages for small fish and squid up to 250 km from its nest.

predatory fish and dolphins. BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Mating system: Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies with nest density determined by nest site availability. Parental roles: Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. Nest: A fragile pad of twigs and leaves, placed up to 10 m above ground on a branch 1–2 cm thick on a bush or mangrove tree, or less often on the ground, amongst rocks or on cliffs. Clutch: 1 egg. Incubation: 28–37 days. Nestling period: 8 weeks. Broods: Single-brooded. WINGSPAN: 75–86 cm.



Breeding migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 7,200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Islands off al-Qunfudhah



COMMON NAME: **SLENDER-BILLED GULL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus genei*

ARABIC NAME: نورس مستدق المنقار

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Fluctuating

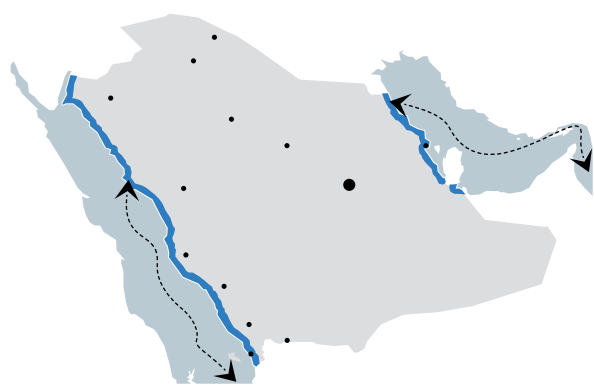
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–44 cm / 220–350 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around northern Africa, Iraq, Kuwait and coastal Iran to Pakistan; migratory populations breed around the Mediterranean to Kazakhstan and Afghanistan and winter up to 1,000 km away in the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas and waters around the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common year-round visitor.* Breeding nearby in Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran, this brilliant white gull is a common visitor to both coasts in all months, particularly in winter. It is rarely recorded inland (at Riyadh and Layla), suggesting limited migration across Arabia. **HABITAT:** Quiet shallow coastal waters and intertidal areas. It avoids harbors and other gulls. It is occasionally found at freshwater sites near the coast, such as Sabkhat al-Fasl.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Fish and marine invertebrates. It actively hunts by swimming, surface dipping and upending in shallow water, or by dipping into the sea in flight from about 1 m above the surface. It likes to wade in shallow water and intertidal areas where it finds invertebrates in the mud and small fish trapped in rock pools. Small groups sometimes fish cooperatively by herding fish into shallow water. It will take carrion but rarely scavenges in rubbish areas like the similar Black-headed Gull. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a gregarious species that usually breeds, forages, roosts and migrates in groups and is particularly numerous in winter with flocks of up to 4,000 recorded. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 102–110 cm.

This gull is recorded along both coasts in all months, but it is particularly numerous in winter when flocks of up to 4,000 have been recorded.



Year-round visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-HEADED GULL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus ridibundus*

ARABIC NAME: نورس رأس

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–43 cm / 193–325 g

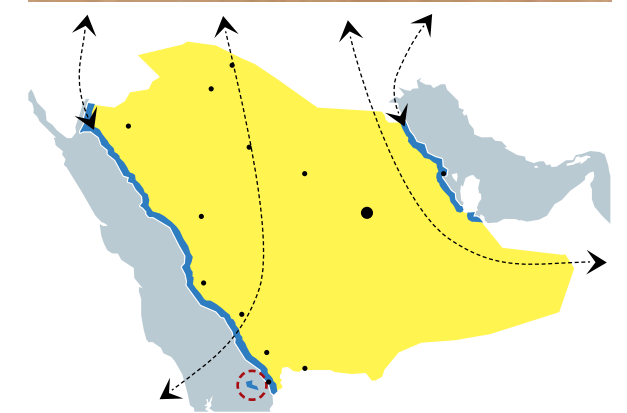


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur mainly inland in western Europe; migratory populations breed throughout central latitudes of Eurasia and winter up to 3,000 km away mainly in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea and the waters of southern Asia from Arabia to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, very common winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* It is most common on the coasts in winter (Nov–Mar) and in recent decades has become a common and widespread winter visitor to inland water bodies, south to Khamis Mushayt. Some pass through en route between Eurasia and India or Africa and a few remain over summer. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas, including harbors and around fishing boats, especially where fish are landed. It is also found inland at wastewater lagoons, rubbish dumps and city parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic and marine invertebrates, fish, carrion and food scraps from other animals. On water it feeds by swimming and dipping or by snatching from the surface, regularly following boats and ferries. On land it walks while probing in mud. It takes food scraps at parks and is particularly numerous where food is abundant, such as rubbish dumps, with over 3,000 recorded at Abqaiq landfill. It can hover, catch airborne insects or food thrown in the air, or flutter above the surface to pick up items. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitarily or in flocks sometimes numbering 100–200 at inland water bodies, or over 2,000 near the coast. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It exhibits a more buoyant and agile flight compared to larger gulls. **WINGSPAN:** 94–110 cm.



In winter, this gull's head is white with a dusky black spot on the ear. In spring, the head turns chocolate brown and can appear black from a distance.

Year-round visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah corniche



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any coastline

COMMON NAME: PALLAS'S GULL
OTHER COMMON NAME: Great Black-headed Gull
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus ichthyaetus*
ARABIC NAME: نورس رأس كبير
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 60–72 cm / 900–2,000 g



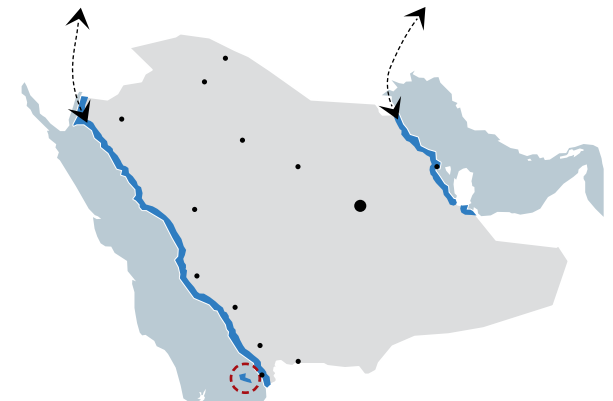
BREEDING ADULT



NON-BREEDING ADULT

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Ukraine to Mongolia and winters up to 4,000 km south in the waters of the eastern Mediterranean and around the Arabian Peninsula to Myanmar. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor, very rare summer visitor.* This impressively large gull is regular in winter (Nov–Mar) along the Arabian Gulf shores, with fewer in the Red Sea. It sometimes visits wetlands near the coast but rarely ventures further inland. There may be some limited movement across Saudi Arabia but most movement appears to be along the coasts. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas, harbors and well out to sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish (including dead fish on the shore), crustaceans and other marine invertebrates, as well as terrestrial invertebrates and aerial insects, such as locusts. It regularly harries other seabirds, stealing the food of small gulls and other fish eaters (i.e., kleptoparasitism). It follows boats and picks up fish offal and is attracted to human food sources, such as harbors and rubbish dumps. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It typically forages solitarily and rests in small loose groups of up to 20 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Graceful in soaring flight or gliding along the coast utilizing onshore winds, it can appear rather heavy in active flight. Nonetheless, it is capable of sudden turns of speed and agility to chase and harass smaller seabirds. The breeding adult has a black hood with a conspicuous white eye ring. Non-breeding birds and juveniles in their first winter have a gray-brown head. **WINGSPAN:** 155–170 cm.

Standing up to 72 cm tall and weighing up to 2 kg, this is the largest gull in Saudi Arabia and one of the largest gulls in the world.



Winter visitor, summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qatif Bay

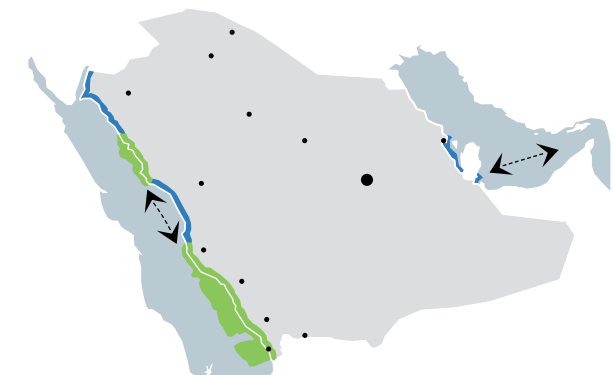


COMMON NAME: SOOTY GULL
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus hemprichii*
ARABIC NAME: نورس أسحم
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 43–48 cm / 400–510 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: breeds on islands in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea and southern Arabian Gulf, on the coasts of Pakistan and eastern Africa (south to Kenya); forages in waters usually within 500 km of breeding sites. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This distinctive dark gull breeds on undisturbed islands in the Red Sea and forages along nearby coastlines. Birds that breed on (non-Saudi) islands in the southern Arabian Gulf often forage in Saudi Arabian waters, especially at Khawr Duwaih in but rarely north of Qatar. **HABITAT:** Breeds on undisturbed, sparsely vegetated arid rocky or sandy islands free from ground predators. It forages in the Red Sea and along the coastline. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly dead fish and offal taken by scavenging along the shoreline or sometimes following ships. It also opportunistically takes turtle hatchlings and the eggs and chicks of terns and other seabirds, including Socotra Cormorants. It steals food from other birds. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found foraging solitarily, though it is typically gregarious when at rest. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, solitary or in small loose associations with nests spaced from 10 m to several hundred meters apart. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A scrape on the ground, unlined or with a few plant stalks, small sticks, stones or bones, usually sheltered by a shrub or overhanging rock, occasionally in the open. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, but age at first flight is unknown. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 105–118 cm.

While this resourceful gull eats mainly fish, it also eats turtle hatchlings, the eggs and chicks of other birds and will occasionally drop shellfish onto rocks to eat the contents.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Islands off al-Qunfudhah



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-EYED GULL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus leucophthalmus*

ARABIC NAME: نورس غرب (نورس أبيض العين)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concerned

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

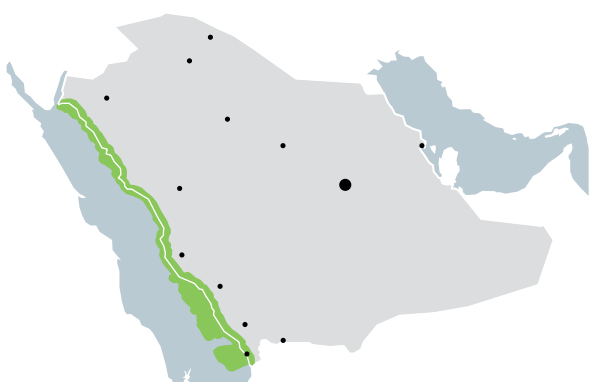
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 39–43 cm / 274–415 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: endemic to the Red Sea basin. It breeds on islands off Arabia and Africa; forages mainly in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden within 700 km of breeding sites. Largely sedentary, though a few individuals wander after the breeding season through the Suez Canal to the eastern Mediterranean, or to eastern Africa or the southern coast of Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This regal seabird breeds on about 20 islands in the Red Sea and forages in adjacent waters. **HABITAT:** Breeds on remote, undisturbed, arid, sandy, predator-free islands and forages in surrounding waters. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish, as well as some crabs and other marine invertebrates. Fish are mostly taken by a plunge dive from the surface. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in small groups, though it can form foraging flocks of hundreds or even thousands in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies usually contain-

ing less than 60 pairs (with nests 3–10 m apart), sometimes with several separate colonies on the one island. *Parental roles:* Unknown (in similar species both adults incubate and tend the young). *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, unlined or scantily lined with small pieces of earth, grit, plant stems and fragments of shells and coral, often arranged around the nest rim, in open, bare, level ground, usually within 100 m of the shore. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (27–29 days in similar species). *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching, but age at first flight is unknown. *Broods:* Unknown. **WINGSPAN:** 110–115 cm.

This fine-looking gull occurs only in the Red Sea. It breeds on islands and islets off Africa and Arabia, including 20 islands belonging to Saudi Arabia.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Island ferry



COMMON NAME: **MEW GULL**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Common Gull

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus canus*

ARABIC NAME: نورس شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

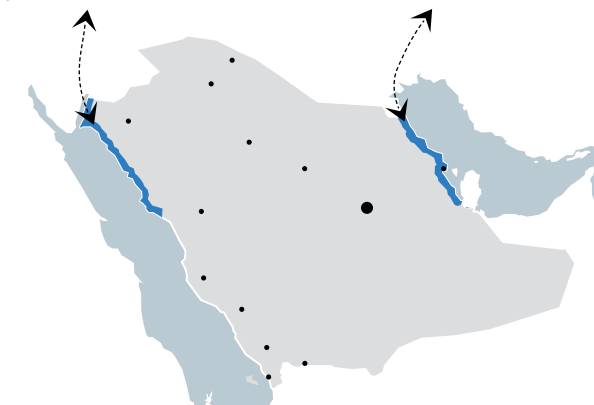
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–46 cm / 290–552 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Eurasia (from Iceland to Siberia), Alaska and western Canada and winters up to 1,000 km away in the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans and the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, the Mew Gull is a rare winter visitor to both the Arabian Gulf (north of Jubail) and the Red Sea (north of Yanbu') and very rarely recorded inland. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas, especially harbors, fish landing areas and mudflats. It occurs rarely at rubbish dumps inland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, small fish and even small mammals, carrion and some seeds. It prefers to forage in terrestrial and coastal locations rather than further out to sea. It may foot paddle in muddy areas to find food or snatch prey from on or just below the water surface. It has been recorded dropping mollusks onto hard surfaces to break their shells and eat the contents. It will also occasionally steal food from other

gulls and can catch insects in the air with its light and buoyant flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found solitarily or in small numbers, sometimes in mixed flocks with other gulls. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 110–125 cm.

Saudi Arabia lies at the southern limit of this gull's winter range; thus, it is a rare winter visitor to northern waters.



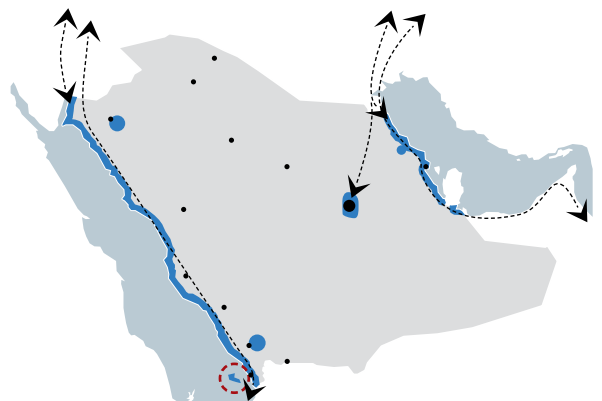
Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Arabian Gulf coastline



COMMON NAME: LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL
OTHER COMMON NAME: Baltic, Heuglin's and Steppe Gull
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus fuscus*
ARABIC NAME: نورس أظھر صغیر
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 51–61 cm / 550–1,200 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Eurasia (Iceland to the Taymyr Peninsula), mostly above the Arctic Circle and winters up to 10,000 km south in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, sub-Saharan Africa and waters around the Arabian Peninsula to Sri Lanka and eastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* It is a common passage migrant and winter visitor to all coastal areas in large numbers from late summer and all through winter, departing around April. It is uncommon inland and small numbers probably pass over Arabia. Three subspecies occur here and all are sometimes regarded as distinct species. The rarer, smaller and darker-backed Baltic Gull (*L. f. fuscus*) occurs in small numbers every year in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf. The commoner Heuglin's Gull (*L. f. heuglini*) and Steppe Gull (*L. f. barabensis*) occur in the Gulf while Heuglin's Gull is also found in the Gulf and the northern part of the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Coastal mudflats, harbors, rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:*



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tarut Bay

Fish, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, eggs and chicks, rodents, offal and carrion. It regularly follows fishing boats and visits human sites, such as landfills to look for food. It forages by contact dipping and surface plunging. Activity: Diurnal. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: It can feed solitarily or in small groups or flocks containing up to several thousand birds (for example, Abqaiq landfill) often mixed with other gulls. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Lesser Black-backed Gull is probably the most misidentified species in Saudi Arabia. Steppe Gull (*L. f. barabensis*) is sometimes lumped with the Caspian Gull. **WINGSPAN:** 124–127 cm.

These large gulls migrate at about the slowest speed recorded for a seabird (44–98 km per day), stopping to feed regularly as they dawdle leisurely along the coast.



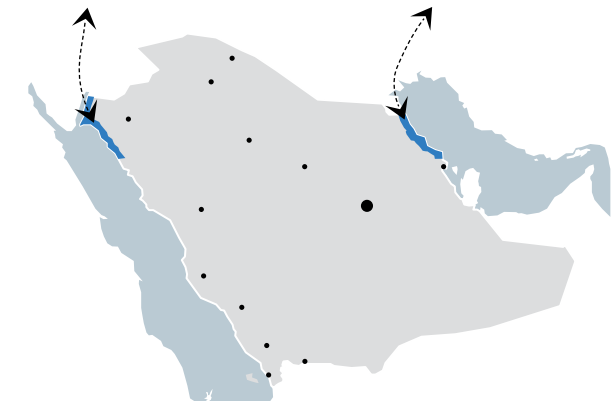
COMMON NAME: ARMENIAN GULL
PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: European Herring Gull, Yellow-legged Gull
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus armenicus*
ARABIC NAME: نورس ارمني
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 57–60 cm / 950–1,050 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Armenia and eastern Turkey; migratory populations breed in Turkey, Georgia and northwestern Iran and winter up to 1,000 km south mainly in the eastern Mediterranean, Suez Canal, Gulf of Aqaba and the northern Arabian Gulf. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this little known gull is recorded as a winter visitor. It is largely restricted to far northern waters of the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, though it occasionally wanders south to at least Dhahran and possibly to the Gulf of Salwa.

As its name suggests, this bird breeds primarily in Armenia and neighboring countries. It winters south to waters off northern Saudi Arabia.

HABITAT: Coastal waters and nearby lagoons. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known. It presumably includes fish, invertebrates and carrion taken from coastal and inland waters. It is likely to scavenge at rubbish dumps like many other gulls. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It often forages and rests within large flocks of other large white-headed gulls, such as Lesser Black-backed Gulls (both Heuglin's and Steppe subspecies). **Breeding Behavior:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Until recently this bird was often regarded as a subspecies of the European Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) or the Yellow-legged Gull (*L. michahellis*). Therefore there is little recorded information about it in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 140 cm.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khobar corniche



COMMON NAME: **CASPIAN GULL**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: European Herring Gull

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Larus cachinnans*

ARABIC NAME: نورس قزويني

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 58–68 cm / 680–1,500 g



ADULT



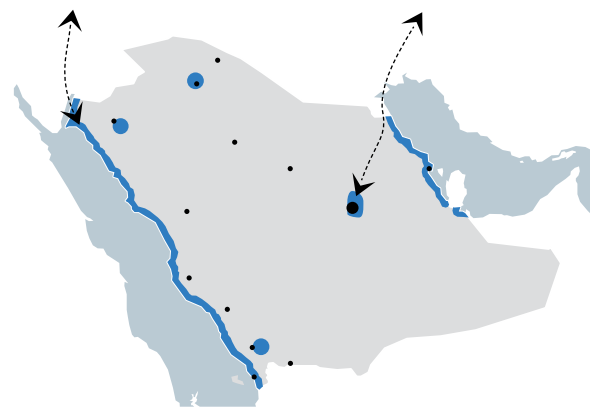
JUVENILE

GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Serbia to Kyrgyzstan; migratory populations breed from the Caspian Sea to eastern Kazakhstan and winter up to 3,000 km away in Europe, the Black Sea and around the Arabian Peninsula to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common winter visitor, scarce summer visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this large gull

is a common winter visitor to the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, with most birds arriving in October and departing April. It regularly occurs at inland wetlands in small numbers where it sometimes stays for winter. A few are also present in the summer months. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas, including harbors, as well as wastewater lagoons and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:*

Mostly fish but also invertebrates, carrion and human food scraps. It forages mainly by wading in the intertidal zone or plunge diving. It also raids the nests of colonial seabirds, including Socotra Cormorant in the Arabian Gulf, steals food from other seabirds and follows ships for offal. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in small numbers, though it can be seen in quite large numbers within mixed flocks of other large white-headed gulls. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This species was previously treated as a subspecies of the European Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*). Immature birds of these two species are very difficult to distinguish. **WINGSPAN:** 137–145 cm.

This bird passes through four sub-adult plumage phases before attaining adult plumage. It is still not clear why so many seabirds exhibit such delayed plumage maturation.



Winter visitor, summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khobar corniche



COMMON NAME: **BRIDLED TERN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Onychoprion anaethetus*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة لجماء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–38 cm / 95–150 g / 76–81 cm



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on tropical and subtropical islands and coasts around Central America, western Africa, Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia to Australasia; forages in surrounding oceans (generally departing Arabian waters). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, this sleek black tern with a long and deeply forked tail breeds on islands in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf and winters (presumably) in the western Indian Ocean. Birds ringed in the Gulf have been recovered as far away as Japan. **HABITAT:** Marine, it breeds on uninhabited, low, rocky or sandy islands with shade and forages at sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small schooling fish (usually under 3 cm long), larval fish and squid taken by plunge diving at the surface or contact dipping from 1 m. It specializes in foraging in areas of poor productivity, thereby avoiding competition from other terns. In Saudi Arabia, it usually forages far from shore. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious.

Every year over 100,000 pairs migrate to Saudi Arabia to breed on islands in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, making it the most abundant seabird in the Kingdom.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in loose colonies. Nest density varies depending on the availability of nest sites. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* The eggs are laid directly on bare ground or in a slight scrape, under a bush, rock, debris, or in a rock cavity. Unusual sites: fallen hollow palm, discarded refrigerator, turtle shell. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 27–29 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest around 3 days, hide nearby and then fly at 35–40 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 76–81 cm.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 110,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Arabian Gulf offshore islands



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sternula albifrons*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

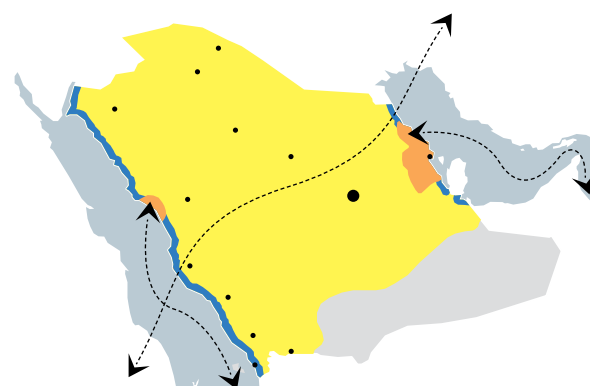
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22–28 cm / 47–63 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations along the coasts and great rivers of northern and western Africa and patchily from Turkey to northern India and Australasia; migratory populations breed in Western Europe to Kazakhstan and Arabia and in far eastern Asia and winter 3,000 km south around the Arabian Peninsula to Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.

In Saudi Arabia, this small tern is an uncommon passage migrant (Apr–May, Sep) and winter visitor and a rare breeding migrant in constructed wetlands in the Eastern Province (north of Hofuf, up to 70 km from the coast) and occasionally Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** Breeds at fresh or brackish wetlands, including marshes, irrigation channels, flooded areas and treated wastewater lagoons. It also forages in coastal areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Small fish (up to 6 cm) and crustaceans taken by scanning over shallow water, hovering and then plunge diving, often in synchrony. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Mating system: socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies usually containing less than 25 widely scattered nests. **Parental roles:** Both adults incubate and tend the young. **Nest:** A shallow scrape or natural depression in open ground, unlined or sparsely lined with plant material, mud flakes or shell fragments. **Clutch:** 2–3 eggs. **Incubation:** 21–24 days. **Chicks:** Young leave the nest a few days after hatching and fly at 20–24 days. **Broods:** Single-brooded. **NOTE:** This species looks very similar to Saunders's Tern. However the white of the forehead reaches behind the eye, with less black on the primaries, and typically with brighter yellow legs. **WINGSPAN:** 47–55 cm.

Little Terns are superb at hovering for minutes at a time waiting for the precise moment to plunge-dive into the water to catch their tiny prey.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **SAUNDERS'S TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sternula saundersi*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة سوندرزية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Fluctuating

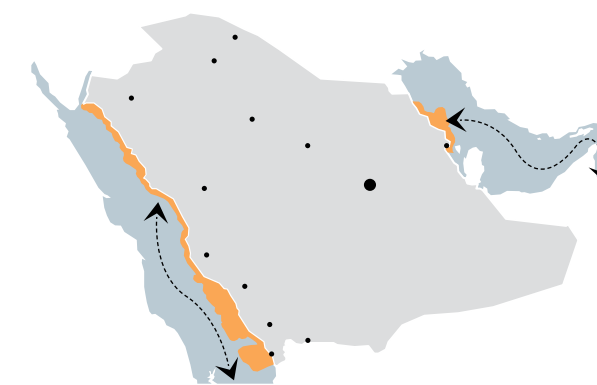
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–28 cm / 40–45 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory and dispersive: breeds in the northern Indian Ocean from Somalia and around the Arabian Peninsula to Sri Lanka and winters mainly in the Red Sea and along the eastern coast of Africa to Madagascar. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Uncommon breeding migrant, erratic year-round visitor. In Saudi Arabia, this small seabird breeds along the coasts and nearby islands of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Over winter, a larger proportion of birds remain in the Red Sea compared to the Gulf, where it becomes rather scarce. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas. It breeds less than 1 m above sea level in exposed areas devoid of vegetation on sand, hard sabkha or shingle and forages in shallow water along coasts and nearby islands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Small fish, crustaceans and mollusks taken by hovering and then plunge diving into shallow water. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found singly or in small groups of up to 25, it can also occur in large gatherings over autumn with over 11,000 recorded at Abu 'Ali. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Mating system: Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies containing up to 20 pairs with nests 10–20 m apart. **Parental roles:** Both adults incubate and tend the young. **Nest:** A shallow depression in open ground, unlined or lined with shell fragments or small stones. **Clutch:** 2 eggs. **Incubation:** Unknown (21–24 days in similar species). **Nestling period:** Unknown (probably 20–24 days). **Broods:** Single-brooded. **NOTE:** Unlike the very similar Little Tern, the white forehead does not reach behind the eye, the upperparts are slightly paler gray, and the legs are dusky yellow-olive. **WINGSPAN:** 50–55 cm.

This tiny tern – the smallest in Saudi Arabia – forms large foraging groups at the end of the breeding season. Flocks of 11,000 have been recorded at Abu 'Ali.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Mating system: Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies containing up to 20 pairs with nests 10–20 m apart. **Parental roles:** Both adults incubate and tend the young. **Nest:** A shallow depression in open ground, unlined or lined with shell fragments or small stones. **Clutch:** 2 eggs. **Incubation:** Unknown (21–24 days in similar species). **Nestling period:** Unknown (probably 20–24 days). **Broods:** Single-brooded. **NOTE:** Unlike the very similar Little Tern, the white forehead does not reach behind the eye, the upperparts are slightly paler gray, and the legs are dusky yellow-olive. **WINGSPAN:** 50–55 cm.



Breeding migrant, year-round visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Ali



COMMON NAME: **COMMON GULL-BILLED TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gelochelidon nilotica*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة نورسية منقار

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 33–43 cm / 190–290 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: Resident populations breed in Central and South America; migratory populations bred in USA, southern Europe, central Asia and eastern China and winter 3,000 km south in the tropics, including around the Arabian Peninsula.

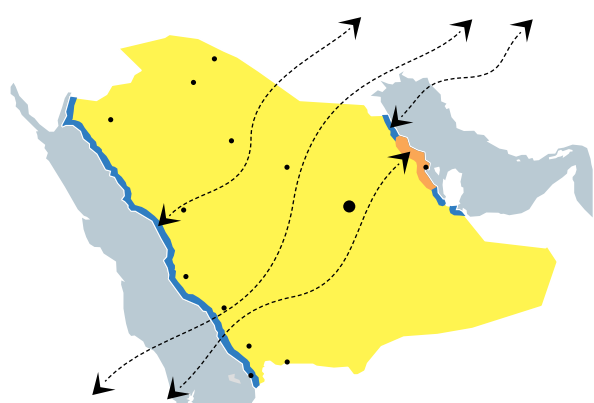
SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This tern, with its unique heavy bill, is a common passage migrant (Feb–Mar, Aug–Nov) and winter visitor and occasionally breeds in the Eastern Province, with records from az-Zakhnuniyah and Sabkhat al-Fasl. **HABITAT:** Coastal sites, including bays, mudflats, brackish lagoons and mangroves. It occurs less often at inland sites, such as fish farms, wastewater lagoons and rubbish dumps. It has nested at an inshore island with scrub (az-Zakhnuniyah) and on sabkhhah (Sabkhat al-Fasl).

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Opportunistic, largely insects, including grasshoppers, dragonflies and moths. It also takes locusts during mass migration events, as well as small reptiles, frogs and fish. It forages by hawking for insects, or darting quickly at the surface. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually in small numbers, though over 100 can aggregate on migration and over winter along the southern Red Sea coast and Arabian Gulf.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small loose colonies containing less than 12 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, lined with plant material, usually near a tuft of vegetation. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 22–23 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest less than 4 days after hatching and fly at 28–30 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 85–103 cm.

Not all terns eat fish. This species hawks for insects, including grasshoppers, dragonflies and grubs, captured with a swift dive.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khobar corniche

COMMON NAME: **CASPIAN TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hydroprogne caspia*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة قزوينية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 48–56 cm / 574–782 g

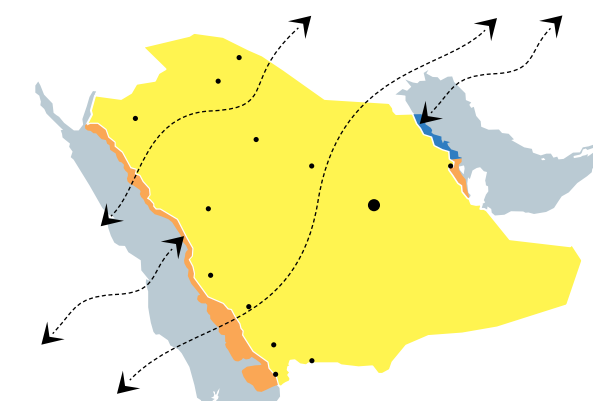


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in western and southern Africa, southern Asia and Australasia; migratory populations breed in North America, northern Europe and central Asia and winter 2,000–4,000 km south in Central America, Africa and India.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This very large tern – the largest in the world – occurs throughout Saudi Arabia on migration and in winter (mainly at coastal sites) and breeds

This is the largest tern in the world. It will return to the same breeding colony if the previous nest was successful, but it will move to a new location if the previous nest failed.

on islands primarily in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Breeds on small, sandy, often remote, uninhabited islands free from ground predators in the Red Sea. It forages along both coasts and in flooded sabkhhah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small to medium-sized fish (up to 25 cm) taken with a plunge dive after hovering. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It often forages in ones or twos or in loose flocks of up to 10 birds, though it can roost at high tide in groups containing over 150 birds. It may sometimes establish individual feeding territories in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in small colonies containing up to 4 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate, tend the young and vigorously defend the nest, often dive-bombing and narrowly missing the head of human intruders. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on open ground, either unlined or sparsely lined with small stones, shells, pieces of coral or plant debris. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 26–28 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest a few days after hatching and fly at 35–45 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 127–140 cm.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah South corniche and port



COMMON NAME: **WHISKERED TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chlidonias hybrida*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة سبلان

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

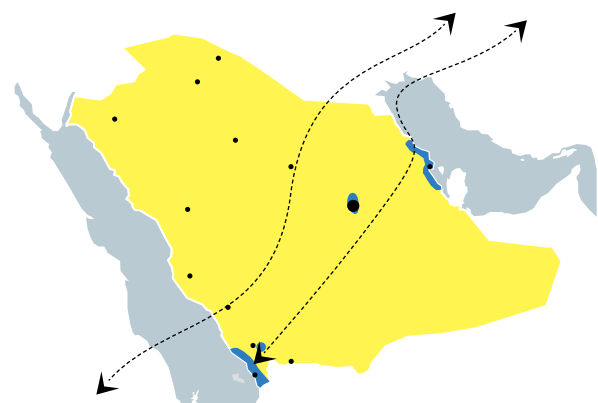
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–29 cm / 60–101 g (Female is significantly smaller)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southern and northern Africa, eastern China and Australia; migratory populations breed from southern Europe to China and winter 1,000–8,000 km south in Africa and southern Asia to Australia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, local winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This slender tern is an uncommon passage migrant (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) in small numbers on a broad front (more numerous in autumn) and the only marsh tern likely to be seen over winter (Sep–Apr). Some remain in the Eastern Province over summer, occasionally in breeding plumage, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Wetlands with emergent vegetation, or sheltered coastal inlets. It also occurs occasionally on dry land and growing crops. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly terrestrial and aquatic insects, including water beetles, dragonflies, grasshoppers and flying ants, as well as small fish, amphibians and tadpoles. It flies low, often only



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake

1–2 meters above the surface of the water and may abruptly stop or turn to dip into the water to pick items from the surface, shallow plunge dive, or carefully take prey from vegetation. It sometimes follows hay cutters and takes disturbed insects. Individuals sit on posts emerging from the water or floating items when not feeding. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found in ones and twos but small groups are sometimes recorded at large wetlands; for example 50 were counted at Malakiyah Lake. It freely associates with other terns and waterbirds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **WINGSPAN:** 64–70 cm.

In this species, the male is heavier with a much larger bill, and feeds by plunge diving into water, whereas the lighter, small-billed female picks prey from the surface.

COMMON NAME: **WHITE-WINGED TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chlidonias leucopterus*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة عصمان

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

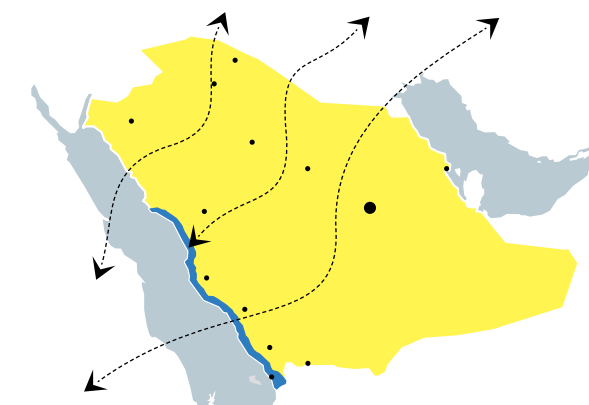
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–27 cm / 42–79 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Eastern Europe to northeastern China and winters 1,000–9,000 km south in Africa and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, local winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, it is a common and widespread broad front passage migrant (Mar–Jun, Aug–Oct), though flocks may also migrate along

This lovely black and white tern is especially numerous in spring. On one occasion, over 1,000 were seen at Dawmat al-Jandal reservoir.

the coasts. Spring migrants are especially numerous. It winters at coastal wetlands on the Red Sea south from Yanbu' and irregularly elsewhere. A few stay at large wetlands over summer sometimes in breeding plumage, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Fodder fields and wetlands at dairy farms, open or vegetated wetlands inland and irrigated crops. It is rarely recorded by the coast. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, fish, amphibians and tadpoles, caught by pecking at the surface of water, ground or vegetation, but does not plunge dive. It is an accomplished aerial feeder and regularly catches flying insects on the wing. It often follows hay cutters and takes disturbed insects, sometimes in association with Whiskered Tern. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it is usually recorded in groups of up to 10 over winter and sometimes in much larger flocks during migration, including over 1,000 at Dawmat al-Jandal in spring. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **WINGSPAN:** 56–67 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dawmat al-Jandal

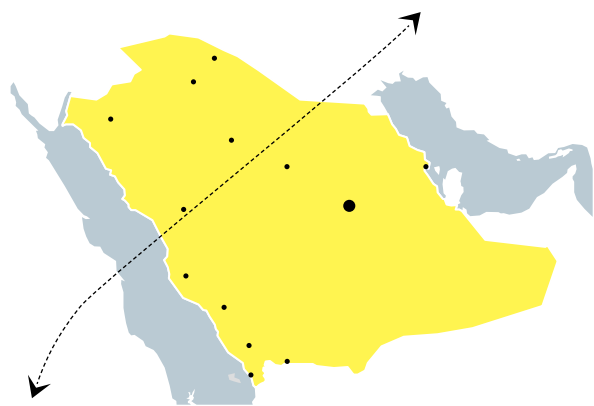


COMMON NAME: **BLACK TERN**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Chlidonias niger*
 ARABIC NAME: خرشنة سوداء
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–28 cm / 60–74 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout North America and Europe to Kazakhstan and winters mainly along coastal Central America, western Africa and the Nile Valley. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant.* Despite Saudi Arabia's geographic position lying midway between this distinctive tern's eastern breeding range and African winter quarters, it is recorded passing through Saudi Arabia much less often than might be expected with the few observations all being of single birds. This might indicate that this species takes an indirect route around Saudi Arabia, or that it typically passes over the Kingdom without stopping. Some individuals have been recorded staying in Saudi Arabia for several weeks. **HABITAT:** Coasts and nearby lagoons. It can also occur occasionally at any wetland or marshy area with emergent or floating vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aquatic insects (especially beetles), tadpoles, frogs, small fish and some mollusks. This elegant, diminutive tern with a bouncy erratic flight usually feeds by aerial hawking with much swooping and some hovering into the wind, dipping frequently to pick prey from the surface or vegetation and rarely plunge diving. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is rare in Saudi Arabia and typically reported singly or in small numbers. It is reported to form flocks over schools of predatory fish, feeding over dolphins and tuna. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 57–65 cm.

This beautiful black tern can migrate at over 1,000 km per day for up to six days without a break. It could cross the Arabian Peninsula in a single 24-hour flight.



Passage migrant
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'

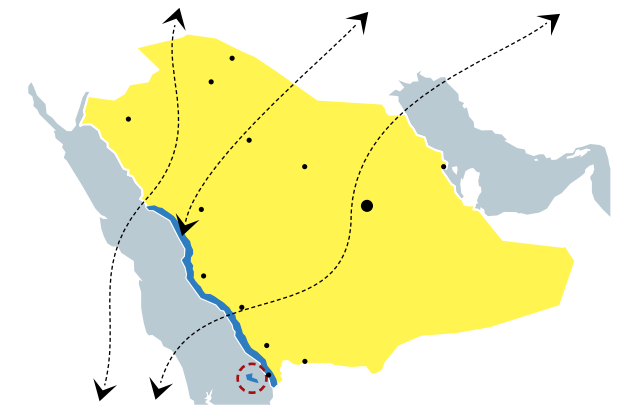


COMMON NAME: **COMMON TERN**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sterna hirundo*
 ARABIC NAME: خرشنة شائعة
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–39 cm / 97–146 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in middle latitudes across the northern Hemisphere and winters 1,000–10,000 km south around the coasts of South America, Africa, Arabia, southern Asia and Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This classic tern is an uncommon passage migrant (May–Jun, Aug–Nov), less frequent in autumn, and a local winter visitor along the Red Sea coast south of Yanbu'. Birds have spent the summer in Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Reservoirs, dams and wetlands with expanses of open water, either with or without aquatic vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small fish (under 15 cm) depending on local prey availability, as well as insects. Most fish are caught with a plunge dive or by surface dipping, while many insects are caught on the wing. As a highly visual plunge-diver, its foraging ability can be severely affected by poor visibility. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is said to feed in dense flocks over the ocean, but most records in Saudi Arabia are of 1–3 birds at inland locations en route through the Kingdom. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Juvenile birds may remain in the wintering area throughout the entire duration of their first summer before returning to the breeding grounds as two-year-olds. **WINGSPAN:** 72–83 cm.

Common Terns eat as much as they can over winter. Those that gain most weight arrive at their breeding grounds earlier, have higher breeding success and live longer.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-CHEEKED TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sterna repressa*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة غشواء (خرشنة بيضاء الخد)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

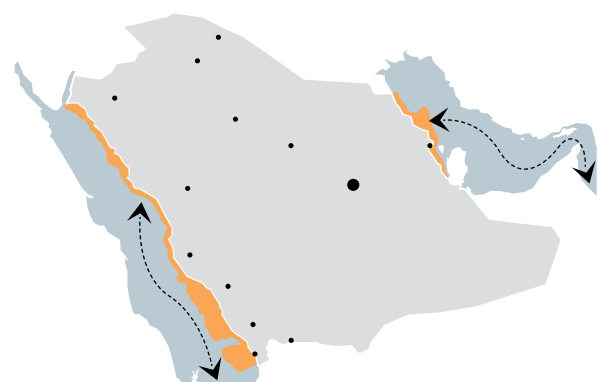
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–35 cm / 113–142 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from coastal northeastern Africa (Somalia to Kenya), the Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, Oman and western India and winters up to 2,000 km away in coastal northeastern Africa, Arabian Sea and Oman to southwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant, rare winter visitor.* This photogenic tern arrives as a breeding migrant (Mar–Oct) to islands widespread in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea. Some birds are present in all months. **HABITAT:** Breeds on islands mainly on soft sand, or less often on shingle, compacted sand or hard stony ground. It forages at sea within 1–2 km of shore. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small fish (around 5 cm) and invertebrates taken from the surface by contact dipping or plunge diving. It often feeds behind fishing boats and above predatory fish and dolphins. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, large migrating or roosting flocks sometimes contain over 10,000 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies usually containing 10–200 pairs (often mixed with other terns) with nests close (6 per square meter) or widely spaced (1 per 40 square meters). *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on open ground, unlined or lined with small stones, shells, coral, sticks, grass or seaweed. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 21–24 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and fly at 25–30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 73–83 cm.

This tern nests directly on the hot ground in summer. Nesting adults will dip their bodies in seawater and return to the nest with wet bellies. This cools their eggs by 4°C.



Breeding migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 29,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Ali

COMMON NAME: **LESSER CRESTED TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Thalasseus bengalensis*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة عرفاء صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

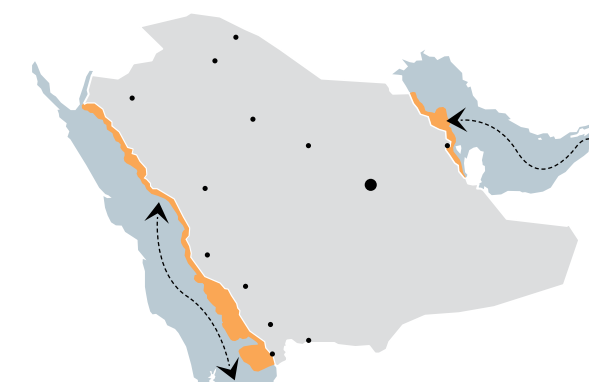
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–43 cm / 185–242 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: breeds in coastal northern Africa and around the Arabian Peninsula southeast to Australia and winters around the colonies and up to 4,000 km away off the coast of northern Africa and throughout the Indian Ocean to the Coral Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant, erratic year-round visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this black-crested tern is a breeding migrant (Apr–Oct) forming dense colonies on islands in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, mostly south of Jiddah. A few are present in all months. **HABITAT:** Breeds on low sandy islands and forages in the surf and offshore. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish and crustaceans taken after quartering back and forth above water, hovering and then plunge diving, often submerging, or by surface dipping. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Highly gregarious, it migrates and roosts in flocks sometimes containing over 1,000 birds often mixed with other terns. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in dense colonies usually containing a few hundred pairs (8–13 nests per me). Separate colonies can co-occur on one island: for example, 13,700 pairs were recorded in 23 colonies on Karan Island (Arabian Gulf), with the largest containing over 5,000 pairs. Egg laying is synchronized within a colony. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined scrape on the ground, 50–200 m from sea, sometimes adjacent to a Greater Crested Tern colony. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 22–25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest 2–4 days after hatching, form crèches and then fly at 32–35 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 88–105 cm.

To protect its nest from lethal summer heat, the adult constantly repositions itself throughout the day so that it always casts a cooling shadow over its eggs and chicks.

To protect its nest from lethal summer heat, the adult constantly repositions itself throughout the day so that it always casts a cooling shadow over its eggs and chicks.



Breeding migrant, year-round visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 41,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khobar corniche



COMMON NAME: **SANDWICH TERN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة ساندويتشية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 34–46 cm / 130–285 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds along the east coast of the Americas and from Western Europe to the Caspian Sea and winters up to 9,000 km south around the coasts of Central and South America, western and southern Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, scarce passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, it occurs along the Gulf coast on migration (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov) and in winter, but is scarce in the Red Sea. It bred on a small island in the Arabian Gulf off Ras Tanajib in 1991 and possibly breeds more frequently on other remote islands.

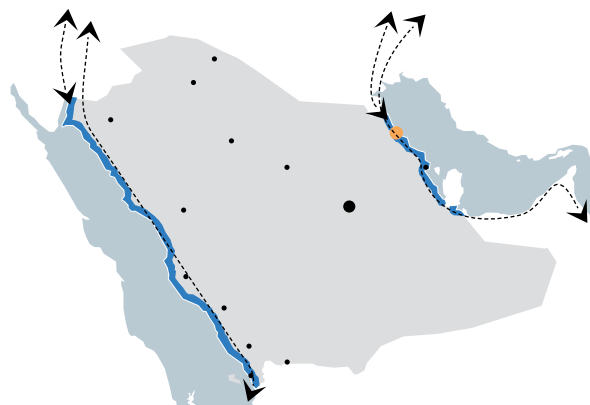
HABITAT: Coastal areas and inshore islands. It has nested on a small island that was partly covered by halophytic scrub and surrounded by an open sandy area. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small fish (usually 3–15 cm) taken by plunge diving from around 10 m

above the surface of the water up to 50 km from the breeding colony. *Activity:*

Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found foraging alone, though migrating flocks can contain hundreds of birds.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies containing up to 10 nests. *Parental roles:* Both adults nest-scraper, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, usually unlined, on a dune, or sandy or shingle bank. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 25 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest a few days after hatching, form crèches by 15 days and then fly at 28–32 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 86–105 cm.

This tern was first described from the town of Sandwich in England; hence the name. It is strictly a coastal bird that feeds almost entirely on small fish.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abu 'Ali

COMMON NAME: **GREATER CRESTED TERN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Swift Tern

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Thalasseus bergii*

ARABIC NAME: خرشنة عرفاء كبيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 43–53 cm / 320–400 g



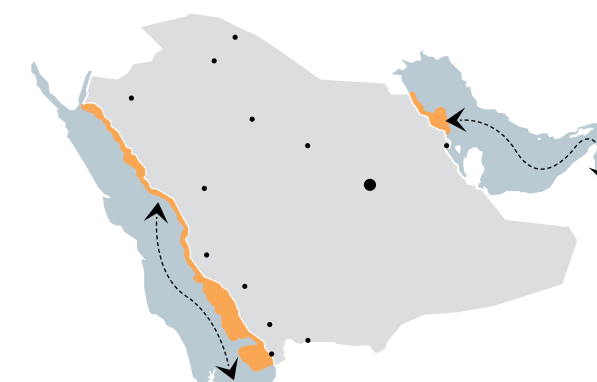
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: occurs along the coasts of southern and eastern Africa, Arabia, southern Asia and Australasia and throughout the western Pacific. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, erratic year-round visitor.* This large tern with a glossy black crest occurs around all coasts in Saudi Arabia. It is found

This tern forms dense nesting colonies on islands in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea. Some colonies contain over 1,000 pairs with eight nests per square meter.

mainly in summer, but some are present in all months. It breeds in dense colonies on islands in the northern Arabian Gulf (Harqus, Karan, Kurayn, Jana, Jurayd) and the Red Sea (mostly near al-Qunfudhah) and may disperse to the southern and eastern African coasts after breeding.

HABITAT: Breeds on low, sandy islands, often small and usually far from the mainland and forages at sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish (up to 15 cm), as well as squid, crustaceans and some insects taken from the water by plunge diving from about 5 m or by contact dipping. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found foraging in small groups.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in dense colonies (7–8 nests per square meter) containing a few to over 1,000 pairs, occasionally adjacent to colonies of Lesser Crested Tern or other terns. Egg laying is synchronized within colony. Colonies move between islands from year to year. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow scrape on the ground, usually unlined. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 25–30 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest 2 days after hatching, form crèches and then fly at 38–40 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 100–130 cm.



Breeding migrant, year-round visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khobar corniche



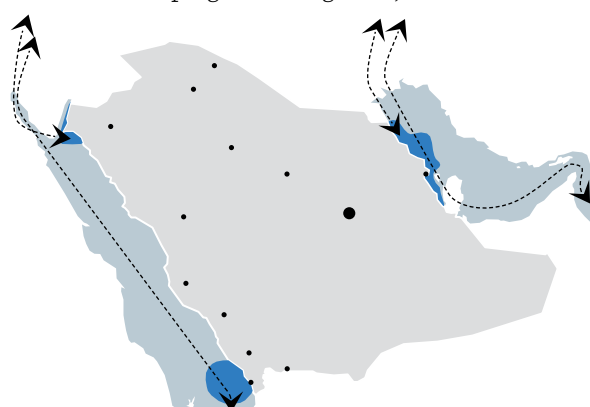
COMMON NAME: **ARCTIC JAEGER**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Arctic Skua, Parasitic Jaeger
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Stercorarius parasiticus*
 ARABIC NAME: كركر قطبي شمالي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 41–46 cm / 330–610 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory; breeds in coastal tundra around the Arctic Ocean and winters 8,000–12,000 km south in temperate and sub-Antarctic seas off South America, southern Africa and southern Australia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this extraordinary seabird is a scarce pelagic passage migrant and rare winter visitor to the Arabian Gulf and much less commonly to the Red Sea with records only from the Gulf of Aqaba and Jazan. **HABITAT:** Pelagic and coastal. It forages at sea and occasionally comes ashore in bad weather. It sometimes rests on buoys, moorings, wrecks and other marine structures. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fish taken by chasing terns and small gulls to harry them into disgorging their last meal and then swooping down to grab it, often before it hits the water. It is a very agile flyer with fast flight and great acceleration giving

a dashing raptor-like appearance. It settles on the sea to wait for potential prey. It also actively hunts by taking fish directly from the sea. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually hunts solitarily or occasionally in pairs. It often attends large gatherings of gulls and terns by the coast and at sea, presumably watching for well fed birds to arrive. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This remarkable sea-bird comes in two distinct color morphs: a sooty-brown dark morph and a variable pale morph. **WINGSPAN:** 110–125 cm.

This handsome seabird does not hunt for prey; instead it chases terns and small gulls causing them to regurgitate their last meal, which it then catches and eats in mid-air.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Arabian Gulf



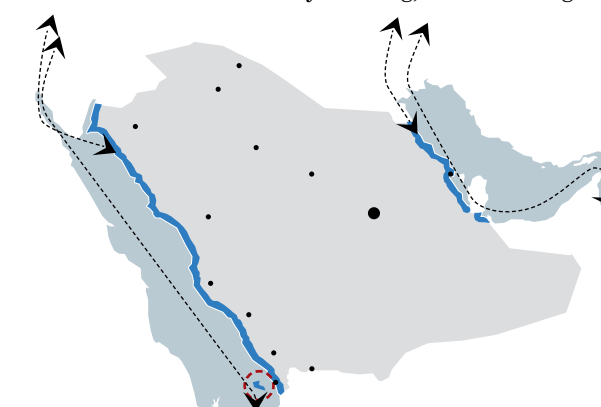
COMMON NAME: **POMARINE JAEGER**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Pomarine Skua
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Stercorarius pomarinus*
 ARABIC NAME: كركر قشري منقار
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 48–51 cm / 550–850 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory; breeds above the Arctic Circle in northern Eurasia and North America and winters 5,000–12,000 km south in much of the world's tropical and temperate seas. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this long-distance migrant is an infrequent winter visitor to the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea and may very occasionally

This seabird breeds above the Arctic Circle feeding on lemmings, before migrating to spend the winter fishing in the world's tropical oceans, including off Saudi Arabia.

travel inland on migration. **HABITAT:** Pelagic and coastal. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fish, carrion and marine invertebrates. It may submerge to feed. It follows ferries in search of waste food items and fish disturbed or injured by the propeller. It sometimes preys on small birds (including phalaropes), killing them by forcing them into the sea. When actively hunting, it can show great speed and agility, turn somersaults and dive abruptly. Like the Arctic Jaeger, it often attends large gatherings of gulls and terns and steals their food by vigorously harassing them in flight, but unlike the Arctic Jaeger this species is not reliant on such kleptoparasitism. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird comes in two distinct color morphs, the common pale morph or a rare dark morph that comprises less than 20% of the population. Individuals may have central tail feathers that extend up to 11 cm beyond the rest of the tail, though it is often shed towards the end of summer because it reduces flight efficiency. **NOTE:** The name “jaeger” is a German word for “hunter”. **WINGSPAN:** 125–138 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Island ferry



COMMON NAME: **COMMON BARN-OWL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tyto alba*

ARABIC NAME: هامة (بومة بيضاء)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 29–44 cm / 187–455 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: widespread across the Americas, Africa, Europe, India, Southeast Asia and Australasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This unmistakable and downright extraordinary barn-owl occurs widely throughout the Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Villages with adjacent crops and refuse areas, including large towns with suitable hunting areas. It also occurs in isolated desert localities far from human habitation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small mammals, including rodents and shrew, as well as small birds, such as White-eared Bulbul, Common Myna, House Sparrow and Rock Dove along with many other communally roosting birds. It hunts low to the ground, searching with silent flight and listening for the subtlest of movement of prey, before pouncing on its victim with its talons extended, often in complete darkness. It has also been recorded in the Hijaz during a plague catching locusts with its feet after chasing them on the ground. *Activity:* Nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING**

BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Usually socially and genetically monogamous territorial breeding pairs; occasionally the female mates with a second male (polyandrous), or two females share a nest with one male (polygynous). *Parental roles:* The female incubates while the male brings her food. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A bare ledge on a crevice in a building (particularly a deserted structure or ruin), well, cave, tree cavity or inside a disused nest of a Hamerkop; pellets and prey remains steadily accumulate. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs (perhaps up to 14 if food is plentiful). *Incubation:* 29–34 days. *Nestling period:* 50–70 days. *Broods:* Single- or double-brooded.

Flying silently, this supreme nocturnal hunter uses its distinctive facial ruff to amplify the slightest sounds and its enormous eyes to see prey in complete darkness.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: az-Zilfi

COMMON NAME: **LITTLE OWL**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Lilith Owlet

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Athene noctua*

ARABIC NAME: صدى (بومة صغيرة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly decreasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21–23 cm / 162–206 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northern and eastern Africa, Arabia and from Europe to China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This tubby little owl is widespread as a breeding resident across Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Escarpments and rocky deserts often near low cliffs. It also occurs in cultivated areas with trees, rock heaps, ruined buildings or disused machinery, which it uses for roosting and nesting. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates (including beetles, crickets and earthworms)

The hoot of the Little Owl can be heard up to 4.4 km away. Despite its simple call, each bird can distinguish between the hoot of a neighbor and the hoot of a stranger.

and small vertebrates, including mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians taken by dropping on prey from a post or similar perch. It may also hunt by hovering or chasing on the ground. Large prey is taken with the feet, while small prey is taken in the bill. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found alone; up to 12 individuals have been recorded together at dusk

within about 1 km of each other in central Saudi Arabia. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially and genetically monogamous territorial breeding pairs.

Parental roles: The female incubates and tends the hatchlings. The male brings her food. Both adults tend the chicks once they are two weeks old. *Nest:* An unlined cavity, usually amidst prey remains and pellets, in a rock crevice, rubble heap, tree hole, building, nest box or occasionally in an animal burrow; sites are often re-used annually. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 28–33 days. *Nestling period:* 30–35 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 54–58 cm.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tuwaiq Escarpment



COMMON NAME: ARABIAN SCOPS-OWL

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: African Scops-owl

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Otus pamelae*

ARABIC NAME: ثبج عربي (بومة الأشجار العربية)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 62–71 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this superb nocturnal predator occurs mainly in the southwest highlands south of al-Bahah. **HABITAT:** Open woodland and dry wooded slopes, often close to a freshwater source. It also occurs in lush Fig thickets at 1,600 m in the western foothills and juniper woodland high on Jabal Sawda'. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Unknown. Probably *This expert hunter occurs only in the highlands of Arabia and nowhere else on earth. Not one nest has ever been found. Not one.* a wide range of invertebrates (including beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, scorpions, spiders, moths, earthworms) as well as occasional small vertebrates (particularly small reptiles, mammals and perhaps birds), depending on local availability, as has been recorded in the African Scops-owl. Most scops-owls hunt by dropping down onto prey from a perch or by actively searching for prey on the ground. *Activity:* Nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Probably solitary, though up to five birds have been recorded calling at the same site. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown (similar species usually form monogamous territorial breeding pairs). *Parental roles:* Unknown. *Nest:* Unknown (similar species use an unlined tree cavity). *Clutch:* Unknown. *Incubation:* Unknown (20–24 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (25–28 days in similar species). *Broods:* Unknown. **NOTE:** This bird was previously regarded as a subspecies of the African Scops-owl (*O. senegalensis*). It is vocal at night while breeding and wherever it occurs it is usually the most abundant owl in the area.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 14,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: EURASIAN SCOPS-OWL

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Otus scops*

ARABIC NAME: ثبج أوراسي (بومة الأشجار الأوروبية)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

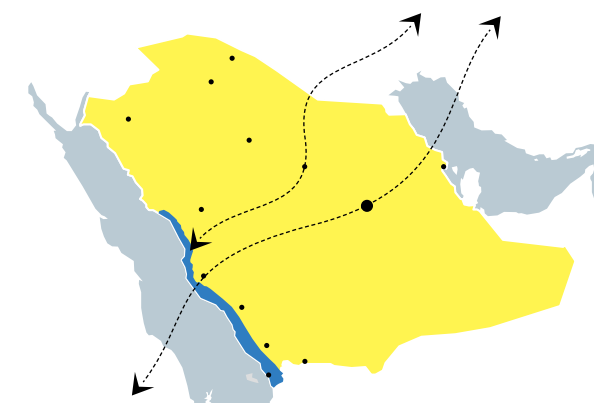
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–20 cm / 60–135 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Africa and Western Europe to Mongolia and winters 5,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This wonderfully cryptic owl occurs in Saudi Arabia primarily as a passage migrant (Feb–Apr, Sep) with a few winter records on the Tihamah south of Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** On migration, it can appear in any bush suitable for roosting. Over winter, it occurs in acacia groves and scrubland, probably near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, especially insects, such as grasshoppers, beetles and moths, as well as spiders and essentially any other animal it can grab in its talons, including small vertebrates like rodents, small birds, lizards and amphibians. Ground prey is secured with the feet after having flown down to it from a perch or after being hunted on the ground. It also sometimes takes aerial insects in flight. *Activity:* Nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Scops-owls are very difficult to locate in the daytime as they sit silent and motionless, tight up against a tree trunk, relying on their excellent camouflage for protection. As a consequence they are almost certainly much under recorded in Saudi Arabia. Both males and females can sometimes be heard making their breeding calls on a spring night, particularly during the full moon. At least two subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia. One of these subspecies (*O. s. turanicus*) is quite pale and can thus be very easily confused with Pallid Scops-owl. **WINGSPAN:** 53–64 cm.

This owl's superb camouflage makes it virtually invisible by day when it sits motionless against the rough bark of a tree.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **PALLID SCOPS-OWL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Otus brucei*

ARABIC NAME: ثبج فاتح (بومة الأشجار المخططة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

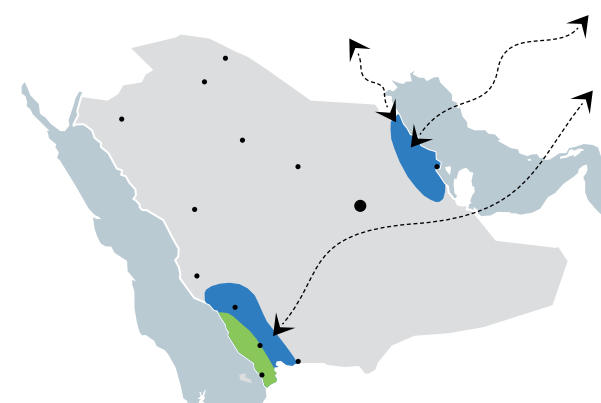
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21 cm / 100–110 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Oman, UAE and Iran; migratory populations breed from Syria and Iraq to Kazakhstan and winter up to 2,500 km south and southwest in Pakistan, India and less often in Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* This magnificently camouflaged nocturnal bird of prey is regularly recorded over winter at Yanbu' and possibly overwinters in Saudi Arabia more widely than is realized. There is probably a small breeding population in southwestern Saudi Arabia where birds have been heard calling. **HABITAT:** Poorly known, it probably breeds in areas with mature trees, including scattered acacias on gravel plains, Ghaf woodland, suburban parks, cultivated areas and well-vegetated wadis (as reported in UAE and northern Oman). It roosts in trees and tangled climb-

This enigmatic owl may breed in small numbers in western Saudi Arabia.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'

ing plants. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, such as beetles, moths and locusts, as well as spiders, small mammals (particularly rodents and bats), small birds and lizards, depending on local availability. It hunts by dropping down from a perch to catch prey on a lower branch or the ground below, or less often by taking aerial prey in flight. *Activity:* Nocturnal and partly crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs; occasionally polygynous. *Parental roles:* The female incubates and broods. Both adults tend the young. The male defends the territory with calls. *Nest:* An unlined cavity, usually in a tree hole (less often in a crevice in a building, well, cliff or earthen bank). *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 26–28 days. *Nestling period:* 28–30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 54–64 cm.



COMMON NAME: **SHORT-EARED OWL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Asio flammeus*

ARABIC NAME: بومة صمغاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

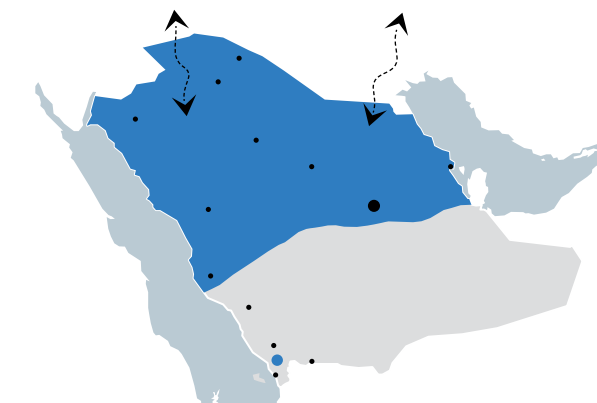
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–38 cm / M: 200–450 g; F: 280–500 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in USA, South America, Britain and Ukraine; migratory populations breed throughout Alaska, Canada and northern Eurasia and winter 2,000–6,000 km south in USA, Mexico, northern Africa and southern Eurasia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This outstanding nocturnal hunter is a rare winter visitor to the northern half of Saudi Arabia. Some birds breeding in northern Asia may pass through the Kingdom en route to eastern Africa. **HABITAT:** Open country, such as northern scrub deserts, low vegetation near deserted coasts, wetlands with abundant short vegetation and irrigated farmland, especially cereal stubbles. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly mammals, such as gerbils, rats, mice, hares and some small birds. It hunts low above the ground, sometimes hovering, sometimes abruptly adjusting direction to drop onto prey. It uses a combination of sight and sound to detect prey. In Europe, one in five hunting attempts are successful. Once the mammal is captured it is eaten whole or the head is removed and the animal eviscerated. Small birds have their wings removed before being swallowed whole. *Activity:* Diurnal, crepuscular and nocturnal.

This impressive owl can hunt for small mammals during both night and day. Around one in five hunting trips are successful, with hunting success increasing on moonlit nights.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Solitary, although sometimes a few can be found in the same general area with six observed together at Lake Asfar in February 2018 and eight together at Wari'ah near Dibdibah in February 1987. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It perches in ground vegetation in the desert. If seen on the ground the piercing yellow eyes are very noticeable. It is distinctively long-winged with a buoyant, agile, usually slow flight. A barking call is sometimes given in winter.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **DESERT TAWNY OWL**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Hume's Owl, Tawny Owl

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Strix hadorami*

ARABIC NAME: بومة الصحراء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

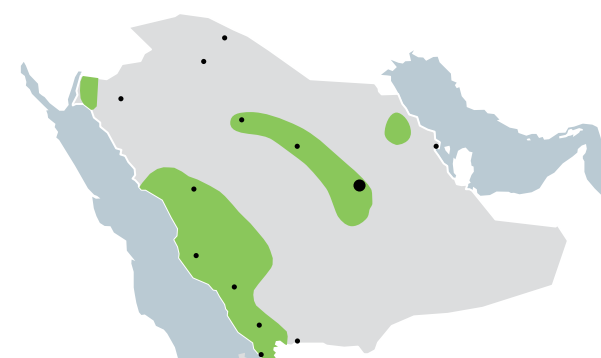
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–35 cm / 140–284 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northeastern Sudan, eastern Egypt, Palestine and Jordan and patchily throughout much of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. Arabia comprises more than 86% of its global range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident*. This enigmatic owl with its large white facial disc is a breeding resident distributed patchily throughout much of Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Areas with rocks, ravines, cliffs and caves, especially with deep wadis and limestone cliffs containing numerous crevices. It also occurs in granite and basalt regions, including lava fields in King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah). It is not recorded in sandstone regions of the northwest or south-central areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly rodents (gerbils, jirds, spiny mice) and shrews, as well as small reptiles, birds, grasshoppers, beetles and scorpions. It hunts by dropping down from a perch onto prey or by hawking for aerial insects. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown

(similar species usually form socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs). *Parental roles:* Poorly known. The female performs most or all incubation. *Nest:* An unlined cavity or cave in the wall of a steep gorge (also in abandoned stone towers in the southwest highlands); prey remains and pellets may accumulate in the nest. *Clutch:* 1–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 34–39 days. *Nestling period:* 30–40 days. *Broods:* Unknown. **NOTE:** This furtive owl was previously considered to be a subspecies of the Tawny Owl (*S. aluco*), or confused with Hume's Owl (*S. butleri*). **WINGSPAN:** 95–98 cm.

Little is known about the mysterious Desert Tawny Owl. Around 86% of the global population occurs in the Arabian Peninsula, with the majority likely to nest in Saudi Arabia.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,800
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tuwaiq Escarpment



COMMON NAME: **PHARAOH EAGLE-OWL**

COMMON NAME: Desert Eagle Owl

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Bubo ascalaphus*

ARABIC NAME: بومة صحراوية (بوم فرعونى)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–50 cm / M: 1,900 g; F: 2,300 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northwestern Africa and patchily east through Arabia to southwestern Iran. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident*. This imposing owl is widespread across Saudi Arabia. Indeed there is probably a pair on every isolated granite rock outcrop in the central regions. **HABITAT:** Usually below 1,000 m in rocky arid areas with broken escarpments, granite outcrops, or small isolated hills surrounded by plains. It also occurs in open sandy areas with low scrub in the Eastern Province and Great Nafud. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small mammals, particularly gerbils and other rodents, small birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Opportunistic, it also takes foxes, hares, bats and scorpions. It hunts from a perch, dropping onto prey from above. Like other owls, it regurgitates pellets of indigestible bone and hair. One pellet collected and analyzed in Dhahran contained at least 173 bone fragments from numerous vertebrate victims. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially and genetically monogamous territorial breeding pairs with the pair bond lasting for life. *Parental roles:* The female incubates and tends the young with food provided by the male. *Nest:* An unlined depression in a cavity or recessed ledge on a low cliff or rock outcrop, or very occasionally on an exposed ledge or scree slope. In the Eastern Province, it may also nest in a tree hole, a cavity between tree roots or sometimes under a bush. The cavity usually becomes littered with prey remains and pellets. *Clutch:* 3 eggs (remarkably, one pair tended six nestlings in Mahazat As-Sayd in 2013). *Incubation:* 32–36 days. *Nestling period:* 34 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

More than three times heavier than any other owl in the Kingdom, this awesome nocturnal bird of prey hunts for small rodents, hares and occasionally even foxes.

Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,200
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hofuf



COMMON NAME: **SPOTTED EAGLE-OWL**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Bubo africanus*
ARABIC NAME: بوهة رقطاء عربية (بوهة عقابية مرقطة)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 45 cm / M: 490–620 g; F: 640–850 g (35% heavier)



ADULT (LEFT) AND JUVENILE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in southern Africa and southern Arabia. Three subspecies are recognized, including *B. a. milesi*, which is endemic to southern Arabia (and is possibly a distinct and endemic species). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. This relatively small eagle-owl with long ear-tufts occurs in the southwest, south from around Jiddah. **HABITAT:** Below 2,800 m in well-wooded wadis in the foothills. It is less often found in the Tihamah south from Jiddah, the drier eastern fringe of the western highlands, or rugged woodlands with rocky outcrops in the 'Asir. It often occurs near human habitation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Opportunistic, including arthropods (spiders, scorpions and beetles), small mammals (rodents, hares, hedgehogs and bats) and birds (from tiny sunbirds to birds as large as doves, falcons and hornbill). It hunts by dropping down onto prey from a perch or catches aerial prey in flight. *Activity:* Nocturnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially and genetically

monogamous territorial breeding pairs with the pair bond probably lasting for life. *Parental roles:* The female incubates while the male brings her food. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined scrape on the ground amongst rocks, or in a hollow in a cliff, earth bank, tree or building, or on a disused nest of another species. The nest is often re-used annually, becoming littered with feathers and regurgitated pellets. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 30–32 days. *Nestling period:* 30–38 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded; double-brooded if food is abundant. **NOTE:** Watch for this bird around streetlamps at the escarpment edge near Tanumah. **WINGSPAN:** 100 cm.

In many owls the female is much larger than the male. This is because smaller males can catch agile prey, while larger females can invest more energy in reproduction.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 800
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **OSPREY**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pandion haliaetus*
ARABIC NAME: عقاب نسارية
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 55–58 cm / M: 990–1,800 g; F: 1,200–2,050 g (15% heavier)

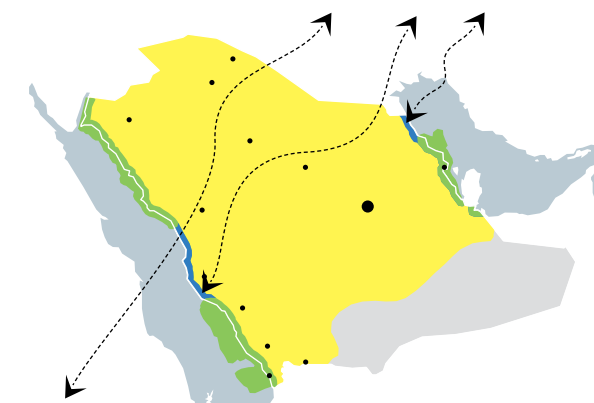


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in tropical and subtropical latitudes and Australasia; migratory populations breed throughout North America and Eurasia and winter 4,000–7,000 km south throughout South America, Africa and southern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor*. It is widespread on the coasts on migration and over winter and breeds primarily in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Breeds on undisturbed, predator-free islands and near shallow coastal water. On migration it occurs at inland and coastal waters.

This superb raptor specializes on hunting large fish. It dives from up to 75 m above the water, grabs the stunned fish in its talons and flies off still grappling with its prey.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Usually socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs; occasionally polyandrous (especially in the Red Sea) with up to four males assisting one female; sometimes polygynous with two females sharing a nest, or one male defending the nests of two females.

Parental roles: The male performs most territory defense. Both adults build the nest and incubate. The female tends the nestlings for 5 weeks with food delivered by the male. After that, both adults provide food. *Nest:* A huge pile of sticks and debris to 2 m high and 1.5 m across, lined, built on the ground, often on a prominent headland or occasionally on a coral pinnacle, artificial structure or mangrove. Pairs have up to six nests. Some sites are re-used annually: a nest on Tiran Island may have been reused for 80 years. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 34–37 days. *Nestling period:* 44–59 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** The Osprey is the only member of its family. **WINGSPAN:** 127–174 cm.



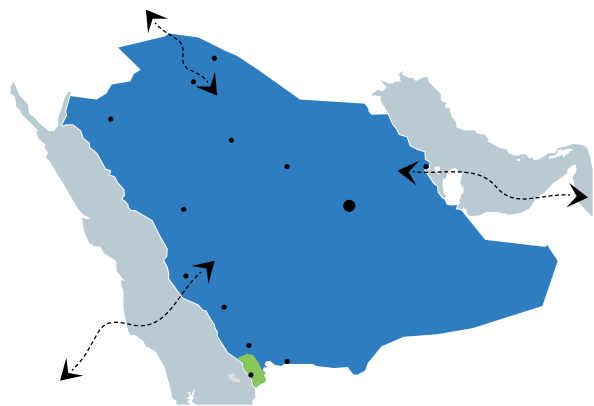
Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-WINGED KITE**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Elanus caeruleus*
ARABIC NAME: زرق شائع (الحدأة سوداء الجناح)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–37 cm / 197–277 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in southwestern Europe, northern and sub-Saharan Africa, Arabia and India southeast to New Guinea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, rare visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, a few pairs breed in the southern Tihamah and western foothills, though perhaps not every year. These birds may wander widely over winter. **HABITAT:** Below 500 m in cereal fields with scattered trees, especially acacia and Dobera. It is often found near flowing wadis or irrigation ditches. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly rodents, along with bats, small birds, reptiles and insects. It hunts from a perch or by hovering and then descending slowly in stages with the wings held high and the feet dangling below followed by a sudden and rapid plunge onto the prey on the ground. It also takes aerial insects on the wing. *Activity:* Diurnal and crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Generally socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, but sometimes sequentially polyandrous with



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh

the female laying a second clutch with a new male. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates while the male defends the territory. *Nest:* A thin, flat platform made of twigs, lined with grass and rootlets, 4–5 m above ground (sometimes 2–20 m) in solitary trees. A new nest is built annually. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 31 days. *Nestling period:* 30–40 days. *Broods:* Opportunistic, occasionally multi-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 77–92 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable regionally due to its very small population size. Fortunately, it appears to be slowly increasing in numbers presumably due to an increase in cereal fields, which support a suitable prey base.

This very stylish bird of prey with stunning red eyes is expanding its range globally, including in eastern Saudi Arabia due to an increase in irrigated cereal fields.



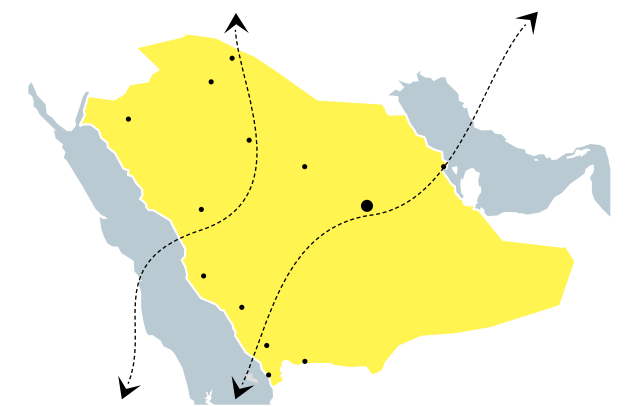
COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pernis apivorus*
ARABIC NAME: عقيب العسل الأوروبية (حوام العسل الأوروبي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 52–60 cm / 360–1,050 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to Iran and Mongolia and winters 4,000–8,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant.* This specialized raptor with highly variable coloration is a rare passage migrant through Saudi Arabia in autumn (Sep–Nov), though it is very rare in spring. Many tens of thousands take the main north to south migration route, which passes west of the Red Sea from Suez, but a few pass east of the Red Sea and come through Saudi Arabia. There is a significant funneling of birds as they cross the Bab al-Mandab Strait from Yemen into Djibouti during autumn. There is no Bab al-Mandab migration in spring. Instead, spring birds presumably move north through northeastern Africa. **HABITAT:** This soaring bird can be found above any environment on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Highly specialized, consisting of the larvae, pupae and adults of colonial hymenoptera (mainly wasps and hornets), digging out or attacking nests. It even follows wasps in flight for up to 8 km to locate and prey upon their nests. It also takes a number of reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds. It has not been observed practicing its special diet in Arabia and probably passes the peninsula without eating. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Migrating groups of around 50 birds have been seen moving south near Yanbu'. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This raptor is highly polymorphic with extremely variable plumage. At least ten adult and seven juvenile morphs have been identified. Despite its name, it is not actually a buzzard but a kite. **WINGSPAN:** 118–150 cm.

These graceful soaring raptors make large detours of around 700 km to obtain favorable winds for migrating across the world's most immense deserts.

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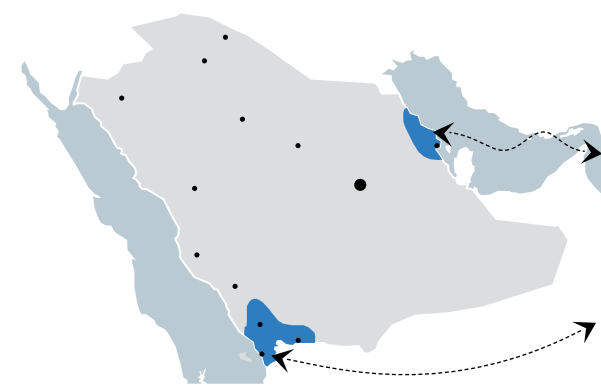
Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
ARABIC NAME: عقيب العسل شرقية (حوام متوهم)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 52–68 cm / M: 750–1,280 g; F: 950–1,490 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory; resident populations occur in southern Asia; migratory populations breed from eastern Kazakhstan to Japan and winter 4,000 km south within the resident range and west to Arabia. The widespread occurrence of the species throughout Arabia and the Middle East in the last two decades may be due to a western range extension by the central Asian population. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor, erratic year-round visitor.* This variably-colored raptor has been recorded in Saudi Arabia only since 1994 and is becoming more frequent. Some come to Saudi Arabia to spend the winter, while others seem to arrive in late summer and autumn and it may be a year-round visitor. **HABITAT:** Variable including woodlands, irrigated parks and the southwest highlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Highly specialized, consisting of colonial bees and wasps and especially their larvae. It preys upon the nest to eat the larvae, as well as the honeycomb and honey. It attacks nests in tree holes or hanging from limbs,



Winter visitor, summer visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

or digs the nest out of the ground with its feet. To protect itself from its stinging prey, the bird has a thin bill with a hooked tip, long talons on the feet, scale-like feathers around the eyes and a long fleshy cere around the bill with slit-like nares (nostrils). It also takes other insects, reptiles, small mammals and birds. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is highly polymorphic displaying extremely variable plumage coloration. Despite its name, honey buzzards are not actually buzzards; they are kites. **WINGSPAN:** 115–155 cm.

As their name suggests, honey-buzzards prey mainly on the nests of bees and wasps. They are so specialized that they can identify pollen-rich food sources by smell alone.



COMMON NAME: **BEARDED VULTURE**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Lammergeier
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gypaetus barbatus*
ARABIC NAME: ستل (النسر الملتحي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly decreasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 94–125 cm / 4,500–7,100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Africa, southwestern Arabia and southern Europe to the Himalayas. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Possibly extinct breeding resident.* This unique vulture once bred throughout the highlands, but now appears extinct in the Kingdom. Hopefully some remain in the most inaccessible areas. **HABITAT:** Sandstone cliffs in the northwest, rugged mountainous areas in the west and the escarpment edge in the southwest. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly bones – preferably older, lighter

Unlike any other vertebrate, this enormous vulture eats mainly bones. Sadly it may now be extinct in Saudi Arabia.

bones and those with a higher fat content. It eats the bone and the marrow and even the regurgitated pellets of eagle-owls to obtain the bones contained within. It occasionally eats carcasses of small mammals. It swallows small bones whole or drops large bones from up to 80 m above ground to shatter them on rocks below. Adults have a home range of thousands of square kilometers. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build and defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A massive pile of sticks, thickly lined with wool, occasionally dung, rags and paper, placed on a sheltered ledge, or in a recess or cavity on a sheer cliff. Usually several nests are built in each territory, used alternately, or the same nest is used for several years. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 55–60 days. *Nestling period:* 110–130 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 231–283 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird has suffered a significant decline in Arabia in recent decades due to persecution, habitat loss, non-target poisoning and collision with power lines. Less than 50 pairs still exist in western Yemen.



Breeding resident (possibly extinct)
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Southwest highlands?



COMMON NAME: **EGYPTIAN VULTURE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Neophron percnopterus*

ARABIC NAME: رخمة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

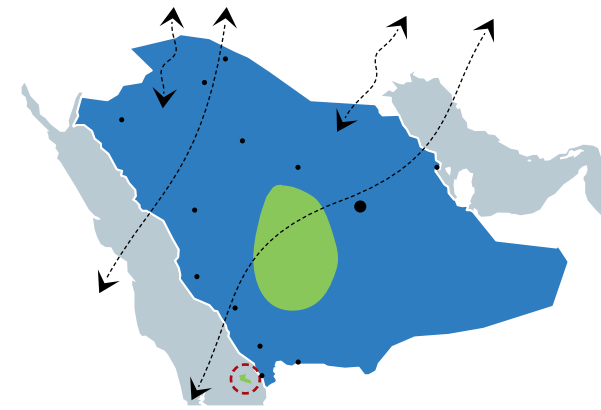
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 54–70 cm / 1,600–2,400 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across the Sahel region of Africa through Arabia to India; migratory populations breed in northern Africa, around the Mediterranean to China and Nepal and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, scarce passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This unique white vulture is a passage migrant and winter visitor. It once bred throughout the central-western deserts, but the only recent recorded breeding is at Farasan Islands. **HABITAT:** Breeds in open habitats, often arid and remote, with cliffs and rock outcrops. It also forages at dumps, markets, abattoirs, farms and fish-sorting areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Dead vertebrates. It occasionally hunts weak or sick animals and sometimes drops stones onto large eggs to extract the contents. It detects prey from 1 km away, travelling 80 km per day.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Farasan Islands

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Small groups gather at rich food sources. Up to 200 birds were at a wetland in the southwest in the 1990s, but the population has since declined markedly. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, occasionally polyandrous with one female nesting with two males. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A platform of twigs, lined with wool, hair, rags, paper, fur, skin and bones, placed in a cavity or recess in a cliff. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 39–42 days. *Nestling period:* 70–90 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 146–175 cm. **CONSERVATION:** Declining rapidly (with 90% lost in the past 50 years in Arabia) due to poisoning, collision with power lines, habitat loss and persecution. Oman remains a stronghold.

This small vulture has been recorded dropping stones onto the otherwise unbreakable eggs of ostrich and other large birds in order to eat their contents.



COMMON NAME: **BATELEUR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Terathopius ecaudatus*

ARABIC NAME: عقاب بهلوانية (العقاب المصفق)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 55–70 cm / 1,820–2,950 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the African savannah and in southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Possibly extinct or very rare and erratic year-round visitor.* This rare and beautiful eagle occurs in the Tihamah and avoids the cloud covered 'Asir highlands. All records have been from July to April and especially

While this acrobatic tailless eagle has never been common in Saudi Arabia, it is still concerning that it has not been recorded in the Kingdom since 1999.

in December when pairs and courtship displays have been observed. It conceivably breeds or has bred in remote areas in very low numbers. Alternatively, it may now be a very rare visitor from Africa, with the last confirmed sighting in 1999. **HABITAT:** Open parkland and farmland on the Tihamah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* A wide range of reptiles, small mammals and birds and occasionally carrion, notably road kill. It is a dynamic hunter that rushes through the air with great speed and agility, catching birds and small mammals by surprise. It hunts by scanning back and forth about 50 m above the ground with a distinctive low gliding flight, before swooping in a tight spiral onto its prey below. It can cover up to 500 km per day in search of food, spending perhaps 80% of the day aloft. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Sometimes described as the handsomest of all eagles, the Bateleur has a unique tilting flight manner and at speed its wings make a whooshing sound audible over a considerable distance. In fact, its name derives from the mid-19th century French word for “acrobatic juggler”, which refers to the bird’s side-to-side tilting flight. **WINGSPAN:** 168–190 cm.



Erratic visitor (possibly extinct)

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Southern Tihamah?



COMMON NAME: **SHORT-TOED SNAKE-EAGLE**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Short-toed Eagle
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Circaetus gallicus*
ARABIC NAME: صرارة (عقاب الثعابين)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 62–70 cm / M: 1,200–2,000 g; F: 1,300–2,300 g (10% heavier)



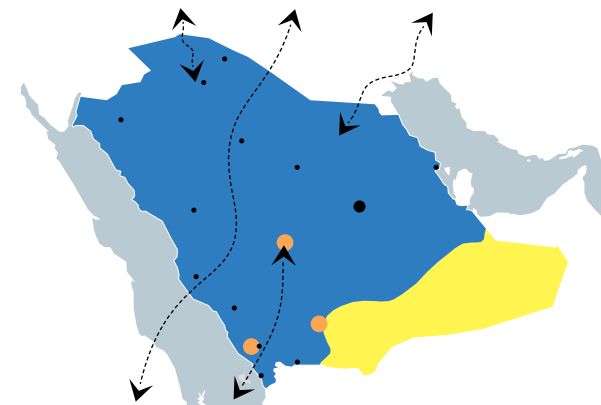
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations exist in India and Pakistan; migratory populations breed from northwestern Africa and the Mediterranean region to Mongolia and winter 3,000–5,000 km south and southwest mainly in the Sahel region of Africa.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Rare breeding migrant, scarce passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This impressive snake-eating eagle occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant and winter visitor and breeds in central regions and the southwest highlands. **HABITAT:** Breeds at isolated jabals with scattered acacias in central regions and in juniper woodland in the southwest highlands. Over winter it also occurs in remote, broken country with rock outcrops, hills and mountains with scattered trees. It can appear anywhere on migration.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly snakes (up to 1.5 m) and other reptiles taken by scanning from 20–150 m above ground before dropping onto prey. Prey is usually swallowed whole, sometimes in flight.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most incubation. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* A shallow platform (diameter 60 cm) made of twigs, lined with finer twigs and placed around 3 m above ground in an acacia or juniper tree. A new nest is built annually, usually in the same territory. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 45–47 days. *Nestling period:* 70–75 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 166–188 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable in Arabia due to the population containing less than 1,000 mature individuals. Fortunately the small population appears stable.

This photogenic raptor specializes on snakes, which can comprise up to 80% of the diet. It usually catches one or two snakes per day with some measuring 1.5 meters long.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 120
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Lake Asfar



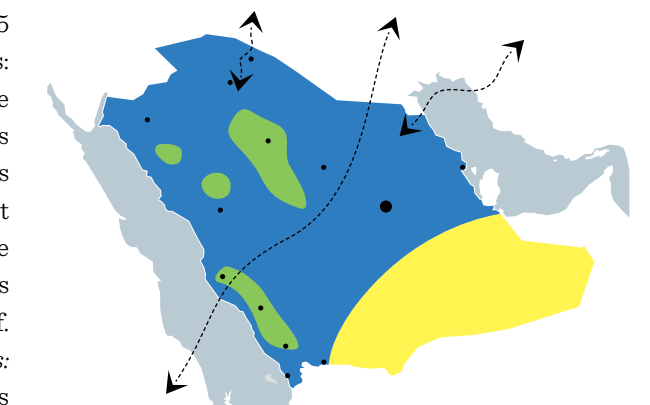
COMMON NAME: **GRIFFON VULTURE**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gyps fulvus*
ARABIC NAME: نسر أوراسي (النسر الأسمر)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 95–100 cm / 6,000–11,000 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in northwestern Africa and southern Europe through the Middle East and Arabia to northwestern India and southern Kazakhstan; migratory populations breed around the Caucasus and winter in the Sahel region of Africa and from Arabia to India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This splendid vulture occurs in Saudi Arabia on migration and in winter (Sep–Mar) and breeds in western and north-central areas. **HABITAT:** Breeds in broken, mountainous country with high cliffs for nesting and roosting. It also visits the Tihamah lowlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Carrion, especially of ungulates, such as ibex, gazelle, sheep, goats and camels). *Activity:* Diurnal.

Weighing up to 11 kg, this is the most majestic soaring bird of the Kingdom's mountainous regions. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Groups of up to 15 that forage communally using social cues: individuals fan out from the roosting site for tens of kilometers in search of food; if one bird finds prey, the other birds will join it. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in loose colonies, usually containing 2–3 pairs but sometimes up to 50 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A thin pad made of sticks, sparsely lined with grass and leafy twigs, placed on a sheltered ledge or in a small cave on a high cliff. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 48–54 days. *Nestling period:* 110–115 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 240–280 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as regionally endangered due to a decline of 50–80% from 1972–2015 in Arabia due to secondary poisoning (eating poisoned prey) and the reduction in herbivore prey in the landscape.

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Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah Escarpment



COMMON NAME: **CINEREOUS VULTURE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aegypius monachus*

ARABIC NAME: نسر مسود

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

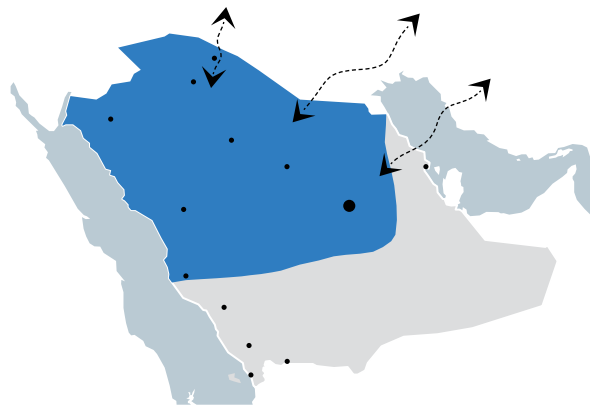
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 98–107 cm / 7,000–12,500 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: resident populations occur in Iberia and from Turkey to Mongolia; some populations winter 1,500 km south from Turkey and Arabia to the Himalayas. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor*. This titanic vulture is a regular but rare winter visitor (Dec–Mar) to the northern half of the Kingdom. There are no records in the southwest or the Rub’ al-Khali. One satellite-tracked bird breeding in Georgia travelled widely in central Saudi Arabia from mid-December to mid-March before returning to its breeding ground. **HABITAT:** Open plains and mountains where the carcasses of domestic animals or wildlife can be found. It also forages at garbage dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Animal carcasses, including domestic stock, road kill and wildlife. It prefers large mammal carcasses, but will also eat the remains of smaller animals such as hares, rodents,

With a wingspan approaching three meters, this colossal vulture cruises south from its breeding grounds around Georgia to spend the winter in northern Saudi Arabia.

reptiles and birds. It also hunts and eats small live prey, including snakes, lizards and even insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually encountered singly, sometimes pairs, once three at Dibdibah, but will congregate with its own species or other vultures at animal carcasses. It dominates smaller species at feeding aggregations, including Griffon Vulture. It also roosts with Griffon Vultures and Lappet-faced Vultures. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 250–295 cm.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **LAPPET-FACED VULTURE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Torgos tracheliotos*

ARABIC NAME: نسر آذن

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

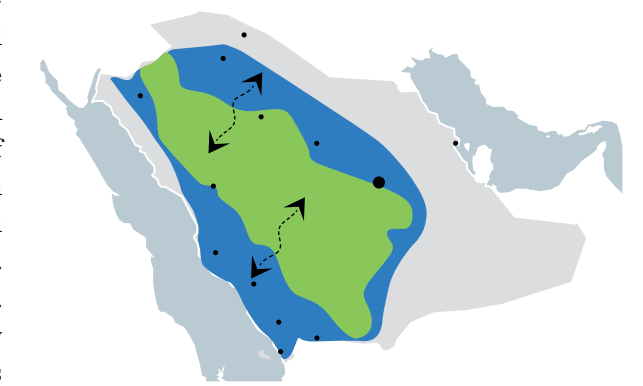
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 115 cm / 5,400–9,400 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across sub-Saharan Africa and in Arabia. Three subspecies are recognized, including *T. t. negevensis*, which is endemic to Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. It occurs mainly in central regions. **HABITAT:** Breeds in vast plains with scattered or isolated flat-topped trees and forages widely over open habitats. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Carrion, skin and bone fragments taken mainly by scavenging from large or small carcasses up to 200 km from the nest. *Activity:* Diurnal, it is rarely active before 9:00 am. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs, but 45 have been recorded together at a large carcass and 162 have been recorded roosting in Mahazat as-Sayd in autumn. It dominates all other birds at a feeding site. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A shallow platform (2 m diameter) made of sticks, lined with grass, fur, hair and skin and placed 3–5 m above ground in the crown of a tree (usually acacia). Each pair may have several nests used in rotation or the same nest may be used in consecutive years. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* 54–56 days. *Nestling period:* 129 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 280 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is endangered globally because only a very small and rapidly declining population remains. It has been reduced significantly by accidental poisoning by farmers using strychnine and other chemicals for predator control, disturbance as people and livestock rest beneath nest trees and persecution by people who mistakenly assume it preys on livestock.

These enormous birds can take 355 days to complete the nesting process; thus, over summer the young are exposed to some of the hottest conditions on earth.

These enormous birds can take 355 days to complete the nesting process; thus, over summer the young are exposed to some of the hottest conditions on earth.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area



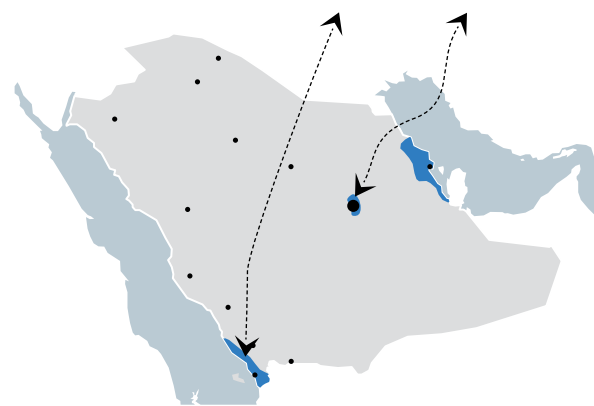
COMMON NAME: GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Clanga clanga*
ARABIC NAME: عقاب رقطاء كبرى
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 59–71 cm / M: 1,500–1,900 g; F: 1,800–2,500 g (25% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Eastern Europe to northeastern China and winters 3,000 km south from the Mediterranean through Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* This majestic eagle winters in small numbers along the coasts and at some inland wetlands. It appears to avoid the northwest as it has not been recorded at Tabuk and may not winter north of Yanbu'. Some individuals might also stay for the summer. **HABITAT:** Coastal areas with mangroves, reedbeds or other tall vegetation. It also occurs inland at large wetlands containing reedbeds, bushes and open water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small mammals and birds taken alive, as well as carrion, including road kill. Its most frequent bird prey is large waterbirds, such as herons and ducks. It also hunts and eats amphibians, reptiles and even insects.

Like many raptors, the female is larger and more powerful than the male. The larger female can dominate the male, while the smaller male can catch more nimble prey.

It spends much of its time perched and watching for potential victims but will also soar high and then dive down to take prey and walk along wet margins searching for smaller animals. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found alone but several may take up winter residences in an extensive wetland and up to eight have been seen in a day at Sabkhat al-Fasl. It mixes with other species on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** May also appear as a very rare pale morph. **WINGSPAN:** 155–180 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable globally due to its small population that appears to be decreasing because of extensive habitat loss and persistent persecution. It does not occur around any permanent human presence.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: TAWNY EAGLE
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila rapax*
ARABIC NAME: عقاب صحراء
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 60–75 cm / 1,600–3,100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Africa, Pakistan and India with a small population in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This formidable eagle is found in the Tihamah and foothills of the southwest. **HABITAT:** Below 2,000 m in cultivated and lightly wooded areas, hillsides near water and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small mammals up to the size of a Rock Hyrax, as well as birds (at least as large as ducks and Helmeted Guineafowl),

This fearsome predator hunts prey as large as Helmeted Guineafowl and Rock hyrax, which can weigh twice as much as the eagle itself.

lizards, carrion and insects. It also scavenges at rubbish dumps. It takes prey by dropping from a perch or after soaring, walking along the ground while scavenging, or stealing from other large birds. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary though groups may form at rich feeding sites. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and performs most of the incubation and chick rearing, with prey delivered by the male. *Nest:* A large platform (1 m diameter) made of sticks, probably lined with dry grass, placed 9–30 m above ground on a tree (or perhaps a pylon, as recorded increasingly in Yemen). The same nest may be re-used annually. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs (n=2). *Incubation:* 39–44 days. *Nestling period:* 76–85 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird occurs in multiple color morphs. **WINGSPAN:** 159–183 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered within Arabia due its decreasing population and because no subpopulation contains more than 1,000 mature individuals. It is vulnerable and declining globally due to consumption of poisoned carcasses, direct persecution and collision with power lines.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake

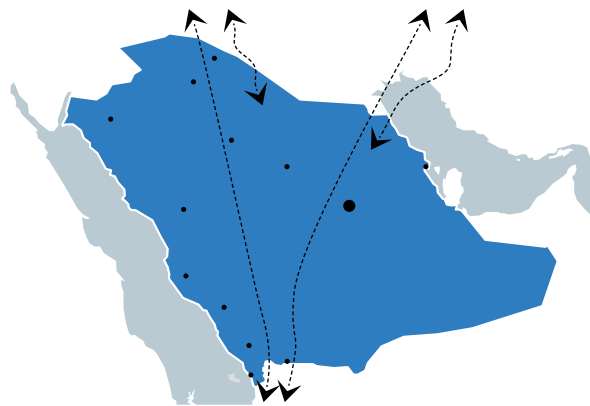


COMMON NAME: **STEPPE EAGLE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila nipalensis*
 ARABIC NAME: عقاب سهبية (عقاب السهول)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 72–81 cm / 2,400–3,900 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds on the steppes from the Caspian to northeastern China and winters 1,500–7,000 km south in eastern and southern Africa, Arabia and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* It is widespread as a winter visitor but many also migrate through to Yemen and then Africa. **HABITAT:** Favors human-modified sites, including rubbish dumps, farms and towns, but can appear almost anywhere in Saudi Arabia on migration, including the Rub' al-Khali. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Probably mainly rodents (as recorded in the breeding range). Accordingly, there are a number of reports in Saudi Arabia of it following ploughs and feeding on the displaced rodents. It may search for food on the ground or soar high in the air and then dive onto prey. It also takes carrion opportunistically, such as road kill and steals food from smaller raptors. Further, each rubbish dump attracts its coterie of Steppe Eagles, which seem to spend the entire winter at the one site. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It gathers in groups during migration, often with other eagles. Large concentrations may gather during migration, when several hundred can be seen near large cities. Once in mid-November around 1,000 were present in the Riyadh area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 160–200 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as globally endangered because it has undergone a very rapid decline within much of its breeding range as a result of the conversion of steppe habitat to agricultural land. It also suffers from persecution, hunting, collision with power lines and accidental poisoning throughout its range, including within Saudi Arabia.

More than one thousand endangered Steppe Eagles have been seen soaring above Riyadh in mid-November.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tayif escarpment



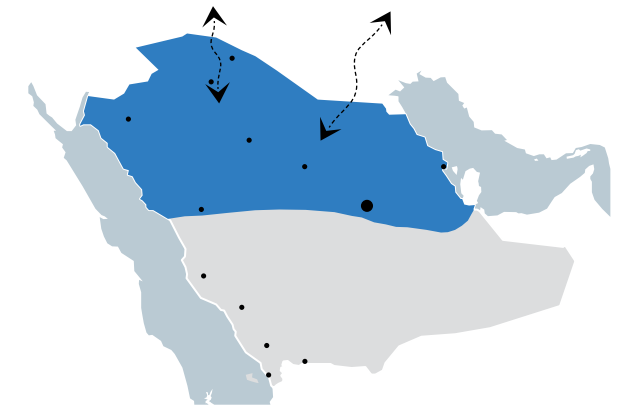
COMMON NAME: **EASTERN IMPERIAL EAGLE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila heliaca*
 ARABIC NAME: عقاب ملكية شرقية
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 72–84 cm / M: 2,450–2,720 g; F: 3,160–4,530 g (50% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to northeastern China and winter 3,000 km south and southwest in northeastern Africa, Arabia, northern India and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* This genuinely imperial eagle is an uncommon winter visitor mainly to the northern plains and central regions. A census revealed that many spend the winter on the northern plains, making it perhaps the most important wintering area in the world. Satellite tracked birds captured while wintering near Tayif flew to Russia, Kazakhstan and China. **HABITAT:** Open steppe deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly medium-sized mammals, such as rodents and some birds and less often some reptiles. It hunts by perching up and then pouncing down onto prey or by soaring above and

Northern Saudi Arabia is perhaps the world's most important wintering area for this threatened and truly imperial eagle.

diving onto it. It has been seen to eat Dhub (Spiny-tailed Lizard), which along with hares are probably taken regularly in Saudi Arabia. It also eats carrion and the high population of domestic ungulates on the northern plains must provide a significant proportion of its food. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in groups of up to four. It rarely feeds alongside other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 180–215 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable globally due to its small population size, which is declining from habitat loss at its breeding grounds as well as persecution, collision with power lines and loss of prey base throughout its range, including within Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **GOLDEN EAGLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila chrysaetos*

ARABIC NAME: عقاب مذهبة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

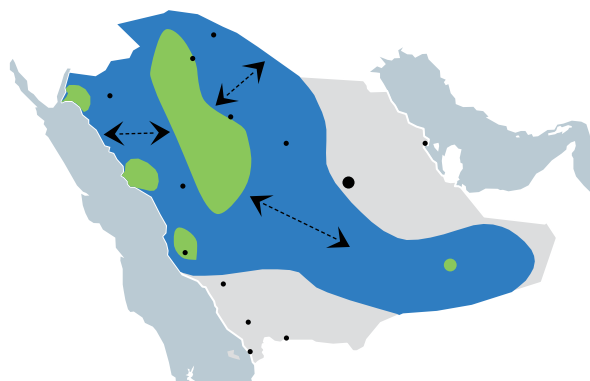
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 75–90 cm / M: 2,840–4,550 g; F: 3,630–6,665 g (40% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in North America, northwestern Africa and much of Eurasia with Arabia at the southern edge of the breeding range; migratory populations breed in Canada and winter in USA. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This breath-taking eagle breeds mainly in northwestern and northern-central areas and in the western highlands. **HABITAT:** Vast, flat or slightly undulating hard sand or gravel plains, either treeless or with scattered acacias, interspersed with rocky outcrops in northwestern and northern-central areas, or rocky, mountainous areas in the western highlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small to medium-sized mammals, including hares, rodents, hedgehogs and foxes, as well lizards (particularly Dhub) and birds (including ravens). It also takes carrion, including domestic stock. It usually captures prey on the ground with a low hunting flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, lined with grass and leafy branches, placed on a sheltered ledge on a rock outcrop (or perhaps a tree as recorded in Oman and UAE). Usually two or more nests are built in each territory, used in rotation. The same nest is often used for several years, becoming huge (a nest near Hayil was more than 2 m deep). *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 43–45 days. *Nestling period:* 65–70 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 190–227 cm. **CONSERVATION:** Listed as endangered regionally because of its small population, which is declining due to poisoning, persecution, hunting and a reduced prey base.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200
BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **VERREAUX'S EAGLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila verreauxii*

ARABIC NAME: عقاب خدارية (العقاب الأسود)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 80–90 cm / M: 3,000–4,150 g; F: 3,100–5,800 g (25% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in southern and eastern Africa with small populations in Arabia north to Jordan. Its distribution is closely linked to the presence of Rock Hyrax, which is its main food source. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This imposing black eagle is a very rare breeding resident in Saudi Arabia, occurring only in the western highlands and foothills. **HABITAT:** Above 200 m in mountainous regions with suitable cliffs and ravines for nesting. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Primarily Rock Hyrax occasionally supplemented with juvenile Hamadryas Baboons. It captures prey by surprise by flying rapidly around a hillside or ridge. It may also hunt cooperatively with one individual distracting the potential victim while the other bird attacks from behind. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest (mainly the female), incubate, tend the young and vigorously defend the nest (including throwing or dropping rocks, earth and other missiles to repel predators and intruders). *Nest:* A huge platform made of sticks (1–2 m diameter, 1 m deep), lined with green vegetation, placed on a cliff ledge. Nests are often re-used for many years. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 43–47 days. *Nestling period:* 84–99 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 181–219 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered regionally due to its small population size containing less than 250 mature individuals. Fortunately this very small population appears to be increasing within Arabia, perhaps because of an increasing supply of juvenile baboons acting as an alternative food source, though this needs to be substantiated.

This beautiful black and white eagle hunts mainly Rock Hyrax, but will also take young baboons weighing 2–3 times more than the bird itself.

This supremely powerful raptor has the largest wingspan of any eagle in Saudi Arabia. It uses its massive talons to kill prey as large as a fox.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Primarily Rock Hyrax occasionally supplemented with juvenile Hamadryas Baboons. It captures prey by surprise by flying rapidly around a hillside or ridge. It may also hunt cooperatively with one individual distracting the potential victim while the other bird attacks from behind. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest (mainly the female), incubate, tend the young and vigorously defend the nest (including throwing or dropping rocks, earth and other missiles to repel predators and intruders). *Nest:* A huge platform made of sticks (1–2 m diameter, 1 m deep), lined with green vegetation, placed on a cliff ledge. Nests are often re-used for many years. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 43–47 days. *Nestling period:* 84–99 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 181–219 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered regionally due to its small population size containing less than 250 mature individuals. Fortunately this very small population appears to be increasing within Arabia, perhaps because of an increasing supply of juvenile baboons acting as an alternative food source, though this needs to be substantiated.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abha



COMMON NAME: **BONELLI'S EAGLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquila fasciata*

ARABIC NAME: عقاب بونلية (عقاب مخططة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 65–72 cm / M: 1,400–2,240 g; F: 2,100–3,025 g (40% heavier)

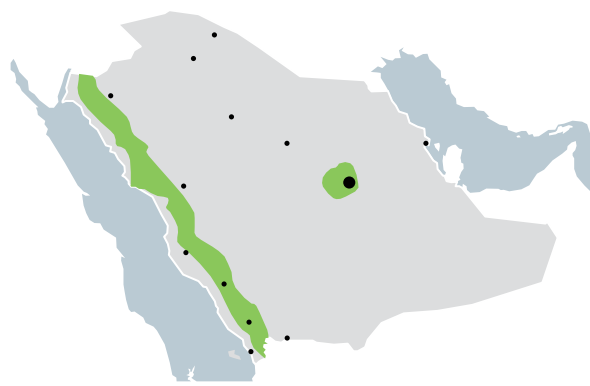


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive; occurs in northwestern Africa and southern Europe through Arabia to southeastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this superb hunter occurs in the 'Asir and the Hijaz Mountains and along the Tuwaiq Escarpment. **HABITAT:** Rugged mountainous areas and broken country with cliffs, trees and bushes.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Opportunistic, mainly includes medium-sized birds (such as partridges, pigeons and doves) and mammals (such as Cape Hare) depending on local availability. It captures most prey on the ground by skillfully approaching the unsuspecting animal through trees and around bushes, before attacking them with a swift and agile burst, though it can also capture birds in flight with a rapid pursuit. Pairs sometimes hunt cooperatively. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs.

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A large platform made of sticks, lined with fine plant material, placed on a ledge or recess on a high steep cliff. There may be several nests in a territory, used alternately, or the same nest may be refurbished and used for several successive years. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 37–40 days. *Nestling period:* 60–65 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 150–180 cm.

This very agile raptor captures most of its prey on the ground, but will also hunt birds in flight. Its chief weapon is surprise.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rugged southwest highlands



COMMON NAME: **BOOTED EAGLE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hieraetus pennatus*

ARABIC NAME: عقاب مسيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

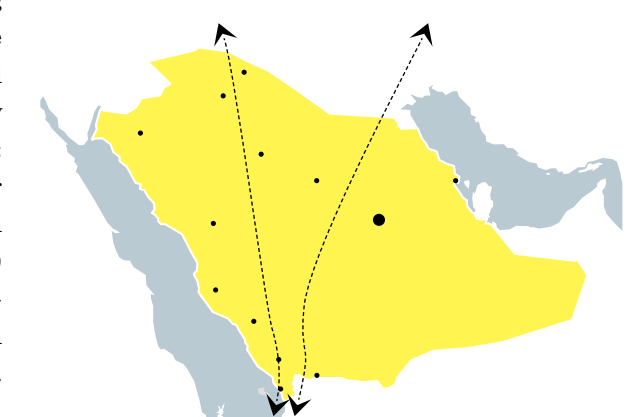
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–51 cm / M: 510–770 g; F: 840–1,250 g (60% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory; breeds from northwestern Africa and Iberia to Mongolia and winters 1,000–8,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant*. In Saudi Arabia, this soaring raptor is probably exclusively a passage migrant en route to Africa via the Bab al-Mandab Strait in Yemen. One or two records in December and January

Like other soaring birds, this migratory raptor uses thermals to rise high into the air before gliding onwards in search of the next thermal.

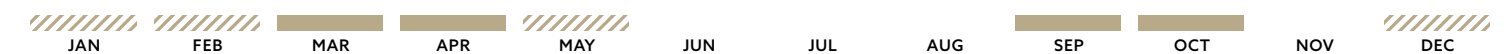
may be stragglers still passing through the Kingdom rather than winter visitors. **HABITAT:** This soaring bird can be found above any habitat on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small to medium-sized birds, such as pigeons, partridges and ravens, small mammals, such as rodents and hares and occasionally lizards. This small, active eagle takes prey on the ground or in foliage, pouncing from a perch or dropping from soaring flight. Its flight action is swift and agile when hunting. It probably does not feed during its passage; instead, it is usually seen soaring through the Kingdom. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually observed as singletons but on migration 2–3 may occur together sometimes with other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This eagle comes in two color morphs (pale or dark) each with several intermediate plumages. While many birds of prey are sexually size dimorphic, the female Booted Eagle is noticeably much larger than the male. The lightest female is usually still larger than the heaviest male. **WINGSPAN:** 113–138 cm.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

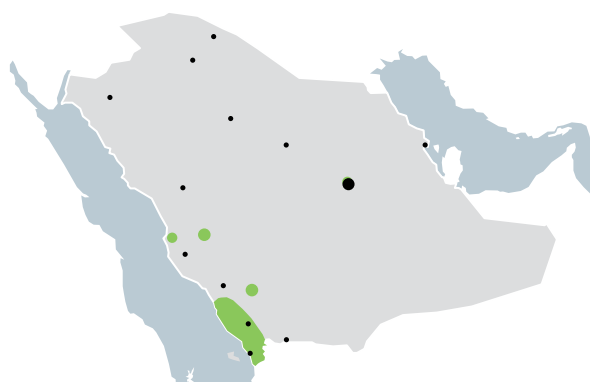
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hadda Escarpment



COMMON NAME: **DARK CHANTING-GOSHAWK**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Melierax metabates*
ARABIC NAME: باشق صياح داكن (الباشق الحزين الترتيل)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–50 cm / M: 646–695 g; F: 841–852 g (25% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of sub-Saharan Africa, with small populations in southern Morocco and southwestern Arabia. Five subspecies are recognized, including *M. p. ignoscens*, which is endemic to southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this highly efficient predator occurs in the Tihamah lowlands and foothills and plains to the east of the highlands. **HABITAT:** Below 1,900 m in scattered trees and bushes in the Tihamah lowlands and foothills, or dry scrub plains east of the western highlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small vertebrates, including reptiles, especially lizards and snakes, birds (up to the size of Helmeted Guineafowl), small mammals and frogs, as well as large invertebrates, such as grasshoppers, locusts and beetles. It hunts mainly by gliding down on prey from a perch. It will also take carrion. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest. The female incubates and tends the young, mostly with prey provided by the male. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, lined with debris, dung, rags, dry mud, stones and grass, placed in a tree (including acacia, palm and fig). The nest is sometimes re-used in subsequent years, though more likely a new one is built nearby. *Clutch:* 1–2 eggs. *Incubation:* 36–38 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest and climb out onto nearby branches at 35–43 days and fly at 50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 86–104 cm.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 750
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Ahad al-Masarha



COMMON NAME: **GABAR GOSHAWK**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Micronisus gabar*
ARABIC NAME: باشق عابد (باشق قبر)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–36 cm / M: 90–173 g; F: 167–240 g (55% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of sub-Saharan Africa (except the equatorial forest belt), with a small population in southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. This very small but very effective bird of prey occurs in the southern Tihamah (south of al-Qunfudhah) and adjacent foothills. **HABITAT:** Acacia thickets and mixed open woodland, often near cultivated areas, in the southern Tihamah. It also occurs in wadis in adjacent foothills. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small birds (up to 80 g), or occasionally medium-sized birds, such as Helmeted Guineafowl or coucal. It often preys on the nests of small birds, such as weavers. It also hunts for small mammals, snakes and some large insects. It hunts making a sudden dash after potential prey from within cover, often in pairs. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building and incubation while the male provides her with food. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow, relatively small (26 cm diameter) platform made of twigs, lined with finer twigs, rootlets, grass and paper, placed about 7 m above ground in a tamarind or thorny acacia; flecks of the nesting female's down or cobwebs may be attached to the nest exterior for camouflage. *Clutch:* 3 eggs (n=1). *Incubation:* 33–35 days. *Nestling period:* 35–36 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **NOTE:** The female is often visibly larger than the male (sometimes 90% heavier than her partner). This allows her to specialize on different prey, physically dominate the male and devote more energy to reproduction. **WINGSPAN:** 56–66 cm.

This very small and skillful raptor preys on little birds through active pursuit, nest robbing, or simply running after them through dense cover.



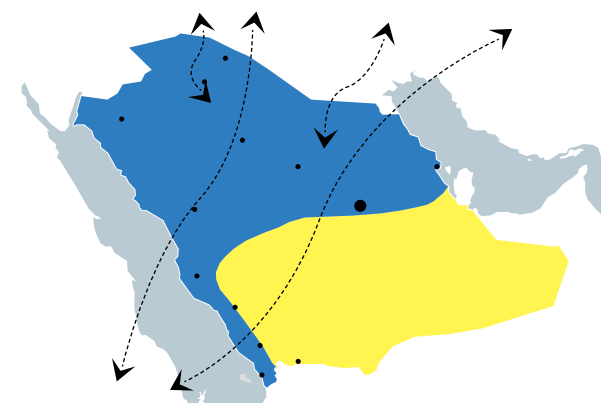
Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 250
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: WESTERN MARSH-HARRIER
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Circus aeruginosus*
ARABIC NAME: مرزة مستنقعية
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 43–54 cm / M: 405–730 g; F: 540–960 g (30% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean to Iran; migratory populations breed from Western Europe to Mongolia and winter 2,000–7,000 km south in southern Europe, Africa, Arabia and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Common passage migrant, common winter visitor. This versatile predator occurs as a broad front passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct) through the Kingdom. It has increased in numbers in recent decades and can now be seen at every wetland on migration and at large wetlands over winter (Nov–Feb). **HABITAT:** Over winter it occurs at large wetlands with extensive reedbeds, as well as mangroves and rough, bushy areas near water. On migration it also visits pivot-irrigated fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Opportunistic, birds, rodents, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and carrion. It prefers small or medium-sized birds. It hunts using a low, buoyant flight over marshy vegetation before dropping suddenly onto ground or water prey. Its approach causes diving birds to immediately



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



submerge and surface feeding birds to immediately scatter. Unlike many other raptors, harriers habitually fly low during migration and feed as they go. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It hunts solitarily, but large numbers (sometimes over 50) can gather at rich wetlands or pivot-irrigated fields over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Like all harriers it holds its wings in a characteristic “V shape” when it glides. There is considerable plumage variation within the species. Older birds are generally paler. More females are seen in Arabia indicating the sexes have different migration routes or separate wintering areas. **WINGSPAN:** 115–145 cm.

The mortal enemy of reed-warblers and water birds, the marsh-harrier flies low and slowly over reedbeds in search of its next meal.

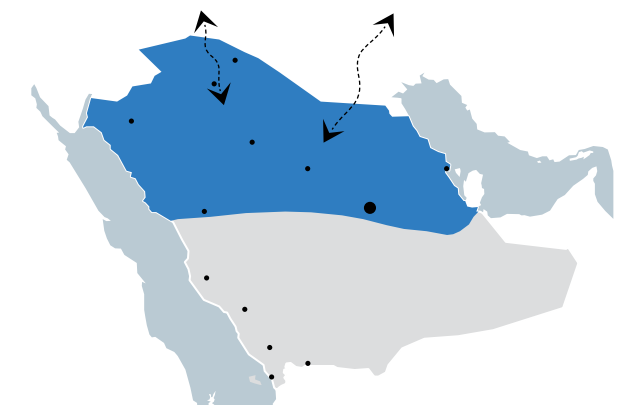
COMMON NAME: HEN HARRIER
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Circus cyaneus*
ARABIC NAME: مرزة الدجاج
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 42–50 cm / M: 300–400 g; F: 370–708 g (50% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in western Europe; migratory populations breed throughout most of northern Eurasia and winter up to 5,000 km south in northwestern Africa and southern Europe east through northern Arabia to China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Rare winter visitor. In Saudi Arabia, this sexually dimorphic harrier is a rare winter visitor in the north of the Kingdom, which is the southern limit of its winter range. It is likely to be more common after a wet spring. **HABITAT:** Crops, such as irrigated wheat fields, near wetlands, or dairy farms with hay

The sexes of this bird appear completely different. Unlike the small gray-white male, the female is streaky brown, 10% larger and 50% heavier.

fields and numerous rodents for prey. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** Diet: Mainly rodents and small ground birds, but also reptiles, amphibians and some insects. It hunts with a low, slow, buoyant flight, apparently using sound to locate prey and then surprising and pouncing on its victim on the ground. The wings are held in a “V shape” in gliding flight following several wing beats. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary when hunting, but groups gather to roost. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The females and immature birds of this species, Pallid Harrier and Montagu’s Harrier have mainly brown plumage and a white rump, unlike the handsome blue-gray of the male. They are difficult to differentiate in the field and are known collectively as “ringtail harriers”. **WINGSPAN:** 100–121 cm.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **PALLID HARRIER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Circus macrourus*

ARABIC NAME: مرزة بغاء (مرزة باهتة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–48 cm / M: 235–416 g; F: 402–550 g (45% heavier)

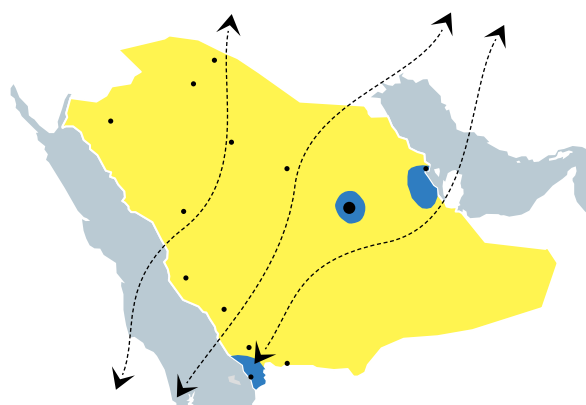


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from north of the Black Sea to western Mongolia and winters 2,000–9,000 km south mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and India, with smaller wintering populations in the Middle East and Arabia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this particularly beautiful harrier can be seen anywhere on the plains on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep–Nov) with females (“ringtails”) more common in spring. It passes through the Kingdom on a broad front, including across the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf. A few have been reported in winter in the Eastern Province, near Riyadh and on the southern Tihamah.

HABITAT: Over winter it is found at irrigated farmland, particularly wheat fields. On migration it prefers open herb-rich scrub desert. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly rodents and small birds, particularly grassland species like larks and pipits. It also takes reptiles and large insects, but not carrion. It hunts by slow, low flight upwind before dropping onto surprised prey on the ground. Passage migrants feed as they go north in spring and can be seen from one horizon to the other progressing in a more or less straight line while constantly searching for prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Although it is not generally a gregarious species, up to 12 have been recorded in the same general area during migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The most buoyant harrier in flight, it shows the typical harrier “V-shaped” profile as it glides. It is sometimes found under a bush sheltering from the midday sun. **WINGSPAN:** 100–121 cm.

The Latin name for the harriers – Circus – is derived from their tendency to circle in thermals. They rise up high in the air and then soar gracefully across the plains.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **MONTAGU'S HARRIER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Circus pygargus*

ARABIC NAME: مرزة مونتجوية (مرزة أبوشودة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

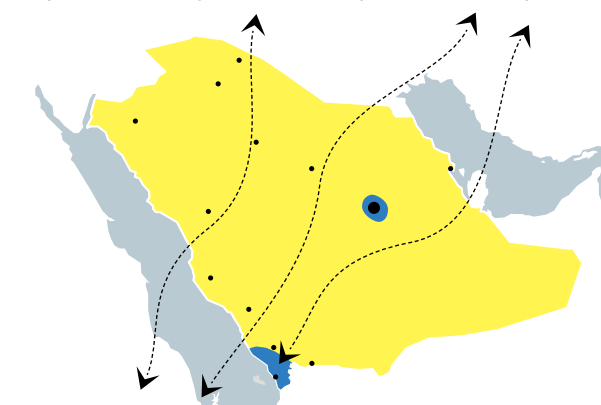
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 39–49 cm / M: 227–305 g; F: 254–445 g (30% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to western China and winters 3,000–9,000 km south mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this highly dimorphic harrier is primarily a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct). Winter visitors have been recorded near Riyadh, Haradh, Tabuk and on the southern Tihamah, and appear to have increased in recent years, probably due to the presence of abundant wheat fields in the Kingdom providing a suitable prey base.

On migration, this harrier specializes on small rodents and birds amongst irrigated wheat fields. It drops quickly from above onto its unsuspecting prey.

HABITAT: Grasslands, large open parklands and cereal fields, particularly irrigated wheat, stubble and fodder crops. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large insects (including locusts and grasshoppers), small mammals, small ground birds and lizards, all caught on the ground during stealthy, low, slow flight. Insects may be particularly important in winter. It quarters into the wind, hunting along a narrow straight strip of land before dropping suddenly onto prey on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is normally found singly but two or three passage migrants may pass in quick succession suggesting that they are moving together. Concentrations may occur at particularly favorable areas during migration. For example 30 or more were counted at a pivot-irrigated wheat farm in Qasim in April. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This harrier also occurs in a rare melanistic morph. **WINGSPAN:** 102–123 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qasim



COMMON NAME: **SHIKRA**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Accipiter badius*
ARABIC NAME: بيدق آسيوي (باشق كستنائي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25–44 cm / M: 100–193 g; F: 130–266 g (35% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in sub-Saharan Africa, southwestern Arabia and from Iran to Southeast Asia; migratory populations breed in Central Asia (from Kazakhstan to Bangladesh) and winter 1,000 km south within the range of the resident populations and in Kuwait. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this small but stocky raptor breeds mainly on the western escarpment in the ‘Asir Mountains. It is also occasionally recorded on passage across the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Above 400 m in woodlands, often in wadis and usually near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small reptiles, including lizards, geckos and skinks, small birds, small mammals, frogs and insects. It hunts by waiting undetected on a perch hidden amongst vegetation before making a short, sudden and powerful dash onto prey on the ground or in nearby vegetation. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest. The female performs most incubation and tends the young, mostly with prey brought by the male. *Nest:* A shallow platform made of twigs, often lined with pieces of bark and placed about 10 m above ground in a tree. The nest may be re-used in successive years, or a new one built nearby. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 28–29 days. *Nestling period:* 32 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded. **NOTE:** The Shikra has a particularly prominent tomial tooth, a bulge in the upper bill that it uses to sever the spinal chord of its prey. **WINGSPAN:** 48–68 cm.

This covert hunter catches lizards and birds with a short sharp dash from cover. Its short wings allow it to plunge through small gaps in the scrub and then onto its prey.



COMMON NAME: **LEVANT SPARROWHAWK**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Accipiter brevipes*
ARABIC NAME: باشق مشرقي
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–37 cm / M: 140–275 g; F: 183–290 g (15% heavier)

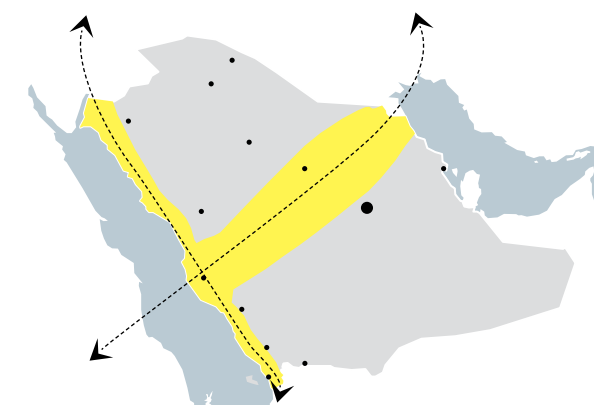


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the Balkans to the Caspian region and winters 4,000 km south in Sudan and South Sudan and possibly east to Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant*. This attractive, heavily barred sparrowhawk migrates south in dense flocks that

This bird usually migrates south through eastern Africa, but occasionally mass migration occurs to the east of the Red Sea with flocks of 500 moving south along the Tihamah.

usually pass to the west of the Gulf of Aqaba and Red Sea taking them into Africa and thus avoiding Saudi Arabia. However, occasionally flocks of up to 500 migrate south along a more easterly route that takes them through western Saudi Arabia along the Tihamah and western foothills to cross into Africa at the Bab al-Mandab Strait (Yemen). For instance,

a flock of over 550 were seen migrating over Wadi Rabigh in September 2013. There is probably also a light passage from northeast to southwest across the Kingdom. Accordingly, birds have recently been recorded at Dawmat al-Jandal. **HABITAT:** Open woodlands, thickets of trees and parklands in the Tihamah and foothills. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large insects (such as grasshoppers, locusts, beetles and dragonflies) and small vertebrates (including lizards, rodents, bats and small birds) hunted by low, fast and agile pursuit flight or picked from vegetation or the ground. It favors the edges of woods and clearings when hunting. Pairs and flocks may hunt together on migration. **Activity:** Diurnal and crepuscular. The autumn migration may extend into the night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Normally solitary or in pairs. On migration it may be seen in large circling flocks using warm thermals to gain height allowing them to glide south. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 64–74 cm.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rabigh

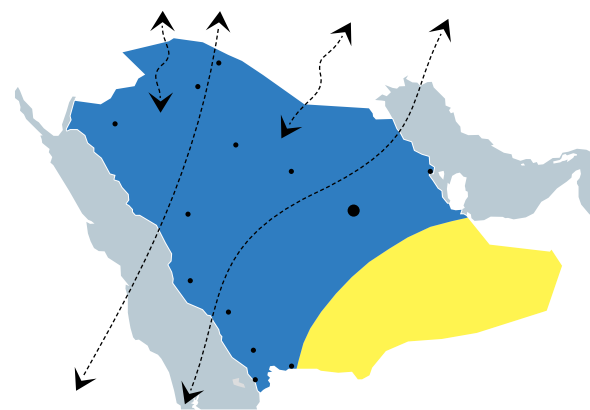


COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Accipiter nisus*
 ARABIC NAME: باشق أوراسي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–40 cm / M: 105–196 g; F: 185–350 g (80% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Europe, Iran, China and Japan; migratory populations breed across northern Eurasia and winter 3,000–5,000 km south in eastern Africa and southern Asia, including the Arabian Peninsula.
SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This highly effective hunter of small birds is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and winter visitor (Nov–Feb) to the Kingdom.
HABITAT: Areas with a mosaic of trees, bushes and hedges, such as gardens, parks and orchards, where it can hunt small passerines from cover.
FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Almost entirely small birds with a preference for ground-feeding species, such as sparrows, larks and pipits. Mammalian prey is insignificant in the diet. It captures prey by surprise using the cover of vegetation to hide its low flight approach. Males are much smaller than females and generally hunt in more densely wooded areas and therefore catch smaller prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually a solitary species but during migration or early winter several may be seen in the same general area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It flies with rapid bursts of wing beats, or it may soar in circles showing its rounded wings and broad tail, which often provokes small birds to mob it. **WINGSPAN:** 58–78 cm.

As a result of climate change, this sparrowhawk now migrates 10 days earlier than it did 30 years ago. It now has more time to wreak havoc on small birds.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh

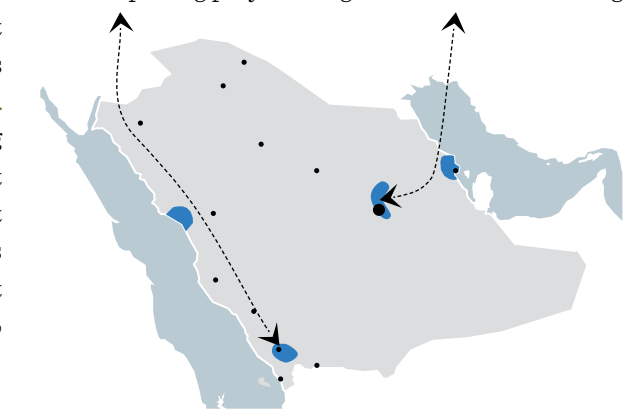


COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN GOSHAWK**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Accipiter gentilis*
 ARABIC NAME: باج
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–63 cm / M: 517–1,110 g; F: 820–2,200 g (85% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and partly migratory: resident populations occur throughout most of North America and Europe and most of Russia (to just above the Arctic Circle); a small fraction of the population winters up to 1,000 km south of the breeding range, sometimes reaching Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* Although it is widespread across most of the northern hemisphere, this very attractive goshawk has been recorded at only a few sites in Saudi Arabia while wandering south of their normal breeding range over winter. **HABITAT:** Open areas with trees and bushes where it can hunt from cover to hide its approach, including parklands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly birds, sometimes including species that are larger than itself, including pigeons, doves and game birds. In some areas, pigeons account for 50% of the prey intake. It also takes rodents, hares and probably large lizards. It hunts by surveying from a perch and then surprising prey on the ground often in a clearing by a sudden low-shielded attack flight. It is agile in the chase of prey but also soars frequently. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary during migration and when wintering, though it may soar alongside other passage migrant raptors. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has a distinctive flight pattern of short bursts of wing beats interspersed with glides. The female can be 10–30% larger than the male and up to 90% heavier. **WINGSPAN:** 89–122 cm.

This fierce-looking hawk is able to hunt and kill birds and mammals that weigh more than the hawk itself, including magpies, partridges and hares.



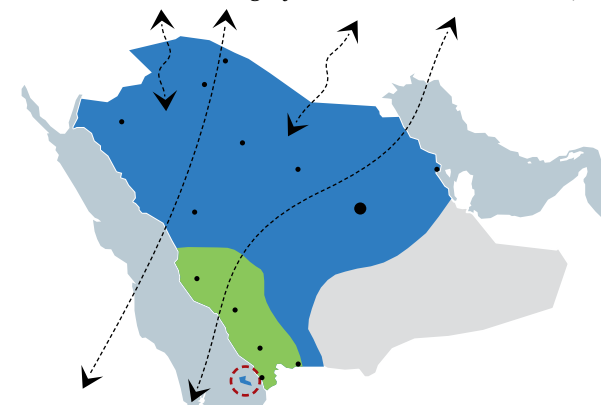
Winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **BLACK KITE**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Yellow-billed Kite, Black-eared Kite
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Milvus migrans*
ARABIC NAME: حداة سوداء
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 44–66 cm / M: 630–928 g; F: 750–1,080 g (15% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout sub-Saharan Africa, southwestern Arabia and Pakistan to Australia; migratory populations breed from northern Africa and Western Europe to Japan and winter up to 3,000 km south within the resident range, Middle East and Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, common winter visitor.* Three subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia: *M. p. migrans* occurs widely on migration and in winter; *M. p. lineatus* (Black-eared Kite) is a rare winter visitor to the east; and *M. p. aegyptius* (sometimes regarded as a distinct species, Yellow-billed Kite) is a breeding resident in the southwest. **HABITAT:** Towns and villages, especially rubbish dumps, markets, picnic areas and even busy streets. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Highly commensal with humans, it scavenges at rubbish dumps, abattoirs, fish landing sites, and essentially wherever food waste occurs. It also catches small vertebrates and large insects. *Activity:*



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk

Diurnal. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Forms groups at rich feeding sites. Hundreds have been recorded on migration at Tabuk. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in loose colonies containing up to 10 pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest. The female performs most incubation and tends the young. Both adults bring food. If the male provides sufficient food, the female may not hunt during the breeding attempt. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, lined with leaves, paper, skin and plastic bags, placed more than 5 m above ground in a tree (especially eucalyptus or Date Palm), telephone pole, pylon or building. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 26–38 days. *Nestling period:* 42–50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 120–153 cm.

This highly adaptable and intelligent bird of prey has learned to forage in human habitats. Consequently, it is now the most abundant raptor in Saudi Arabia.



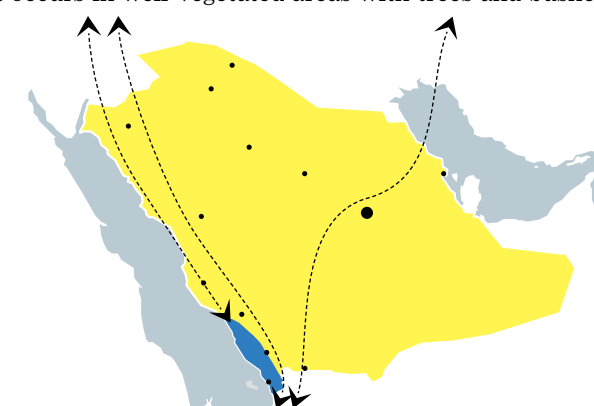
COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN BUZZARD**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Steppe Buzzard
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Buteo buteo*
ARABIC NAME: عقيب شائعة (البازي الحوام)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–52 cm / M: 427–1,180 g; F: 486–1,360 g (15% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout Europe to northern Iran; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to Mongolia and winter 1,000–10,000 km south in Turkey and eastern and southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This buzzard is a common passage migrant through the west of the Kingdom in autumn (Sep–Oct). Numbers steadily decrease east of the highlands. Few are recorded in spring (Feb–May), except in the far north (200

This stunning bird of prey is a common passage migrant. Over 22,000 have been recorded soaring through a gap in the Tayif escarpment in the space of only two weeks.

were seen near Jabal Hismah and 40–50 daily at Jabal Tubaiq), which suggests the return migration passes west of the Red Sea and around the Gulf of Aqaba before heading east. The few winter visitors usually keep to the southern Tihamah. **HABITAT:** This soaring bird can be found above any environment on migration. Over winter it occurs in well-vegetated areas with trees and bushes, farmland and scrub-covered mountainsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Rodents and other small mammals, reptiles and some birds. It also takes carrion. It hunts by watching from a prominent perch or in soaring flight before dropping onto prey on the ground. It hovers occasionally. It prefers to soar once the sun is up and stronger thermals are more abundant. In early morning or late afternoon it can only progress by flapping flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary in winter, gregarious on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** All Saudi Arabian records appear to be the eastern subspecies *B. b. vulpinus*, which is sometimes regarded as a distinct species known as Steppe Buzzard. This bird has extremely variable plumage. **WINGSPAN:** 109–136 cm.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tayif escarpment



COMMON NAME: **LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Buteo rufinus*

ARABIC NAME: سقاوة (البازي طويل الساق)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

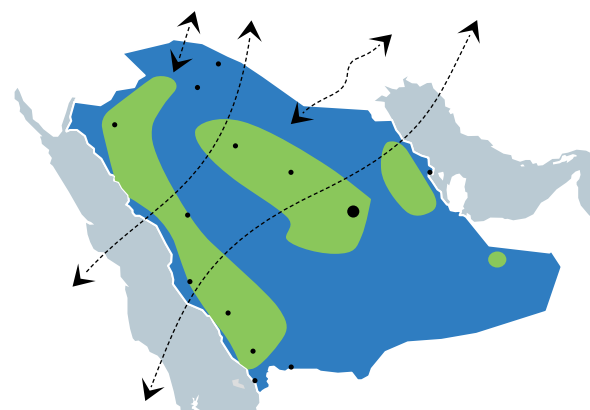
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–65 cm / M: 590–1,281 g; F: 945–1,760 g (45% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from northern Africa to Afghanistan and scattered throughout Arabia; migratory populations breed from Greece to Kazakhstan and winter up to 4,000 km south in eastern Africa and from Iraq to Bangladesh. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, scarce passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This powerful buzzard occurs widely on migration and over winter (Sep–Apr) and breeds in the Eastern Province, central regions and southwest highlands. **HABITAT:** Breeds in open deserts, isolated jabals in the Eastern Province and cliffs and valleys in the southwest highlands. Over winter it also forages in agricultural areas, including stubble fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Diet: Mainly small mammals, as well as reptiles (including Dhub), small birds and large insects, such as grasshoppers, locusts and beetles. It surveys the ground for long periods from a perch or in soaring flight before dropping onto prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A platform made of sticks, lined with grass, rags, rope, wool and plastic bags, placed typically 5–8 m above ground in a cavity or recess on a cliff, or less often on a low bush or rock, or on the ground on a dune or ridge in open desert. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 28 days. *Nestling period:* 45 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **NOTE:** This buzzard is highly polymorphic exhibiting great variation in plumage characteristics between individuals. **WINGSPAN:** 126–155 cm.

This buzzard has highly variable plumage, from dark brown through reddish to very pale brown. Interestingly each color morph exhibits a different level of aggression.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 700
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN GREY HORNBILL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lophoceros nasutus*

ARABIC NAME: نَسَاف أَرَمَد أُفْرِيقِي (أبو معول)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 45–51 cm / M: 172–258 g; F: 163–215 g (15% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across much of sub-Saharan Africa and into southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This truly fascinating bird, which exhibits some of the most extraordinary nesting behavior of any bird in the world, can be found in the Tihamah and foothills south from Jiddah. **HABITAT:** Mainly in the foothills below 1,000 m (though locally at higher altitudes, especially Rayda Reserve) and occasionally down to sea level in the Tihamah in wooded wadis, well-vegetated hillsides, acacia groves and crop fields with scattered trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, particularly grasshoppers, beetles, mantids and scale insects usually taken in the trees, as well as occasional small vertebrates, eggs, nestlings, fruit and seeds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs, family groups or small parties of up to 20 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:**

To protect her offspring, the female uses mud to seal herself inside a nest cavity in a tree. For the next 10 weeks, her mate passes food to her through a narrow slit.

Mating system: Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs with extreme nest defense. *Parental roles:* The female protects the nest by walling herself inside a nest cavity using mud, food and excreta, leaving only a narrow, vertical slit through which her bill tip can protrude. The male brings bark flakes and dry leaves to line the nest. The female incubates the eggs and feeds the chicks, while the male passes food to her through the slit. The female breaks out of the nest when the chicks are 3–5 weeks old and assists in providing food. *Nest:* A cavity more than 2 m above ground in an old tree (or possibly in a crevice amongst rocks, as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 2–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 24–26 days. *Nestling period:* 43–49 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



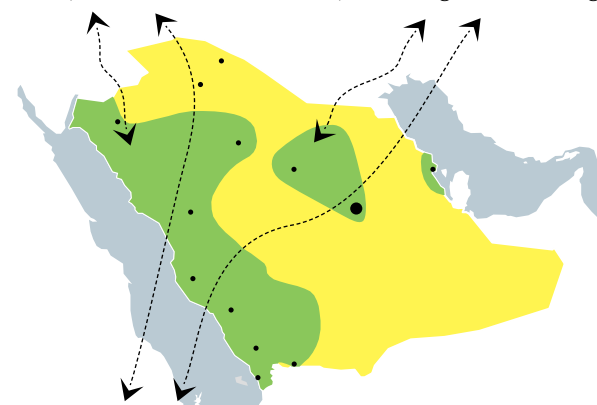
Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda



COMMON NAME: **COMMON HOOPoe**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Hud Hud
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Upupa epops*
 ARABIC NAME: هدهد أوراسي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–32 cm / 46–90 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across much of Africa and southern Asia, including the Arabian Peninsula; migratory populations breed across most of temperate Eurasia and winter up to 5,000 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident, common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* It is fitting that one of the birds mentioned specifically in the Holy Qur'an should be so widespread within Saudi Arabia. This unmistakable and tremendously popular bird occurs widely throughout the Kingdom as a breeding resident, on migration (Feb–Apr, Aug–Oct) and increasingly over winter (especially within the resident range). **HABITAT:** Open areas with scattered trees, often close to habitation, including traditional agriculture, lawns, gardens, parks, roadsides and



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 30,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

open woodlands. It can appear anywhere on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large insects and their soft-bodied soil-dwelling larvae and occasionally small vertebrates taken from the ground by digging, probing and turning over loose items. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs (though sometimes 10% of broods contain offspring sired by extra-pair males). *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory. The female incubates, while the male brings her food. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A crevice, lined with debris or occasionally a sparse lining of plants or feathers, usually in a tree hole from 0–40 m above ground, or less often amongst rocks, in a cliff, well, wall, roof or nest box. *Clutch:* 5–7 eggs. *Incubation:* 15–16 days. *Nestling period:* 26–29 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

A Hoopoe's health can be assessed by the number of notes in its call: a bird that calls "hud hud... hud hud" is not as healthy as a bird that calls "hud hud hud... hud hud hud."



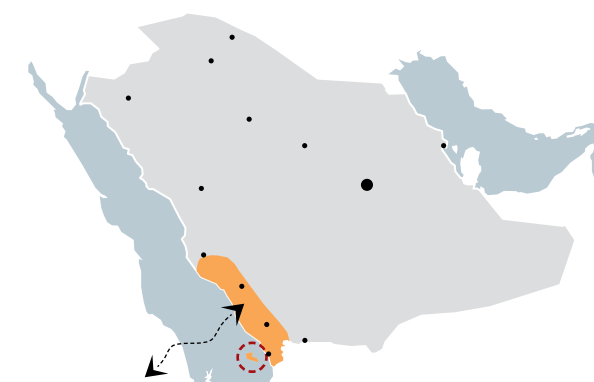
COMMON NAME: **WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Merops albicollis*
 ARABIC NAME: قارية صدراء (وروار أبيض الزور)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20 cm / 20–32 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the Sahel region of Africa (from Mauritania to Eritrea) and in southwestern Arabia (southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen) and winters 1,500 km south and southwest entirely in Africa (from Liberia to Uganda). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant.* This eye-catching bee-eater breeds in the southwest on both sides of the highlands and migrates over the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Below 1,600 m in dry acacia bush country, wadis or cultivated areas with earth embankments

After migrating to Saudi Arabia from Africa, these pretty birds form loose breeding colonies of up to 50 pairs. Each nest contains the breeding pair plus up to five helpers.

and scattered trees. It also occurs on the outskirts of villages. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Ants, honeybees and almost any other flying insect taken in the air during long sorties from a perch or during continuous flight. It subdues stinging insects by bashing the prey against the perch and then rubbing the abdomen to remove the sting. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs, family groups, or flocks of up to 50 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Cooperatively breeding groups, usually with one but sometimes up to five helpers, nesting in loose colonies containing 5–30 pairs with the nests scattered over a wide area. *Parental roles:* Both adults and their helpers assist in all nest duties. *Nest:* A rounded, unlined chamber at the end of a 1–2 m long tunnel excavated into a sloping earth bank or flat ground. A new tunnel is dug for each nesting attempt. *Clutch:* 5–7 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (17–19 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (20–25 days in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly single-brooded. **NOTE:** Tail streamers can sometimes exceed 12 cm in males and 8 cm in females.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: ARABIAN GREEN BEE-EATER

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Merops cyanophrys*

ARABIC NAME: قارية خضراء (وروار أخضر عربي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

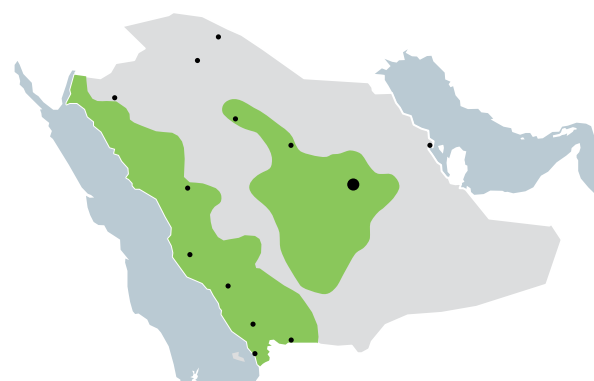
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 15–20 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: near endemic to Arabia. It occurs in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and UAE with a small population in Jordan and Palestine. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. This exceptionally pretty bee-eater is one of Arabia's most abundant endemic or near endemic species. Two subspecies are recognized: *M. c. cyanophrys* occurs in Jordan, Palestine and in western and southern Arabia; *M. c. muscatensis* occurs in central Saudi Arabia, eastern Yemen and Oman. **HABITAT:** Below 2,800 m in areas with plentiful flying insects to eat and steep banks suitable for excavating nest burrows, including rocky wadis with scattered acacias, parks, cultivated fields, coastal plains and hillsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Flying insects, including bees, wasps, flies, dragonflies, moths, locusts and beetles taken in flight during long sorties from a perch. It subdues stinging insects by bashing the prey against the perch

and then rubbing the abdomen to remove the sting. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs; some potentially breed cooperatively with a single helper (as is common for the genus) though not reported with certainty. *Parental roles:* Both adults excavate and defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A rounded, unlined chamber (150 mm in diameter) at the end of a 1–2 m long tunnel (60–65 mm diameter) excavated horizontally into an earthen or sandy bank. A new tunnel is dug for each nesting attempt. *Clutch:* 5 eggs (n=1; 4–7 eggs in similar species). *Incubation:* Unknown (18–21 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (30 days in similar species). *Broods:* Sometimes double-brooded.

This ornate bee-eater is a birdwatcher's dream. It stands voguishly on a prominent perch, often cheek to cheek with its mate, chirruping as if asking to be photographed.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 75,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Merops persicus*

ARABIC NAME: قارية زرقاء الخدين (وروار أزرق الخد)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 31 cm / 38–56 g

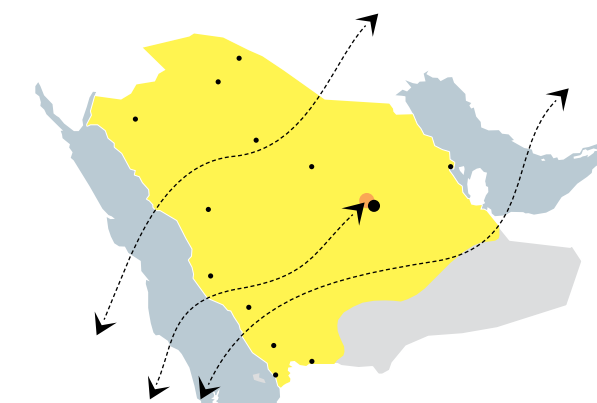


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northwestern Africa, the western Sahel region and from the Nile Delta to Kazakhstan and northwestern India and winters 2,000–7,000 km south and south west in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant*. This aerial acrobat occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–May, Sep–Nov) and breeds erratically, with breeding records near Riyadh and possibly near Tabuk.

While bee-eaters do eat bees, they will also eat virtually any flying insect. It seems that no insect is too poisonous or too fast to deter a bee-eater in hot pursuit.

HABITAT: Areas with plentiful flying insects, such as wetlands and agricultural areas. It roosts in tall trees and bushes and breeds near water fringed with reeds and tamarisks with sand or soil suitable for excavating nest burrows. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Bees, wasps, ants, dragonflies and butterflies taken during a long pursuit flight from a perch. It subdues stinging insects by bashing the prey against the perch and then rubbing the abdomen to remove the sting. *Activity:* Diurnal. It often migrates at night.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually found in pairs or in groups of 10–20 during migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs; some possibly breed cooperatively though not confirmed. *Parental roles:* Both adults excavate and defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. Only the female incubates at night. *Nest:* A rounded, unlined chamber at the end of a 1–3 m long tunnel excavated into flat or sloping ground or in steep sandy banks. A new tunnel is dug for each nesting attempt. *Clutch:* 4–8 eggs. *Incubation:* 23–26 days. *Nestling period:* 30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN BEE-EATER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Merops apiaster*

ARABIC NAME: قارية أوروبية (وروار أوروبي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

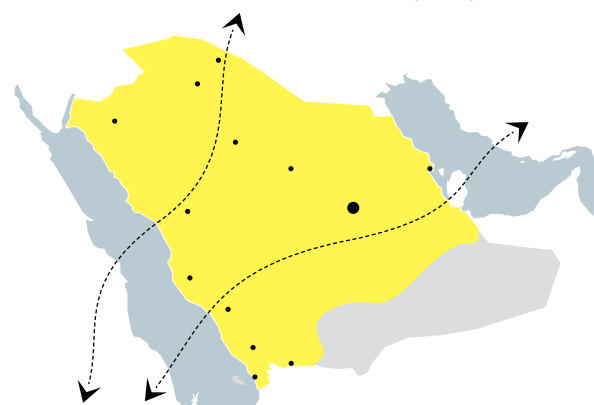
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28 cm / 44–78 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in South Africa; migratory populations breed in northern Africa and southern Europe to Kazakhstan and winter 5,000–8,000 km south and southwest mainly in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant.* This flamboyant bee-eater occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Nov) with distinct peaks in April and September. It could occasionally breed in the east and northeast of Saudi Arabia where pairs sometimes spend the summer. **HABITAT:** Sites with abundant flying insects, including waste-water lagoons, rubbish dumps, cultivated fields, gardens, fodder crops and light woodland. It breeds in areas with sand or earthen banks suitable for excavating nest burrows. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Bees and almost any other flying insect taken during a short sortie from a perch or during long continuous flights. It subdues stinging insects by bashing the prey against the perch and then rubbing the abdomen to remove the sting. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, migrating flocks usually contain 10–20 birds but groups of over 100 are regularly recorded.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Usually socially monogamous breeding pairs; some may breed cooperatively with the aid of a single helper, which is usually a son from the previous year. *Parental roles:* Both adults excavate and defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A rounded, unlined chamber at the end of a 1–3 m long tunnel excavated into sandy banks. A new tunnel is dug for each nesting attempt. *Clutch:* 5–8 eggs. *Incubation:* 20 days. *Nestling period:* 25–30 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

The harbingers of spring: these stunning birds pass through the Kingdom en masse while chirping constantly as if it were their job to announce the changing of the seasons.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

COMMON NAME: **INDIAN ROLLER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coracias benghalensis*

ARABIC NAME: شقراق هندي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

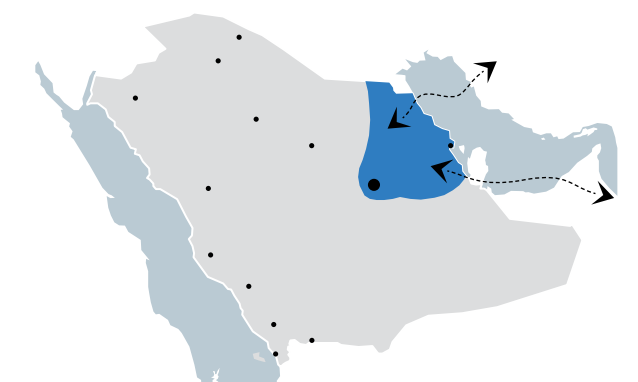
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–34 cm / 166–176 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: resident in Oman and UAE and from southern Iraq and Iran to Bangladesh; a few wander into eastern Arabia over winter, perhaps from India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This rare bird with iridescent blue flight feathers usually arrives in Saudi Arabia in winter. All records are from the eastern part of the Kingdom. Most stay only a day

Rollers are named for their extraordinary display flights in which they hurtle towards the ground while rolling their body from left to right around 270°.

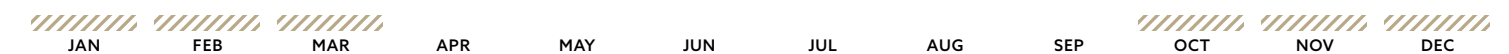
or a week; however, some birds have stayed for several months near Riyadh and Abqaiq. **HABITAT:** Below 1,000 m in human modified landscapes with water and plenty of trees, such as date groves, city parks, farms and residential areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly large insects, reptiles and occasionally small rodents as well as nestling birds, all of which are taken on the ground. It habitually perches high on a wire, post or tree and watches the ground for movement, then swoops down to grab the prey or it sometimes searches the vegetation briefly. It takes the prey back to its perch and may batter it before it swallows it whole. It may juggle prey items in the bill to swallow them head first. It occasionally pursues prey in the air. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hofuf



COMMON NAME: **ABYSSINIAN ROLLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coracias abyssinicus*
 ARABIC NAME: شقراق حبشي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–31 cm / 100–140 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: Resident populations occur south of the Sahel region of Africa (from Senegal and Liberia to Ethiopia and Kenya) and in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen; migratory populations breed in the Sahel and winter 300 km south within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this gorgeous blue and tan roller with extravagant tail streamers breeds in the southern Tihamah, south of al-Wasaqah. **HABITAT:** Usually near sea level but up to 800 m in the foothills in open cultivated areas and gardens with trees and some shrub cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large insects, including crickets, grasshoppers, beetles and caterpillars taken after watching from a perch on a tree, wire or roof then dropping down onto prey on the ground, sometimes loping somewhat awkwardly after it. It swallows prey whole after seizing it in the bill, or it returns to the perch to dismember larger prey. It also catches a few insects on the wing. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs, though up to 20 may gather at rich feeding sites. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Unknown. *Nest:* A cavity, unlined or lined with a small amount of plant material, located 3–8 m above ground in a tree, building or occasionally in a termite mound. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (about 18 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (30 days in similar species). *Broods:* Unknown.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 800
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya



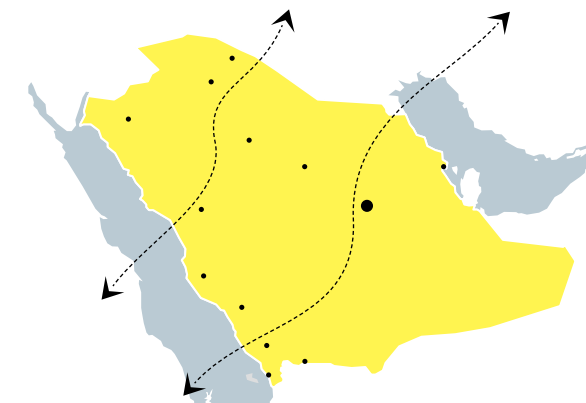
COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN ROLLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coracias garrulus*
 ARABIC NAME: شقراق أوروبي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly decreasing)
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 31–32 cm / 127–160 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northwestern Africa and southern Europe to Kazakhstan and winters 3,000–8,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This colorful roller is a widespread passage migrant (late Apr, Aug–Sep) throughout Saudi Arabia, typically

Rollers can appear rather drab when resting, but then when they fly their wings blaze the most vivid blue. It is a breath-taking, almost magical, sight.

in groups of up to 20. **HABITAT:** Any open habitat with prominent perches, such as telephone poles, electricity cables, or tall bushes, which it can use to scan for prey. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large ground-living invertebrates, such as beetles, grasshoppers, locusts, cicadas, butterflies, dragonflies, bees, centipedes, spiders, scorpions and worms and also small vertebrates like snakes, lizards and frogs. In fact it will eat essentially any animal it can grab with its stout bill and carry off. It also takes some fruits and berries. It drops onto prey from its perch, grabs the prey and then returns to the same or nearby perch to beat the animal a few times before swallowing it whole. It occasionally flycatches for aerial prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitary or in small groups of up to 20 on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** In spring, birds occasionally perform spectacular courtship displays where individuals fly up high into the air and then plunge down with dramatic tumbles towards the ground.



Passage migrant
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **COMMON KINGFISHER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alcedo atthis*

ARABIC NAME: زفراف شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

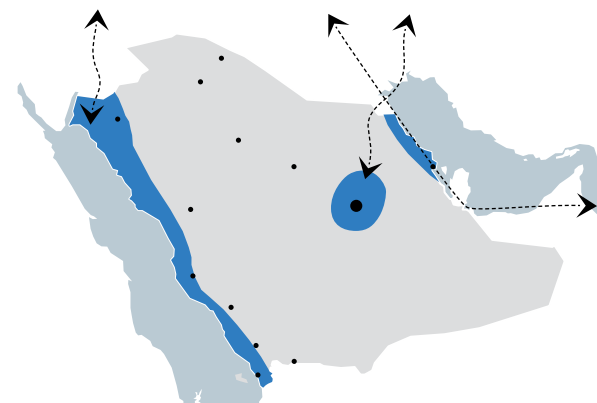
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 23–35 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in northwestern Africa, Western Europe and from the Caspian through India to Japan and Indonesia; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to northeastern China and winter up to 4,000 km south within the resident range as well as northern Africa, Arabia and Iran. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This petite jewel is mainly recorded as a passage migrant, especially in autumn (Sep–Nov), with some staying overwinter (until Apr). It is most numerous on the Gulf coast, uncommon but regular inland to Riyadh and absent from the Red Sea coast south of Jiddah. Consistent summer records at Yanbu' suggest it could occasionally breed there. **HABITAT:** Open freshwater and coastal sites, including harbors, mangrove stands, coastal creeks and coral or rocky cliffs. It also occurs at date groves with small pools. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly fish but also aquatic insects and their larvae, tadpoles and crustaceans. It perches about a meter above water sometimes for an extended period before plunging into the water with a few powered flaps. It completely submerges, grabs its prey in the bill and flies to its perch. Prey is held by the tail and beaten on the perch before being swallowed headfirst. It occasionally dives from a hover, picks from the surface and takes flying insects. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **Note:** The first view one gets of this shy bird is often the last. Its rapid flight is straight and low over water with whirring wing beats.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail



This bejeweled kingfisher dives steeply into water from 1–2 meters above. It catches a small fish near the surface, takes it back to its perch and swallows it headfirst.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **Note:** The first view one gets of this shy bird is often the last. Its rapid flight is straight and low over water with whirring wing beats.

COMMON NAME: **PIED KINGFISHER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ceryle rudis*

ARABIC NAME: زفراف أبقع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25 cm / 68–110 g

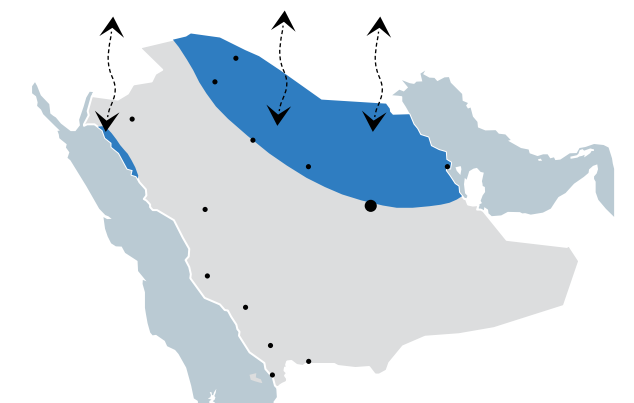


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: resident populations occur across sub-Saharan Africa, India, China and Southeast Asia; dispersive populations occur around the eastern Mediterranean and along the great rivers of the Middle East and occasionally wander up to 1,000 km south to Arabia over winter. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor.* This distinctive black and white kingfisher is found mainly in the Arabian Gulf coastal region, but has been recorded at inland locations, including Abqaiq, Riyadh and Sakaka. **HABITAT:** Saltwater or brackish habitats, including mangrove stands with exposed water, sheltered coastal lagoons and harbors. It avoids the open sea. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly fish as well as a range of other animals, including amphibians, crustaceans and insects. Its normal method of fishing is to watch from an exposed perch above the water before making a strong, powered plunge. It may also be seen flying along quite low over the surface and suddenly towering up and plunging into the water. It does not hunt

This striking black and white kingfisher is indeed a skillful fisher. On average, it catches a fish on six out of every ten dives.

far from shore. Almost all prey is taken from the water, though it occasionally flycatches and may also pick insects from the ground or vegetation. Small prey may be swallowed in flight but larger fish are often battered on a perch before being swallowed headfirst. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It hunts alone, but at other times it can be found in small

social groups of up to six, which can be rather noisy. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It often tail-flicks if it is anxious and may erect the crest. The male has two black breast bands, whereas the female has one.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qatif Bay



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-BREADED KINGFISHER**

OTHER COMMON NAME: White-throated Kingfisher

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Halcyon smyrnensis*

ARABIC NAME: رفراف أصد

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–28 cm / M: 85–88 g; F: 110 g (25% heavier)

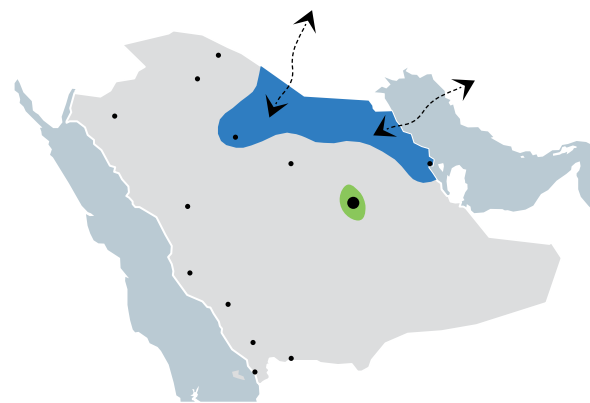


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: occurs in coastal areas of the eastern Mediterranean and from Iraq to southern China and Indonesia. Some individuals wander from their resident range up to 1,000 km south and southwest to Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this large colorful kingfisher usually arrives over winter (Sep–Mar).

Pairs have also been recorded over summer in the Eastern Province and have recently bred near Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Seashore, harbors, wetlands with reedbeds, wastewater outfalls and farming areas with ditches and trees (not necessarily by water).

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects, crabs, fish, amphibians, small reptiles and rodents. It is a sit-and-wait predator spending more than 50% of daytime hours scanning for prey from a perch. It dives head first into water at a 45° angle or feet first in shallow water. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary, though 10–15 have been found together at Sabkhat al-Fasl. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults excavate the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A chamber at the end of a tunnel (30–150 cm long, 6–8 cm wide) excavated into a steep earth bank. *Clutch:* 5–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 18–20 days. *Nestling period:* 26–27 days. *Broods:* Sometimes double-brooded.

The largest kingfisher in Saudi Arabia, this noble-looking bird catches a range of prey, including insects, crabs, fish, frogs, birds, mice, lizards and even snakes.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **GREY-HEADED KINGFISHER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Halcyon leucocephala*

ARABIC NAME: رفراف أرم

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22 cm / 35–61 g

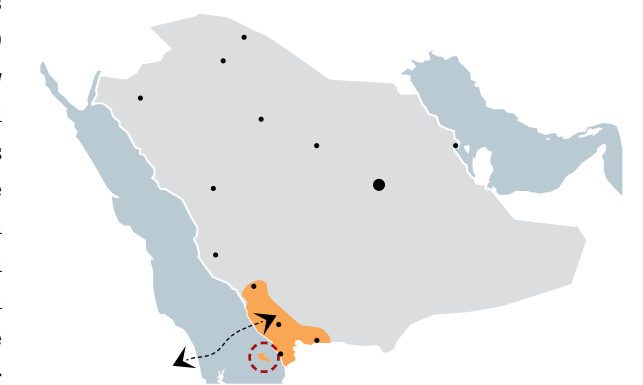


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed in southwestern Arabia and winter over 300 km south within the resident range in Africa. Five subspecies are recognized, including *H. l. semicaerulea*, which breeds only in southwestern Saudi Arabia, Yemen and western Oman and appears to winter in Somalia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding migrant.* This multi-colored kingfisher migrates across the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia to breed in the southwest, south from Makkah. **HABITAT:** Below 2,300 m in the foothills and highlands in thick acacia scrub, woodland edge, bushy areas around cultivated fields, often near watercourses and marshy areas. It occurs in the Tihamah but probably does not breed there. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, especially grasshoppers and locusts, as well as spiders, scorpions, small lizards and other small vertebrates. It hunts by waiting on a perch before dropping suddenly onto prey below. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL**

Every year around 1,500 pairs of this colorful bird fly across the Red Sea from Africa to breed in the southwest, making it the most common kingfisher in the Kingdom.

BEHAVIOR: Found solitary, in pairs or in small migrating groups of up to 10 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults excavate the nest tunnel and tend the young. The role of adults in incubation is unknown. *Nest:* A chamber, lined with coarse plant fibers, at the end of a tunnel (40–100 cm long) excavated horizontally into a sandy or silt bank, often the eroded side of a wadi. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 20 days. *Nestling period:* 21 days. *Broods:* Unknown.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda



COMMON NAME: **COLLARED KINGFISHER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Todiramphus chloris*
 ARABIC NAME: زفراف مطوق
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23–25 cm / 51–100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs along both sides of the southern Red Sea (Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia and Yemen) with scattered populations in Oman, UAE, India and through Southeast Asia to Australia and Fiji. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* This exceptionally pretty, emerald green and blue kingfisher occurs in the southwest, south from al-Lith. **HABITAT:** Black Mangrove stands containing older trees with suitable nest hollows. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly crustaceans, especially crabs and shrimp and small fish. It is a sit-and-wait predator. It perches on a mangrove branch 1–3 m above water then swoops down to catch prey in the mud below. The prey is taken back to the perch, bashed, subdued and eaten whole. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found solitarily or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Khawr 'Amq (northwest of al-Birk)

This dazzling kingfisher is one of the most morphologically diverse birds in the world – no less than 50 subspecies are recognized on coasts and islands from Fiji to the Red Sea.

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An almost horizontal cavity (40–50 cm deep, 6–10 cm entrance diameter) in a mature mangrove tree, located 1.3–3 m above ground. Pairs might also excavate a nest hole in an earth bank or arboreal termite mound (as recorded in Southeast Asia). *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 19–21 days. *Nestling period:* 29–30 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable regionally due to its small and fragmented population that continues to decline. The population in Saudi Arabia decreased by 50–55% in recent decades due to degradation of mangroves. It needs old mangrove trees for nest cavities but mangrove regeneration is very limited and takes decades.



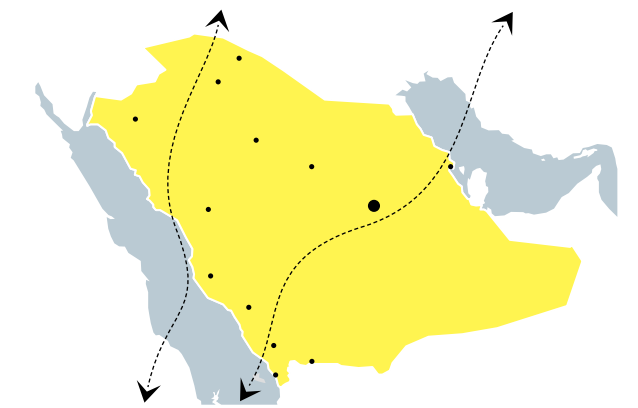
COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN WRYNECK**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Jynx torquilla*
 ARABIC NAME: لواء أوراسي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 30–50 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across continental Europe and the southern half of Russia to Japan and winters 4,000–7,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa and from India to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This somewhat odd bird with its strange neck movements is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant (Mar–May, Aug–Oct), which travels through the Kingdom solitarily on a broad front. **HABITAT:** Prefers shaded places with trees, such as roundabouts, gardens and parks, but it can appear anywhere on migration, even sand dunes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly ants although almost any invertebrate is taken, including bugs, beetles, butterflies, flies and spiders. Primarily a ground feeder, it may be seen pecking quietly in leaf litter or hopping about on grass, especially early morning or late afternoon. It excavates holes in ant colonies with its bill and inserts its long sticky tongue to extract ants, or it pulls insects out of crevices. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This is an unobtrusive and easily overlooked member of the woodpecker family. It may crouch and rely on its excellent camouflage when alarmed and at these times may turn its neck and head into strange positions.

Although it is a member of the woodpecker family, this species does not drill into wood for food; instead it mainly picks ants from the ground.

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Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN WOODPECKER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Dendropicos dorae*

ARABIC NAME: قراع عربي (نقار الخشب العربي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 41.5 g



MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in western Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* Saudi Arabia's only true woodpecker occurs in the western highlands south from Khaybar. It occurs more often on the drier, acacia-rich eastern side of the southwest highlands. **HABITAT:** Below 2,800 m in woodlands, including acacia and juniper woodlands on mountain slopes and summits, well-vegetated wadis, trees around cultivated fields, or wooded thickets in the Tihamah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Larvae of wood-boring insects, fig wasps and aphids taken by drilling holes into the trunk of a tree and extracting the prey with the long sticky tongue. It may also take tree sap in winter. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs.

Parental roles: The male (and probably the female) excavate the nest. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A cavity (25–30 cm deep, 4.4 cm entrance diameter) excavated by the birds 2–5 m above ground (sometimes up to 25 m) in a tree (living or dead), usually in the main trunk of an acacia (or juniper at higher altitude). The eggs are laid on wood chips that have accumulated in the cavity. Old nest cavities are often used by other species, including the Violet-backed Starling, which may even usurp a newly excavated hole. *Clutch:* 3 eggs (n=3). *Incubation:* 11 days. *Nestling period:* 16–22 days. *Broods:* Unknown.

Endemic to Saudi Arabia and Yemen, this is one of the rarest woodpeckers in the world. It uses its strong bill to drill holes in tree trunks for nesting or to find burrowing grubs.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah

COMMON NAME: **LESSER KESTREL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco naumanni*

ARABIC NAME: عويسق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

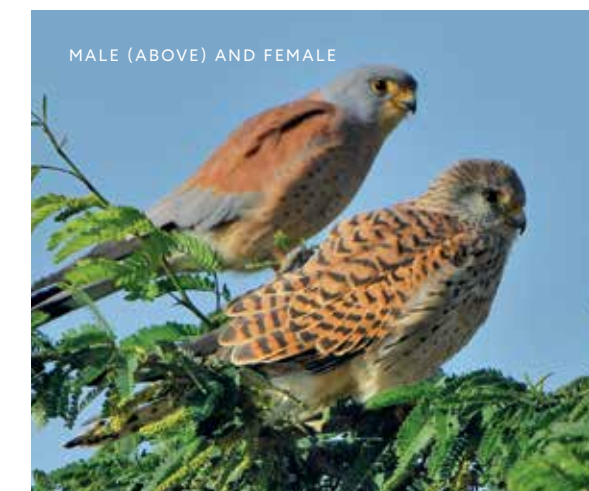
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 29–32 cm / M: 90–172 g; F: 138–208 g (30% heavier)



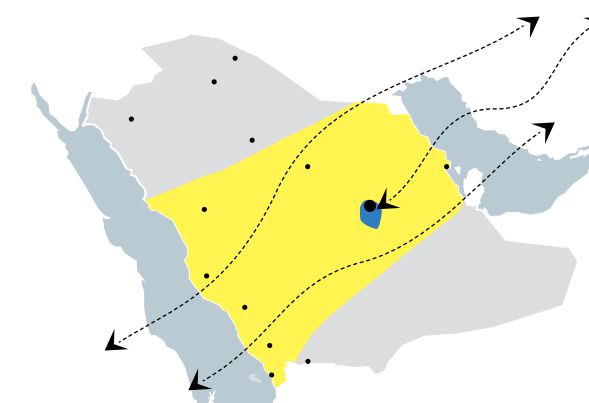
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Africa and southern Europe to northern China and winters 3,000–10,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa, with a few wintering in southern Asia and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor, erratic summer visitor.* This small and quite colorful falcon is an uncommon passage migrant (Mar-Apr, Oct) throughout Saudi Arabia in

This sleek falcon migrates up to 850 km per day. A large percentage of the world's population passes through Saudi Arabia every year.

small to large flocks and is more common in spring. Some birds have been recorded over summer at Thumamah and Dhahran and a few have wintered around Riyadh since 1987. There are no records from the north of the Kingdom or the Rub' al-Khali. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration but prefers open areas suitable for aerial feeding, including above irrigated farmlands (especially fodder crops), grassy steppes and well-vegetated landscapes, including near towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly aerial insects, such as beetles, locusts and dragonflies taken in the air, but also ground-dwelling invertebrates and less frequently lizards and small mammals taken on the ground. It feeds aerially as a flock continually wheeling around in agile graceful flight, individuals may briefly hover, or hang in the wind, stooping on ground prey or chasing airborne prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** This social falcon feeds in flocks, nests in colonies and migrates in groups. Historically it has been recorded in thousands in Saudi Arabia but in recent decades the most seen together is a flock of 300–600 in the Eastern Province, but usually much less and a dozen together nowadays is noteworthy. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 58–73 cm.



MALE (ABOVE) AND FEMALE



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

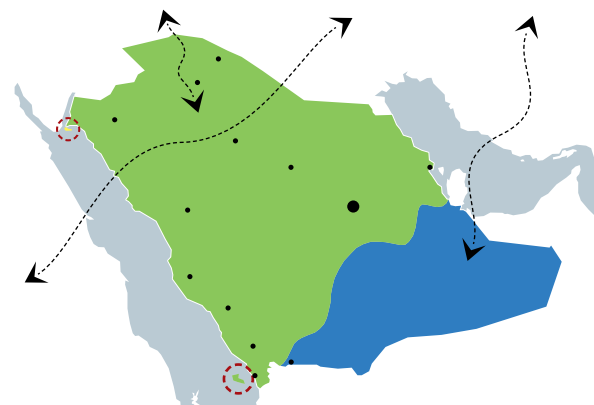


COMMON NAME: **COMMON KESTREL**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco tinnunculus*
ARABIC NAME: عوسق
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 27–35 cm / M: 136–252 g; F: 154–319 g (20% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across most of Africa (except the Sahara), Arabia and southern Eurasia to China; migratory populations breed across northern Europe and Russia and winter up to 5,000 km south within the resident range and in southern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This is the most common falcon in Saudi Arabia. It occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia as a breeding resident, with much higher numbers present during the spring migration and over winter. **HABITAT:** Breeds in rocky, mountainous regions and increasingly on buildings in agricultural areas, around villages, towns and even city centers. Over winter it is also found on open plains and deserts, including the Rub' al-Khali. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small mammals, along with small birds, reptiles, including snakes and large insects. It often detects prey with a distinctive low hovering flight or from a perch before dropping rapidly onto its victim. It also takes insects in flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female defends, incubates and feeds the chicks, but both adults bring food. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape in a recess or ledge on a cliff, rock outcrop, building or structure, or on the disused nest of another species, especially ravens. It might also nest in a tree cavity or nest box (as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 5 eggs. *Incubation:* 27–31 days. *Nestling period:* 27–35 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded.

While hovering, the kestrel searches for small mammals on the ground below. It can see what is invisible to us – UV light shining brightly in the scent marks of its prey.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 6,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail

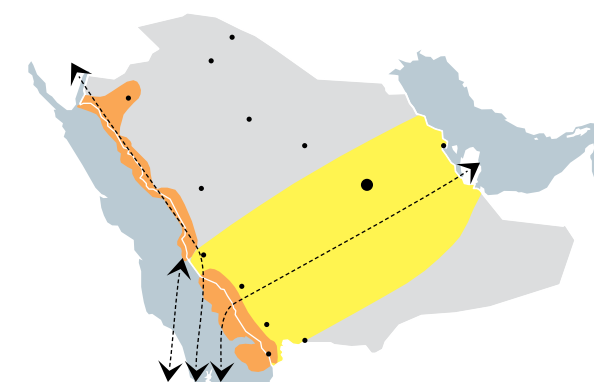


COMMON NAME: **SOOTY FALCON**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco concolor*
ARABIC NAME: صقر أسحم (صقر الغروب)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 32–36 cm / 298–350 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northeastern Africa to Jordan, Arabia and southwestern Pakistan and winters 5,000 km south in Madagascar and Mozambique. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant, scarce passage migrant.* This gray falcon breeds on islands in the Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Red Sea islands free from ground predators with shaded nest sites and concentrations of migrating birds in autumn as food for the young. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small birds, especially juvenile birds attempting their first migration, particularly nocturnal migrants at dawn and dusk. It also takes bats and other small mammals on its autumn migration. Most prey is taken in flight. *Activity:* Crepuscular and diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting solitarily, or in loose associations depending on availability of nest sites (with only 25 m between nests on an island near al-Lith). *Parental roles:* The female performs most incubation and feeds the hatchlings with prey brought by the male. Both adults provide food once the chicks are 2 weeks old. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape inside a recess or cavity in a rock outcrop or low cliff, or on the ground under a bush; nest sites are re-used annually. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 27–29 days. *Nestling period:* 35 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 75–88 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as vulnerable globally and endangered regionally because of the small population size, which exists as only one sub-population with all birds mixing at the wintering site. Arabian breeding birds are threatened by the introduction of nest predators to islands, such as foxes, rats and cats.

This rare falcon feeds its young on birds migrating through the Kingdom. It waits until autumn to breed when the number of migrating birds is at its peak.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Islands off al-Wajh



COMMON NAME: **MERLIN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco columbarius*

ARABIC NAME: بَيْيُيْ

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

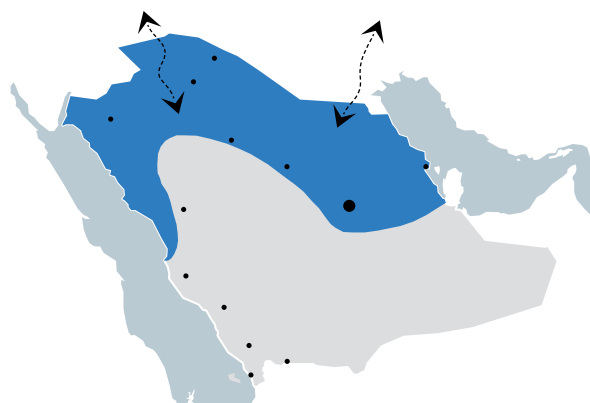
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–33 cm / M: 150–210 g; F: 189–255 g (25% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout northern North America and northern Eurasia and winters up to 4,000 km south in USA, Mexico, northern Africa and southern Eurasia, occasionally entering Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia lies to the south of the normal winter range of this distinctively small falcon. Consequently, it is a rare winter visitor occurring mainly in the northeast and central parts of the Kingdom, with single records from Tabuk, Yanbu' and north of Jiddah.

HABITAT: Open scrub desert plains, irrigated farmland, or low vegetated coastal areas. It usually avoids human sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small birds, but also flying insects, such as locusts and dragonflies and rarely rodents and shrews. Larks are the most common prey in the areas it frequents. It may attack from a raised perch or when flying low, attacking its flying prey as opportunity arises. It may turn abruptly in low flight, often only 1 m above the vegetation, to give chase to a bird. It typically gets underneath a lone passerine to force it higher into the air so that the falcon can more effectively stoop on its prey. It also hunts birds displaced by vehicles. It sometimes stores food in caches for later consumption. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 50–67 cm.

Small, fast and rare, this falcon dashes through the northern plains of Saudi Arabia in pursuit of small birds.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN HOBBY**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco subbuteo*

ARABIC NAME: شويهين أوراسي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 28–36 cm / M: 131–232 g; F: 141–340 g (35% heavier)

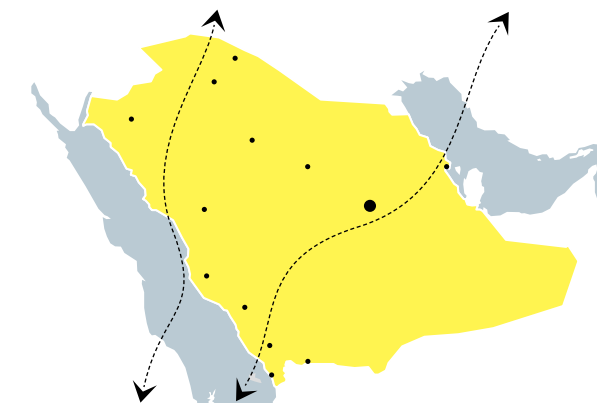


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Europe and Russia to Japan and eastern China and winters mostly in southern Africa (with some in southern China), meaning that most Asian birds pass through Arabia on migration. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This boldly marked falcon is a widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia passing quickly in spring (Apr) and more leisurely in autumn (Sep–Oct), sometimes staying a few days or a week in one spot. Very occasionally birds have also been recorded in summer and winter. **HABITAT:** Can occur anywhere on migration, especially around wetlands, parks and open farmland with trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Large flying insects, such as beetles, locusts, dragonflies and moths, especially when concentrated, caught by grabbing with the foot and eaten on the wing. It also takes small birds on the wing and picks other birds, rodents and lizards from the ground, or steals them from a weaker raptor, such as a kestrel. Its fast, aerobic flight allows it to catch the most agile of birds, including swifts and martins in the air, closing in with a fast stoop on half closed wings. The Hobby itself resembles a swift in its flight action and its long pointed wings. It employs a number of hunting strategies and utilizes the entire airspace from low level to high open chases. *Activity:* Diurnal and partly crepuscular (it hunts at dusk taking bats and birds going to their collective roosts). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary but occasionally migrates in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 68–84 cm.

This incredibly fast and agile falcon catches and eats dragonflies, birds and bats in flight as it migrates across the Kingdom.

This incredibly fast and agile falcon catches and eats dragonflies, birds and bats in flight as it migrates across the Kingdom.

Activity: Diurnal and partly crepuscular (it hunts at dusk taking bats and birds going to their collective roosts). **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary but occasionally migrates in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **WINGSPAN:** 68–84 cm.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

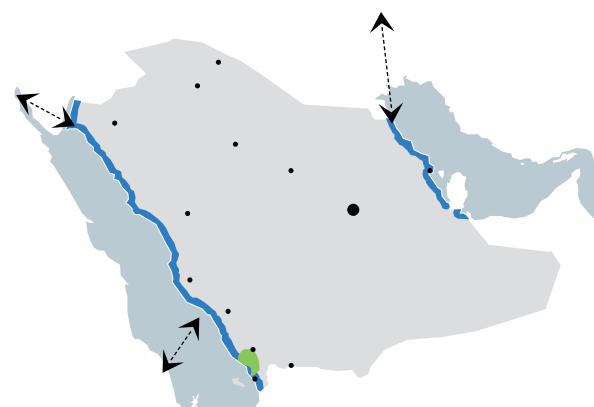


COMMON NAME: **LANNER FALCON**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco biarmicus*
ARABIC NAME: صقروكري
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 39–48 cm / M: 430–600 g; F: 700–900 g (55% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: resident populations occur throughout much of Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, with scattered populations in the Middle East and Arabia. Some populations wander in winter. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* It breeds in the far southwest highlands and perhaps still in some central regions and is a rare winter visitor to the coasts. **HABITAT:** Breeds mainly in arid areas, typically on isolated hills surrounded by desert plains, such as granite rock outcrops in central Arabia and above 2,000 m in the juniper forests of the southwest highlands. Over winter it also visits wastewater lagoons and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small birds, especially doves, as well as rodents, bats, lizards, insects, spiders and scorpions taken with a pursuit from a stoop or horizontal chase. *Activity:* Crepuscular and partly nocturnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitarily or hunting in tandem with its partner. Small groups gather at rich sites. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young, though only the male hunts for prey in the first weeks after hatching. The female provisions older nestlings and for 3 months post-fledging. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape in the recess of a cliff or sheltered ledge, or on the disused nest of another species, especially Brown-necked Ravens; very occasionally on the ground. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 32 days. *Nestling period:* 35–47 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 88–113 cm. **CONSERVATION:** Critically endangered regionally, this bird declined due to DDT poisoning and continues to suffer from shooting and trapping and egg collecting for falconry.

A traditional hunting falcon of the Arabian Bedouins, this bird is now critically endangered in the region with only a handful of wild pairs left in the Kingdom.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



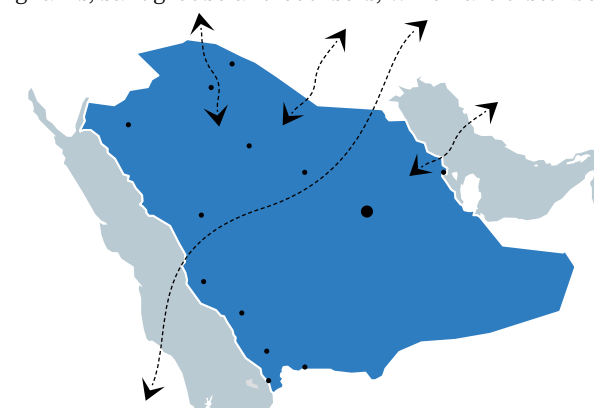
COMMON NAME: **SAKER FALCON**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco cherrug*
ARABIC NAME: صقرحر
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 45–57 cm / M: 730–990 g; F: 970–1,300 g (30% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur patchily from southeastern Europe to the Himalayas; migratory populations breed from central Europe to China and winter up to 4,000 km south in the Sahel and eastern Africa, Arabia and the eastern Mediterranean to southern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This strong falcon can occur widely throughout Saudi Arabia over winter (Oct–Mar) with odd birds in other months probably on passage to Africa. **HABITAT:** Open deserts, including sandy and rocky areas with scrub, as well as farmland and coastal scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly ground dwelling vertebrates, including rodents and hares, probably large lizards, such as Dhub and Desert Monitors and birds.

Sadly this traditional hunting falcon – the largest and most powerful falcon in the Kingdom – is now critically endangered in Arabia.

Other birds are taken on the wing, including larks, sandgrouse and coursers, which are disturbed whilst it hunts low over open wastes. It also watches for prey from a suitable vantage point. Breeding pairs sometimes hunt cooperatively. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The status in Saudi Arabia is much confused by the escape and deliberate release of falconers' birds. The picture is further complicated by the existence of captive bred birds and hybrids. **WINGSPAN:** 97–126 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is endangered globally and critically endangered within Arabia. It is declining very rapidly both within Arabia and internationally as a result of unsustainable capture for falconry, collision with power lines, habitat loss and the impact of agrochemicals.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



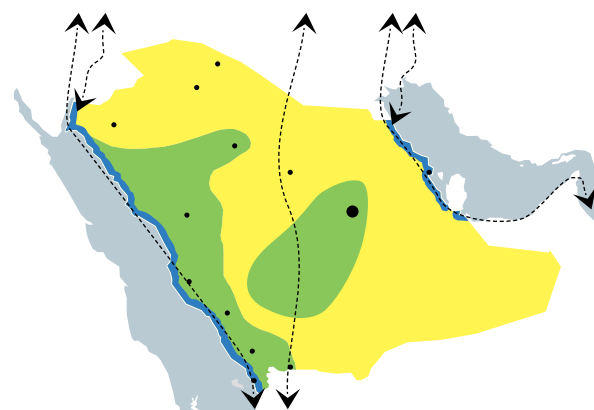
COMMON NAME: PEREGRINE FALCON
OTHER COMMON NAME: Barbary Falcon
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Falco peregrinus*
ARABIC NAME: كوبج (الشاهين)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 35–51 cm / M: 425–1,060 g; F: 595–1,600 g (50% heavier)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in all continents (except Antarctica); migratory populations breed across northern North America and northern Eurasia and winter up to 10,000 km away in temperate and tropical areas. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, rare passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* Eurasian populations occur throughout Saudi Arabia on migration and in winter, mainly in coastal regions. The small desert subspecies *F. p. pelegrinoides* (sometimes regarded as a distinct species, Barbary Falcon) is a breeding resident across northern Africa to Iran, with populations in Saudi Arabia.

Diving towards its prey at over 320 km per hour, this supreme hunter is the fastest animal on earth and can capture virtually any small bird it wants.

HABITAT: Breeds in mountains and wild desert areas with precipices. On migration it prefers areas with abundant prey, including wastewater lagoons, reservoirs, wetlands and coastal mudflats. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly birds, as well as mammals, reptiles and occasionally fish. It kills birds in flight using its great speed. Females catch larger prey. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults defend the territory and incubate. The female broods the nestlings for the first week, while the male provides food. Both adults bring prey to larger chicks. *Nest:* A shallow, unlined scrape on a cliff ledge; some sites can be re-used for years. Elsewhere, it is increasingly recorded nesting on buildings and may do likewise in Saudi Arabia. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 29–32 days. *Nestling period:* 35–40 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded. **WINGSPAN:** 79–114 cm. **CONSERVATION:** This species was decimated globally by DDT poisoning but is recovering with DDT reduction worldwide. It is listed as endangered within Arabia because its population size is still small.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 600
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tuwaiq Escarpment



COMMON NAME: EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oriolus oriolus*
ARABIC NAME: صفارية أوراسية
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–25 cm / 42–102 g

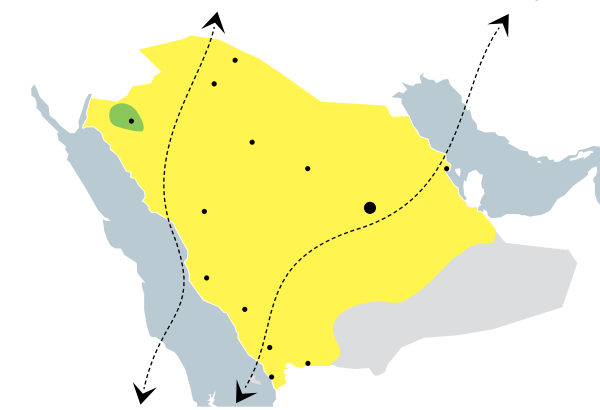


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Africa and Western Europe to Mongolia and south to Turkey and northern Iran with very small breeding populations in northern Arabia and winters 4,000–9,000 km south and southwest in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant.* This sunny gold and black bird occurs widely on migration through Saudi Arabia (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) while a small, apparently resident population breeds in the northern half of the Kingdom with sporadic breeding at rich sites such as Dhahran and Yanbu'.

The vibrant gold-colored male broadcasts a loud, musical, flute-like tune that floats across the wide-open plains of northern Arabia like a call to prayer.

HABITAT: Breeds in isolated groups of trees, especially eucalypts in parkland and overgrown gardens. On migration it occurs in thick, tall vegetation and tall trees, again especially in parkland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small invertebrates and fruits, as well as some seeds, nectar, pollen and very occasionally small lizards, bird eggs and nestlings. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates primarily at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary, in pairs or occasionally in large migrating and feeding flocks containing up to 40 or more birds.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and performs most incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of grass, plant fibers and often string, wool or paper, lined with fine grass and slung between two branches of a horizontal fork, placed 2–20 m above ground in the outer branches of a tree. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–20 days. *Nestling period:* 14–15 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Tchagra senegalus*
ARABIC NAME: أخطب رأس
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing (probably)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–23 cm / 42–55 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northwestern Africa and much of sub-Saharan Africa, with an isolated population in southern Arabia. Ten subspecies are recognized, including *T. s. persivali*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring only in southwestern Saudi Arabia, southern Oman and Yemen.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding resident.* This rather secretive bird occurs in the southwestern foothills, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Mainly in the foothills below 1,500 m or up to 2,200 m in the southern Hijaz amongst dense, tangled vegetation, including creepers, euphorbias and succulents, on scrub-covered hillsides and woodlands.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly insects, as well as worms, spiders, scorpions, snails and small lizards, snakes, frogs, tadpoles and fruit. It forages on the ground or in low vegetation under woody cover. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or family groups. It sometimes forms mixed-species feeding flocks with other birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Nest:* A neat cup made primarily of grass and plant stems, lined with fine grass and rootlets, placed 1–2 m above ground in a low tree or bush in dense cover. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–13 days. *Nestling period:* 13–16 days. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. The male defends the territory. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

This shy bird is best located by the male's rich and melodious song, which sometimes sounds like "tch...tcha...tcha...gra" with each note whistled lower and slower.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi below Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Terpsiphone viridis*
ARABIC NAME: صائد ذباب فردوسي أفريقي
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 13–14 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in much of sub-Saharan Africa and southern Arabia. Ten subspecies are recognized, including *T. v. harterti*, which is endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, with isolated populations in far southwestern Saudi Arabia, Yemen and southern Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this glamorous bird occurs in the southern Tihamah, foothills and highlands of the southwest, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Mainly between 600–1,800 m in the warm moist foothills, but also from sea level in the Tihamah to 2,500 m in highland juniper woodland, usually near running water in areas with thick vegetation in mixed forests on hillsides and lush deep wadis. It also occurs in sheltered parts of cultivated areas, including plantations, farms, parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, spiders and

What a magnificent bird! The male advertises his health and vigor with his extravagant tail streamers, which extend 18 cm beyond the tail and wave up and down in flight.

some small berries. Prey is taken in brief hawking flights, by snatching from under leaves, or by fanning the tail and capturing displaced insects. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small foraging groups in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes nesting in close proximity to each other for communal defense. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. The male defends the territory with song. *Nest:* A neat cup made of grass and bark strips, decorated with lichen, leaves and occasionally paper, bound with cobwebs, lined with fine grass and rootlets and placed 3–5 m above ground on an exposed fork in the lower canopy of a shady tree. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–16 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this glamorous bird occurs in the southern Tihamah, foothills and highlands of the southwest, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Mainly between 600–1,800 m in the warm moist foothills, but also from sea level in the Tihamah to 2,500 m in highland juniper woodland, usually near running water in areas with thick vegetation in mixed forests on hillsides and lush deep wadis. It also occurs in sheltered parts of cultivated areas, including plantations, farms, parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, spiders and some small berries. Prey is taken in brief hawking flights, by snatching from under leaves, or by fanning the tail and capturing displaced insects. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small foraging groups in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes nesting in close proximity to each other for communal defense. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. The male defends the territory with song. *Nest:* A neat cup made of grass and bark strips, decorated with lichen, leaves and occasionally paper, bound with cobwebs, lined with fine grass and rootlets and placed 3–5 m above ground on an exposed fork in the lower canopy of a shady tree. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–16 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **RED-BACKED SHRIKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius collurio*

ARABIC NAME: دغناش أمغر (صرد أحمر الظهر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17 cm / 23–34 g



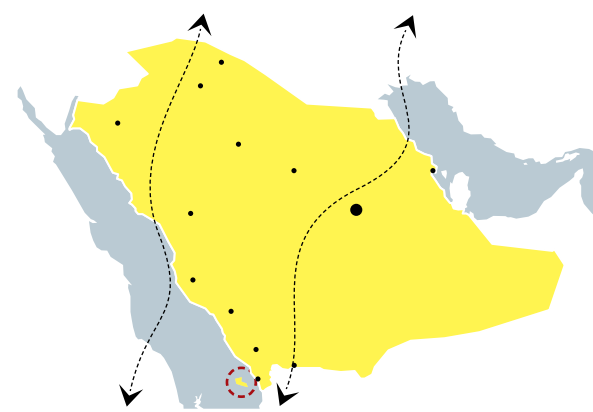
MALE



FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to Kazakhstan and winters 3,000–9,000 km south and southwest in eastern and southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant.* This sharp-looking shrike is one of the most noticeable and common passage migrants (Apr–May, Sep–Oct) through Saudi Arabia, particularly in spring. It is less numerous on the slower, more protracted return migration as most birds return through Africa. **HABITAT:** Bushy areas near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Any animal it can surprise and overpower, mainly beetles, bugs and grasshoppers but also lizards, small mammals and birds. It hunts usually by sitting on a prominent perch or wire, waiting and watching for movement and then catching prey after a shallow direct dive. It takes prey back to its perch, beating invertebrates repeatedly to remove the extremities. It is also opportunistic taking nestlings when it finds them. It regularly impales prey on thorns or barbed wire, usually after decapitating vertebrate prey and consuming the brains. If food is abundant it will store surplus prey items by impaling them on thorns to eat later. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually seen on migration in groups of half a dozen or more but there are several spring reports of migrations “falls” when hundreds suddenly appear overnight in a small area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

This impressive shrike migrates 22,000 km per annum in a distinct loop. It heads south through Africa in autumn and then north through Saudi Arabia in spring.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River

COMMON NAME: **RED-TAILED SHRIKE**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Isabelline Shrike, Turkestan Shrike

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius phoenicuroides*

ARABIC NAME: صرد أحمر الذيل

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

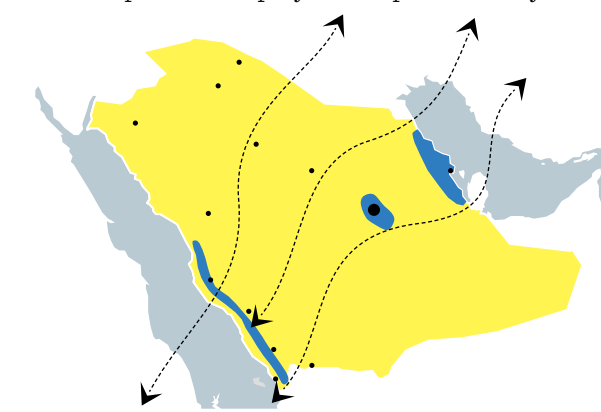
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 25–34 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Iran to Kazakhstan and winters up to 7,000 km southwest in the Sahel and eastern regions of Africa and across the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This handsome shrike is a common passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) passing on a broad front. It appears more numerous in autumn and is perhaps more common in the north. Some spend the winter in the Eastern Province, near Riyadh and in the foothills of the southwest highlands. **HABITAT:** Bushy areas with prominent perches. It may occur anywhere on migration, even arid sandy wastes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Any animal it can surprise and overpower, mainly invertebrates, such as beetles, bugs and grasshoppers, as well as lizards, small mammals and birds. It pounces on prey from a perch usually 2–3 m off the ground and occasionally pursues its quarry through vegetation. It impales its victims on thorns or barbed wire, consuming the head and saving the rest for later. It also visits rubbish areas where there may be rich prey pickings. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Poorly known: usually solitary or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When being followed by a birdwatcher, it may sometimes hide in a bush rather than fly off and can even be confiding if not threatened. This species was previously treated as a subspecies of the Isabelline Shrike and is sometimes referred to as the Turkestan Shrike.

Virtually the entire global population of Red-tailed Shrike is likely to pass through the Arabian Peninsula every year during migration.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **ISABELLINE SHRIKE**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Daurian Shrike

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius isabellinus*

ARABIC NAME: دغناش داوري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 25–34 g



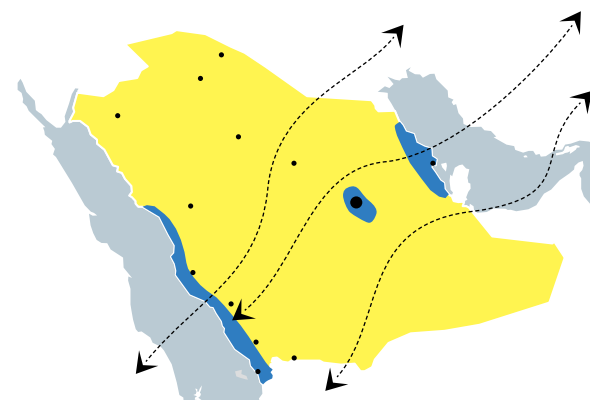
MALE



FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds around Mongolia and northern China and winters 1,000–9,000 km southwest from northeastern Africa through Arabia to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this sleek grayish-yellow shrike is a common and widespread passage migrant and a local winter visitor to central and coastal areas. One of the three recognized subspecies (*L. i. isabellinus*) winters in Saudi Arabia and is sometimes referred to as Daurian Shrike. **HABITAT:** Bushy areas near wetlands, farmland and parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly invertebrates and small mammals and birds if it can grab them. It takes frogs and lizards and has even been known to eat fish in Arabia. Most ground prey is pounced on from a low perch and then taken back quickly to the perch to consume. It impales vertebrates and large invertebrates on thorns or barbed wire while it disembowels or decapitates its quarry, often saving the body for later. Shrikes are rather ungainly on the ground and limit their ground forays to only a second or two. It also flycatches insects. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in small migrating groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When flying between perches it usually launches itself with a downward swoop and flies low to the next perch, pitching up to the topmost point of a bush or prominent feature right at the last moment. This bird was previously regarded as a subspecies of Red-tailed Shrike.

Shrikes hunt for insects and small vertebrates, which they then impale on thorns or barbed wire. They often leave them for several days before eating them.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **LESSER GREY SHRIKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius minor*

ARABIC NAME: صرد صغير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

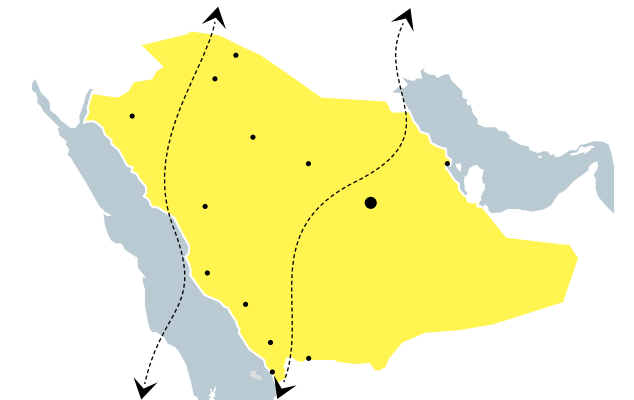
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–23 cm / 41–62 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southern Europe to Kazakhstan and south to Iraq and winters 8,000–12,000 km south in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This highly migratory shrike passes through Saudi Arabia quickly on migration (Apr–May, Aug–Sep). It is uncommon throughout the Kingdom, which is surprising since the Arabian Peninsula lies directly between the breeding and wintering ranges of half the world's population of this species; indeed in some years it is inexplicably absent. Presumably most Asian breeding populations must initially migrate west towards Eastern Europe before heading south through Africa. **HABITAT:** Parklands, bushy areas and farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, caterpillars and occasionally small mammals, birds and lizards. It perches on trees and high wires, usually higher than most shrikes at up to 10 m or more and waits for prey to appear. It takes most prey on the ground pouncing from its perch but it can also hover pounce and flycatch slower flying insects.

By impaling their prey on thorns, shrikes can then use their strong bill to tear the animal apart; they leave poisonous insects impaled for days until any toxins have degraded.

It does not impale and cache prey as frequently as other shrikes. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Generally solitary on migration but sometimes four or more can be found in one area for short periods. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This shrike has an erect stance; the slightly short tail and black facemask gives it a blunt headed, stubby appearance.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **GREAT GREY SHRIKE**

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Steppe, Arabian and Southern Grey Shrike

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius excubitor*

ARABIC NAME: صرد كبير

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

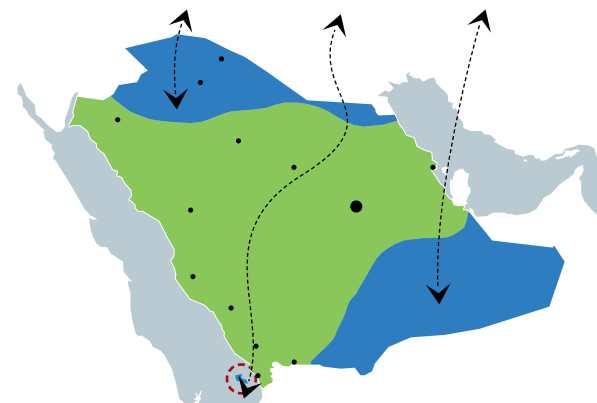
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–25 cm / 48–81 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across northern Africa and Arabia to Bangladesh and from France to Kazakhstan; migratory populations breed in northern Europe to central Russia and winter up to 4,000 km south from Britain to Kazakhstan and within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* At least two of the twelve recognized subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia, including *L. e. pallidirostris* (Steppe Grey Shrike), which occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on migration and in winter and *L. e. aucheri* (Arabian Grey Shrike), which breeds across much of Saudi Arabia except the northern plains and Rub' al-Khali. **HABITAT:** Below 2,800 m in fairly open desert areas with scattered thorny trees and scrub, especially acacia. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small vertebrates and large arthropods taken by dropping from a perch up to 15 m high. It frequently impales prey on thorns or barbed wire, decapitating vertebrate prey and saving the rest for later. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs or very occasionally polygynous with one male nesting with more than one female. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of twigs, grass and roots, lined with hair, wool, softer grass, string and occasionally paper and cloth, placed 2–3 m above ground in a tree or bush. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 15–17 days. *Nestling period:* 16–19 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 150,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh

COMMON NAME: **WOODCHAT SHRIKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius senator*

ARABIC NAME: دغناش شامي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–19 cm / 21–59 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds around the Mediterranean to Iran and winters 3,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon passage migrant, possible breeding migrant.* This pretty shrike can be scarce in many areas of Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct) and is particularly scarce in autumn, though in some years it can be more numerous in autumn at Tabuk. It is occasionally recorded in winter on the Tihamah. Some early breeding season behavior, such as male song and

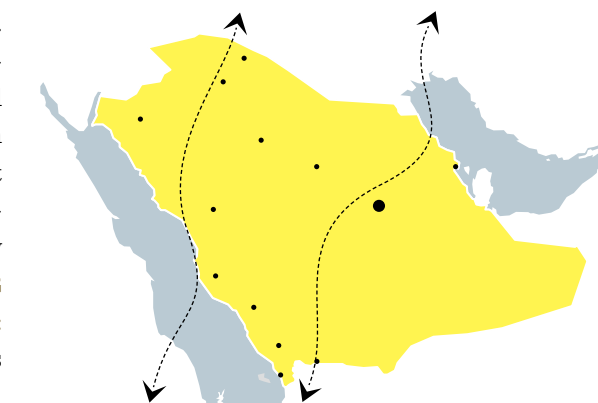
Given their tendency to impale animals on thorns and tear them apart with their bills, shrikes are sometimes referred to as butcherbirds.

pair formation, is noticeable in spring, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Parklands, farmlands and bushy places. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, notably beetles, caterpillars and grasshoppers, which are grabbed usually following a pounce or glide from its elevated perch. It also takes lizards and birds, especially injured ones. Accordingly, it has been recorded taking Crested lark, African Silverbill and Common Whitethroat in Arabia. It is, in turn, hunted regularly by the Sooty Falcon when it crosses the Red Sea. It catches prey by flycatching and will try to steal food items from its own species. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is mainly solitary but several might be present in one area on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** This bird has a somewhat skulking nature and sometimes hides in bushes. Its flight is more direct and purposeful than other shrikes.

notably beetles, caterpillars and grasshoppers, which are grabbed usually following a pounce or glide from its elevated perch. It also takes lizards and birds, especially injured ones.

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Activity: Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is mainly solitary but several might be present in one area on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** This bird has a somewhat skulking nature and sometimes hides in bushes. Its flight is more direct and purposeful than other shrikes.



Passage migrant, summer visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **MASKED SHRIKE**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lanius nubicus*

ARABIC NAME: دغناش مبرقع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 20–23 g



MALE

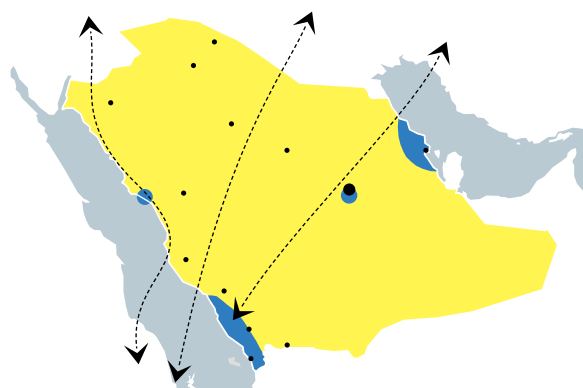


FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the eastern Mediterranean and highlands of western Iran and winters 3,000 km south and southwest in the Sahel region of Africa and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, local winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This small and particularly pretty shrike occurs as a passage migrant (Apr–May, Sep) in variable numbers throughout the Kingdom. It regularly winters in the foothills adjacent to the southern Tihamah and very occasionally in Dhahran, Riyadh and Yanbu'. Birds have been recorded

in the Hijaz Mountains all summer and juveniles have been reported, which suggests that some breeding may occur there. **HABITAT:** Bushy areas in parks, gardens, agricultural areas and open woodlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, such as grasshoppers, dragonflies, ants and beetles and the occasional lizard. It also attacks injured birds or grabs nestlings if the opportunity arises. It tends to sit quietly on the edge or under the bottom branches of an open tree or bush and wait for prey, which it pounces on. It will flycatch and pursue flying insects. It has the classic shrike habit of impaling prey on a thorn or barbed wire, consuming the brains first and saving the rest to eat later. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not confirmed breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** Rather shy and skulking, it is not as bold or robust as other shrikes. It has a relatively long tail, which is often cocked.

This shrike's facial mask helps it overcome the glare of the sun. This improves its ability to identify and stalk its prey without alerting its victim to the imminent attack.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Saiysad National Park (Tayif)

COMMON NAME: **ASIR MAGPIE**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Eurasian Magpie

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pica asirensis*

ARABIC NAME: العقق العسيري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46 cm / 240 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* Now restricted to a small patch of the 'Asir Mountains. **HABITAT:** Usually above 2,100 m in juniper woodland with good shade, mainly on south facing slopes. It also occurs in cultivated areas and open hillsides with scattered junipers, acacias and broad-leaved trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known. Omnivorous and opportunistic, including invertebrates, road kill, plant material and human food scraps. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in family parties of up to seven birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A bulky cup made of sticks, lined with a thick cup made of mud, which is lined in turn with fine twigs and rootlets.

The Kingdom's only nationally endemic bird. This highly endangered species occurs in Saudi Arabia's 'Asir Mountains and nowhere else on earth. Less than 100 pairs remain.

A thick dome made of twigs is built above the cup, leaving an entrance at the cup edge. The nest is placed 3–8 m above ground in a tree, especially juniper or acacia. Although the nest is robust and may remain for many years, a new one is built annually. *Clutch:* Unknown (2–5 nestlings or fledged young are usually reported; 2–8 eggs in similar species). *Incubation:* 21–22 days. *Nestling period:* 24–30 days. *Broods:* Unknown. **NOTE:** This bird was previously regarded as a subspecies of Eurasian Magpie. **CONSERVATION:** It is endangered globally due to the very small population size with all individuals in a single subpopulation. It once occurred north to Tayif but the remaining population continues to decline due to clearing of juniper habitat for tourism, development, timber and firewood.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **BROWN-NECKED RAVEN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Corvus ruficollis*

ARABIC NAME: غراب أدرع (غراب بني الرقبة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 52–56 cm / 500–647 g

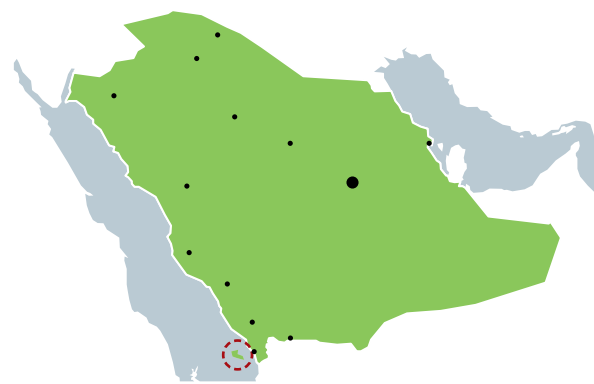


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout the desert belt of the Old World from Cape Verde Islands east through Africa and Arabia to Kazakhstan and western Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This undeniably tough bird is widespread across the Kingdom (including some islands and even the Rub' al-Khali), but is especially common in central and western areas. **HABITAT:** Widespread but concentrated along highways (especially parking areas) where road kill and discarded scraps provide food, and pylons and other upright structures are available for nesting. It also occurs at camps, towns and rubbish tips. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Opportunistic and omnivorous, including invertebrates, small vertebrates, carrion (especially road kill), food scraps and plant matter.

It also steals eggs and nestlings. Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages solitarily, in pairs or small parties and forms non-breeding flocks of up to 500. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, perhaps monogamous for life. *Parental roles:* Both adults build and defend the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation.

Nest: A large cup made of sticks, often with rags or debris, lined with hair, wool, grass, cloth and paper and placed usually more than 5 m above ground in a tree, especially acacia, down to 1 m on a bush in a treeless area, or up to 100 m on a mast, pylon or cliff. *Unusual sites:* on a telephone box, basketball pole and pile of rusty wire. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 20–23 days. *Nestling period:* 38–42 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

This intelligent bird is known to hunt cooperatively for Dhubs. Two birds will block a Dhub's burrow to prevent it from retreating underground while the other birds attack it.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 120,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)

COMMON NAME: **FAN-TAILED RAVEN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Corvus rhipidurus*

ARABIC NAME: غداف (غراب مروحي الذيل)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 46–47 cm / 512–734 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northern Africa (from Mali to Somalia) and Arabia north to Palestine and Jordan. Two subspecies are recognized, including *C. r. stanleyi*, which is near endemic to Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this good-looking raven with its distinctive fan-shaped tail can be found in mountainous or rocky areas in western and central regions. **HABITAT:** Mountainous areas with high cliffs in the highlands and rocky areas of western Arabia, as well as rock outcrops in central Arabia, notably the Tuwaiq Escarpment. It also occurs in parking areas along mountain roads and various human sites, especially rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:*

Ravens have the largest forebrain-to-hindbrain ratio of any group of birds in the world. This allows them to use tools, solve problems and invent new ways of finding food.

Invertebrates, grains, berries, dates and human food scraps. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or family groups, it forms flocks from mid-summer to December. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, probably with long-term pair bonds. Often several nests will be clustered along a stretch of cliff. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A platform and cup made of sticks, lined mainly with wool and hair (perhaps also cloth, string or debris) and usually placed in a recess, crevice, or sometimes a sheltered ledge, on an inaccessible sheer cliff or high rock outcrop. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 18–20 days. *Nestling period:* 35–40 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 90,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abha



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN PENDULINE-TIT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Remiz pendulinus*

ARABIC NAME: قرقنة أوراسية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Data Deficient

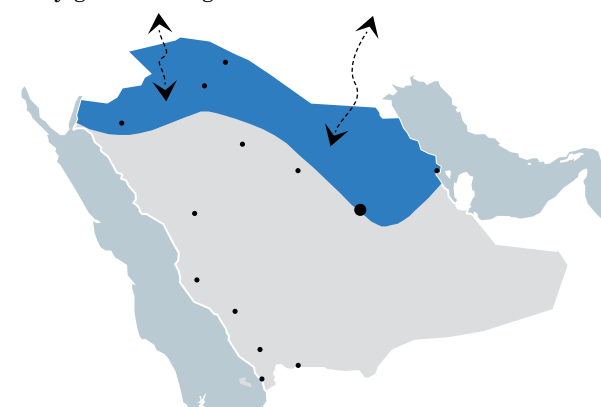
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10–11 cm / 8–13 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed across southern Europe to the Caspian; resident populations breed from central Europe to Kazakhstan and winter 1,500 km south in southern Europe to Iran and south into northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This diminutive bird arrives in Saudi Arabia to spend the winter in Tabuk, Sakaka, Riyadh and the Eastern Province south to Abqaiq, which is about the southern limit of its normal global wintering range. **HABITAT:** Wetlands containing a mosaic of swampy areas, trees, bushes and emergent vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, such as insects and their larvae, including caterpillars and spiders. It searches reeds thoroughly in a lively and restless manner and may glean through the outer branches of waterside bushes and trees searching for food items. It also takes small seeds, including those of reed mace. It may hold seed heads by its foot whilst it feeds on the seeds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in small groups in winter, the most seen together in Saudi Arabia is eight. It does not mix with other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This tiny bird with a fluttery flight is easily overlooked, but listen for its high-pitched “seeou” call.

Over winter this bird lives in Saudi Arabia where it leads a shy and quiet life. In spring it flies to Europe for a complex mating system with much divorce and partner swapping.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: az-Zilfi



COMMON NAME: **GREATER HOOPOE-LARK**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alaemon alaudipes*

ARABIC NAME: سكال

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

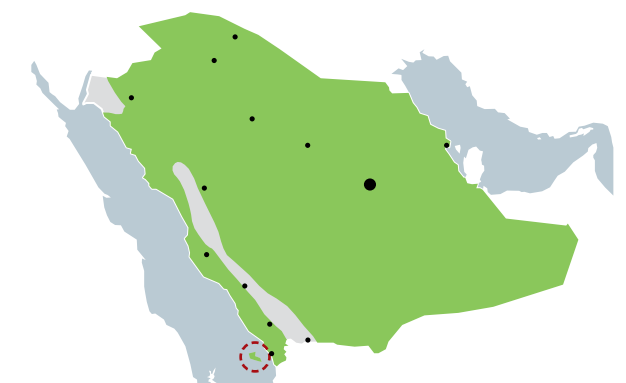
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–23 cm / 30–51 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the desert belt of northern Africa through Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This desert specialist nests throughout most of Saudi Arabia, including hyperarid sand deserts. It avoids the relatively moist western Highlands. **HABITAT:** Below 1,800 m in flat areas, such as sand and gravel plains, har-rats, sand seas, coastal plains, beaches, farms and irrigated fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates as well as some green plant material, seeds and occasionally small lizards and other small vertebrates. It digs in sand to 5 cm deep to extract food. It has been recorded breaking snail shells by dropping them or hammering them against rocks. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found solitarily or in pairs or occasionally in family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of twigs and grass, lined with fine grass, fiber, plant down and sometimes seed heads, wool, cloth and paper and placed either in an excavated hollow on the ground (in the open or at the base of a shrub) or on top of a platform made of sticks around 30 cm above ground atop a low shrub. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 14 days. *Nestling period:* 12–13 days. *Broods:* Opportunistic: double-brooded in good years. Some pairs may not attempt to breed in rainless years.

This plucky lark is supremely adapted to desert life. Indeed it is probably the only small bird that can nest throughout the Rub’ al-Khali.

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Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 600,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **THICK-BILLED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ramphocoris clotbey*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة شدقاء (قبرة سميكة المنقار)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–18 cm / 45–55 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northwestern Africa (Western Sahara to Libya), with isolated populations in northern Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This distinctive but little studied lark breeds primarily within King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah) and in northern parts of the Eastern Province. It wanders further into northern and central Arabia over winter. **HABITAT:** Breeds in stony deserts, plateaus and hillsides with rocks and pebbles, especially the black volcanic lava of King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah). Over winter it also occurs in barren plains, farms and abandoned camps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, invertebrates and green plant material, as well as occasional small

reptiles and other small vertebrates.

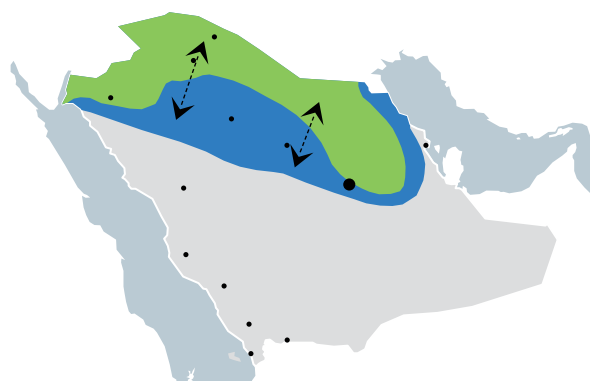
Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**

Usually forages alone or in small flocks.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A small hollow in the ground, lined with small twigs, grass and downy plant heads, sheltered by, and usually on the northern side of, a plant or rock, with a rampart of pebbles on the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13–14 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

This little known bird has the largest bill of any lark in the world. Its robust, pincer-like beak is probably used mainly for crushing seeds.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area

COMMON NAME: **BAR-TAILED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ammomanes cinctura*

ARABIC NAME: حمرة صبغاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 14–23 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the desert belt of northern Africa through Arabia to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this little brown lark can be found widely throughout the open sandy or gravel plains, particularly in central, northern and eastern regions. **HABITAT:** Below 1,200 m to sea level in the east but mainly absent from the Tihamah lowlands in the west, in arid, open, sandy or gravel plains, usually well away from human habitation, including flat rocky

Like many desert-adapted larks, this ground-foraging bird is sandy colored above for camouflage and white below to minimize heat absorption from the hot desert surface.

areas, harrats and hard gravel sabkha between sand dunes in the Rub' al-Khali. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds and insects taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**

Usually found alone or in pairs or in small flocks in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest

and tend the young. The role of adults in

incubation is unknown. *Nest:* A small,

excavated hollow in the ground, lined

with grass, plant down and occasionally

hair or feathers, sheltered by and on the

northern side of, a low rock or plant, with a rampart of flat pebbles or pieces

of earth on the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days.

Chicks: Young leave the nest at 11 days, hide nearby and then fly at 13–15 days.

Broods: Double-brooded. **NOTE:** The simple, far-carrying song of this lovely

little lark is one of the most pervasive and uplifting sounds of Saudi Arabia's

plains in spring.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 700,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



COMMON NAME: **DESERT LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ammomanes deserti*

ARABIC NAME: حمرة صحراوية (قبرة صحراوية)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–17 cm / 20–30 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the desert belt of northern Africa through Arabia to Pakistan. Twenty-four subspecies are recognized, with several occurring in Saudi Arabia, including two that are endemic to the Kingdom. *A. d. azizi* occurs around Hofuf, and *A. d. saturate*, can be found in harrats. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant breeding resident.* This wonderful, desert-adapted lark is a widespread resident across most of Saudi Arabia, although it is absent from the Rub' al-Khali and large areas of the southwest highlands, especially the wetter western escarpment.

HABITAT: Mostly below 2,000 m but up to 2,700 m in the eastern 'Asir on open, rocky and stony areas and rocky hillsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small seeds and insects usually taken while walking on the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded singly or in pairs, though small groups may form over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A deep hollow on the ground, lined mainly with grass and plant down, sheltered on one side by a rock or plant and with a rampart of small stones or pieces of earth placed around the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 10–11 days, hide nearby and then fly a few days later. *Broods:* Sometimes double-brooded. **NOTE:** Birds found in black harrats tend to have darker plumage while those in sandy deserts are pale. It is apparently impossible to flush the dark larks on to pale terrain, and vice versa.

This desert specialist is the most abundant bird in Saudi Arabia. Around 4.5 million pairs breed in the Kingdom every year.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 4,500,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)

COMMON NAME: **BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Black-crowned Finch-lark

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eremopterix nigriceps*

ARABIC NAME: أكيد أسود تاج (قبرة سوداء متوجة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10–11 cm / 12–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the Sahel region of Africa, through Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This distinctive, finch-like little lark is found across sandy regions throughout much of the central and coastal fringes of the Kingdom, including sandy islands in the Gulf and Red Sea. **HABITAT:** Below 1,800 m in open sandy areas with sparse vegetation (mainly grasses), including arid plains, irrigated alfalfa fields and dairy farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, along with insects and spiders taken from the ground or directly off the plant. It also occasionally

The smallest lark in Saudi Arabia is also the most boldly marked. The male has a jet-black facial mask, crown and belly, while the female is sandy brown and white.

hawks for insects. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in flocks of up to 50, though winter flocks can contain many more birds. For example, a flock of 700 birds was reported near Tayif in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A small, excavated hollow in the ground, lined with a cup made of grass, plant down and occasionally string, wool, hair or feathers, usually placed beside a clod of earth, grass tuft, plant or rock and sometimes with a rampart of small pebbles or pieces of earth around the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 10–11 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 8 days, hide nearby and then fly at 12–14 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 170,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **HORSFIELD'S BUSHLARK**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Singing Bushlark

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Mirafra javanica*

ARABIC NAME: حمرة شجرية (قبرة الشجر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 15–21 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in the Sahel and eastern Africa, southern Arabia, India and Southeast Asia to Australia. Twenty subspecies are recognized, including *M. c. simplex*, which is endemic to Arabia, occurring in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and western Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this musical lark is found only in the far southwest near the Yemen border. **HABITAT:** Agricultural fields in far southern Tihamah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, including seeds and insects, such as beetles, ants and caterpillars. It forages on the ground.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages singly, or in pairs or small loose parties of up to 15 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown (similar species often form socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs).

Parental roles: Unknown. *Nest:* A small cup made of grass and plant material on the ground, lined with fine grass and partially domed, with a canopy, thicker on one side, built over the cup, well hidden in thick grass, or sheltered by a small shrub or low rock in more exposed sites. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown. *Nestling period:* Unknown (10–12 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded. **NOTE:** This little brown bird wholeheartedly delivers its lovely and variable song either from a low perch or during its unusually high and impressive song flight. It frequently imitates other birds within its song bout, which can last for several minutes.

Also known as the Singing Bushlark, this bird repeatedly sings its beautiful ringing song, either from a perch or during flight.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya

COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN LARK**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Dunn's Lark

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eremalauda eremodites*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة عربية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Rapid decline¹

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / Unknown



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: near endemic to Arabia. It breeds regularly in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Yemen with small isolated populations in Jordan and southern Syria. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this unassuming brown lark is found mainly on the central and northern plains. It is nomadic and irruptive following rains. It appears to have suffered a rapid decline in recent years. **HABITAT:** Hard packed sand or gravel plains with a variety of moderately sparse shrubs, grasses and

This near endemic lark was once abundant in remote areas across the center of the Kingdom, but now it is very rarely recorded and may be in serious decline.

ephemeral plants. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes seeds and adult and larval insects, including caterpillars and grasshoppers. It forages on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages singly or in pairs during the breeding season and often in small groups of up to 20 birds outside the breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The role of adults in nest building is unknown. The female performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A small, excavated hollow on the ground, lined with a cup made of grass, thin twigs, plant down and sometimes a few feathers, placed at the base of a low shrub. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13–16 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (10 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably single-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird was previously considered to be a subspecies of Dunn's Lark, but it is now regarded as a distinct species that is largely confined to the Arabian Peninsula. It is nomadic and irruptive, making it difficult to find in most years.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 17,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Emam Saudi Bin Mohammed Protected Area



¹ IUCN Regional Assessment lists the species as stable (Symes et al. 2015). We have downgraded it to rapid decline based on the dearth of recent records.

COMMON NAME: **LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alaudala rufescens*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة صبيعاء صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 20–27 g

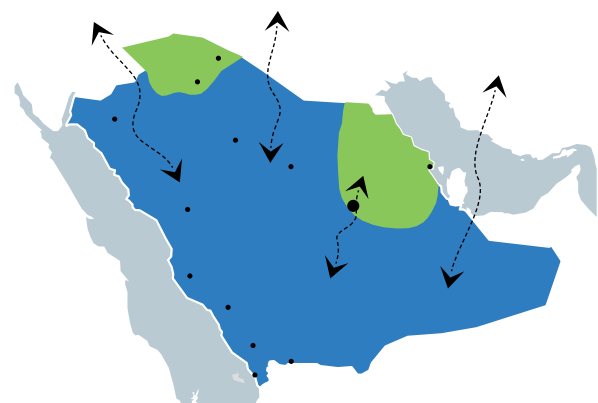


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in Spain and across northern Africa through Arabia to northern China; migratory populations breed from Ukraine to Mongolia and winter 2,000 km south within the resident range and throughout much of northern and eastern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, common winter visitor.* This heavily streaked lark is a common and widespread winter visitor throughout the Kingdom. It breeds in northern and eastern areas, including along the Gulf coast and perhaps also in central areas. **HABITAT:** Open sandy or gravel plains with herbs and grasses, or cultivated areas. It also occurs in vegetated sabkha by the Gulf coast. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates in spring and seeds in winter, as well as fruits and bulbs taken by walking along the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in pairs or in small groups.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young.

Nest: A small hollow in the ground, lined with a cup made of grass, small twigs, rootlets, or sometimes hair and wool, often sheltered by a low shrub or tuft of vegetation. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 12 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 9 days, hide nearby and then fly 2–3 days later. *Broods:* Sometimes double-brooded.

Although this bird usually breeds in low numbers in Saudi Arabia, many thousands may breed in the Kingdom after a particularly wet winter.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 450
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Nariya

COMMON NAME: **BIMACULATED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

ARABIC NAME: عليعل (قبرة شرقية صغيرة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–18 cm / 47–62 g



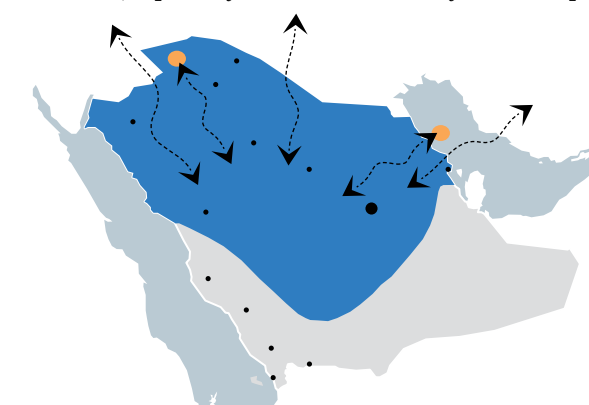
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed from Afghanistan to Kyrgyzstan; migratory populations breed from Turkey and Syria to Kazakhstan and winter 2,000 km south in northeastern Africa, northern Arabia and from Afghanistan to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, sometimes common winter visitor.* This heavily streaked lark is a winter visitor (Oct–Mar) in variable numbers mainly to the northern half of the Kingdom. It has been recorded breeding in the far north

While there are only two nest records from Saudi Arabia, this largely nomadic species probably breeds opportunistically in the Kingdom following good winter rains.

and on Gulf islands. It probably breeds opportunistically after good winter rains. **HABITAT:** Open plains and steppe desert in the far north, including King Salman Protected Area (Harrat al-Harrah). Over winter it also occurs in farms and cultivated fields, especially stubble fields. It may breed in open,

stony, sparsely vegetated areas, dry hills with stones and roughly ploughed fields (as recorded in Turkey). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates during the breeding season and seeds during the non-breeding season taken while

walking along the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages, singly or in pairs or small groups, however, large flocks can form after the breeding season with more than 4,000 recorded together in the north-central region of the Kingdom. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of grass and plant material in a shallow hollow on the ground, sheltered by a low bush, tuft or rock. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–13 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 9 days, hide nearby and then fly 2–3 days later. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.



Breeding migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0–5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **RUFOUS-CAPPED LARK**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Blanford's Lark, Blanford's Short-toed Lark

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calandrella eremica*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة صبيعاء عربية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / Unknown



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 25,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Ethiopia, Somalia and southwestern Arabia. Two subspecies are recognized, including *C. b. eremica*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen, with a single record from Oman.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this little brown lark can be found in the southwest highlands, south from around al-Bahah. **HABITAT:** Altitudinal migrant: breeds above 1,900 m in sparsely vegetated, open, flat or slightly undulating areas in the southwest highlands, including bare summits, plateaus, terraced fields and stony ground. Over winter it moves to lower altitudes on desert plains with gravel and scrub.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Unknown. Similar species take seeds and invertebrates. It forages while running or walking rapidly along the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small groups, or occasionally in flocks of up to 40 birds throughout the non-breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Unknown (similar species usually form socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs). *Parental roles:* Unknown. *Nest:* Unknown (similar species build an open cup nest lined with grass in a shallow hollow on the ground). *Clutch:* Unknown (2–5 eggs in similar species). *Incubation:* Unknown (12–15 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (9–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Unknown. **NOTE:** Until recently, this species was considered to be a subspecies of Blanford's Lark (*C. blanfordi*), which is now regarded as occurring only in eastern Africa.

Like most larks in Saudi Arabia, the male performs an exuberant display flight. It rises high up into the air and parachutes in circles to the ground, singing throughout.

COMMON NAME: **GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Calandrella brachydactyla*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة صبيعاء كبيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

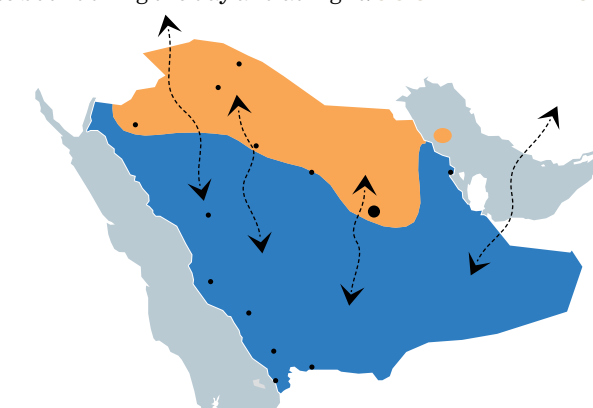
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 20–26 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northwestern Africa and Western Europe to Mongolia and winters up to 3,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa and from Arabia to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant, very common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this migratory lark occurs widely on migration and over winter. It breeds in small numbers, perhaps more so in years following good winter rains. **HABITAT:** Breeds in irrigated and cultivated areas with sparse and low vegetation and winters in desert plains. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates during the breeding season and seeds during the non-breeding season taken while walking slowly over the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both during the day and at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**

Millions of these neat little larks pass through or winter in Saudi Arabia every year, while a few hundred stay to breed.

Usually forages alone, in pairs or in small flocks, though groups of up to 100 or more birds are not uncommon in winter and flocks of 5,000 have been recorded on migration in March. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs with low levels of extra-pair paternity. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A small, excavated hollow on the ground, lined with a cup made of grass, roots, plant down, hair, wool and sometimes feathers, usually sheltered by a plant or grass tuft and with a rampart of pebbles or pieces of earth on the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–13 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 9–10 days, hide nearby and then fly at 12–15 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **TEMMINCK'S LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eremophila bilopha*

ARABIC NAME: حمرة قرناء صحراوية (قبرة مقرنة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 38–39 g

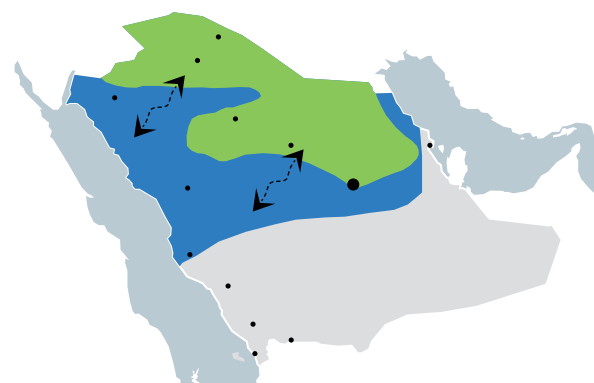


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northern Africa and northern Arabia to Syria. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This unique, horned lark can be found in the northern desert plains of Saudi Arabia, south to Riyadh in some years. It may wander further south in winter. **HABITAT:** Below 800 m in hard, stony desert or rock-strewn sandy areas with scattered tufts of vegetation. It avoids hills and bare rocks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds along with some insects and fruits. It forages mostly on the ground while walking rapidly or running. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found foraging in pairs or small groups during the breeding season, or in larger flocks of up to 150 birds during the non-breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female performs most of the nest building and probably most incubation. Both adults tend the young.

The two black "horns" on the head are particularly prominent on the males, which suggests they are used to attract potential mates and to warn rival males.

Nest: A deep excavated hollow in the ground, lined with roots, grass, plant down, wool and occasionally paper or feathers, usually sheltered by and on the northern side of, a low rock or plant and with a rampart of small stones or pieces of earth on the exposed side of the nest. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 10–11 days, hide nearby and then fly at 15–16 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

Clutch: 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 10–11 days, hide nearby and then fly at 15–16 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 750,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN SKYLARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alauda arvensis*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة سماوية أوراسية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

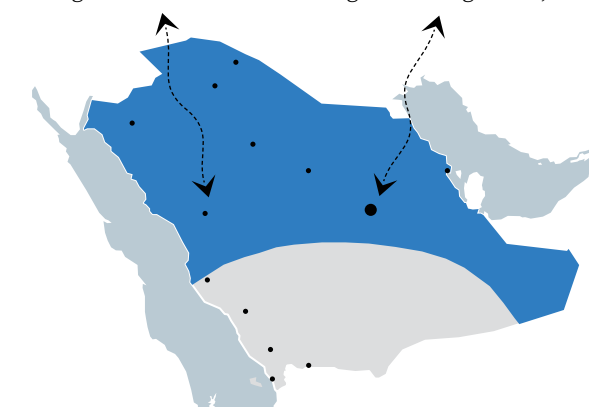
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–19 cm / M: 35–50 g; F: 26–40 g (20% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Western Europe and around the Mediterranean basin to the Caspian; migratory populations breed from northern and central Europe to Japan and eastern Russia and winter up to 5,000 km south in northern Africa, Arabia and the Middle East to India and eastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* Familiar to farmers, this skylark is an uncommon winter visitor to the Kingdom, mainly in the Eastern Province, near Riyadh, Tabuk and on the west coast north from Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** Croplands, especially pivot-irrigated fields and particularly stubble fields and fodder crops, such as alfalfa. It also occurs in large open gardens, damp areas near wetlands and vegetated low coastal areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small seeds in winter, along with some leaves of grasses and herbs. It forages on the ground, never

Strangely, a high quality skylark will sing loudly when chased by a falcon. It is trying to convince the falcon that it is very healthy and therefore not worth pursuing.

in tall vegetation, picking up items while walking along or occasionally by digging in the ground. It has a rather fluttery low flight when disturbed, often landing with a short hover quite close by. Conversely, it may sit tight until almost underfoot and then explode away in a panic. It sometimes perches in bushes but never in trees and does not come to water to drink. It sings a beautiful song at its breeding grounds, but unfortunately it is not heard in Arabia. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found foraging in small groups, but up to 50 have been seen together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **ORIENTAL SKYLARK**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Small Skylark

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alauda gulgula*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة سماوية مشرقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 24–30 g



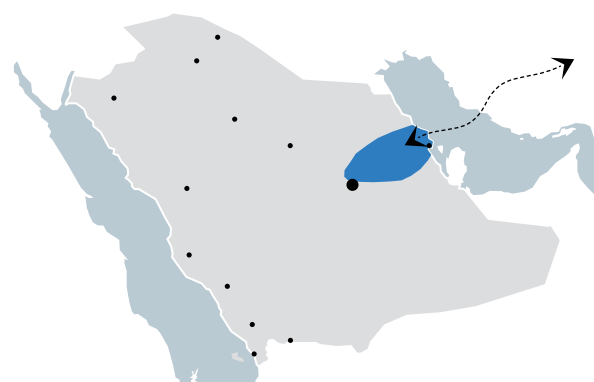
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Pakistan to the Philippines; migratory populations breed in Iran and Kazakhstan to China and winter within the resident range and occasionally in pockets throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Very rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this inconspicuous buff-colored bird has been recorded mostly near the Gulf Coast (at Sabkhat al-Fasl, Jubail and Dhahran), but also inland to Thumamah.

HABITAT: Irrigated landscapes, such as pivot-irrigated fields and landscaped lawns, as well as coastal wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes seeds and insects taken on the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded singly, in pairs or small groups of up to 25. A group of 25 recorded at Abu 'Ali in January 1991 appear to be the largest group

recorded in the Kingdom. It has been recorded feeding in association with Eurasian Skylark and Greater Short-toed Lark. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This small lark with a slight erectile crest could be mistaken for the Eurasian Skylark except for its distinctive buzzing call, short primary wing projection and warmer coloration. It also lacks the white trailing edge to the wing. This bird sings a similar song to the Eurasian Skylark, which it likewise delivers in flight or from a perch.

This very rare visitor to Saudi Arabia is not well adapted to the desert. To survive here it needs to drink 30% more water than the desert-adapted Arabian Lark.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **CRESTED LARK**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Galerida cristata*

ARABIC NAME: قبرة شائعة (قبرة متوجة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 35–50 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout much of northern Africa and Europe through Arabia and central Asia to India and Korea, appearing in numerous color variations according to local conditions. Thirty-seven subspecies are currently recognized, including *G. c. tardinata*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring in southwestern Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Abundant breeding resident.* This familiar lark can be found around virtually every village and town in Saudi Arabia and is especially common in coastal regions. It is the second most abundant breeding bird in the kingdom.

Predation on females sitting on the nest is so great that by the end of the breeding season males can outnumber females by more than four to one.

HABITAT: Farms and cultivated areas, nearby scrub deserts, waste ground around villages and parks in cities and towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates during the breeding season and seeds and green plant material during the non-breeding season. It forages while walking or running along the ground, or occasionally by digging holes in the sandy ground.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages alone or in pairs during the breeding season or in small groups over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A cup made of grass, small twigs and rootlets, lined with fine grass, hair and occasionally wool or feathers, placed in a natural or excavated hollow on the ground, often sheltered by and usually on the northern side of, a clump of vegetation or low rock. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–13 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 9–11 days, hide nearby and then fly at 15–16 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A cup made of grass, small twigs and rootlets, lined with fine grass, hair and occasionally wool or feathers, placed in a natural or excavated hollow on the ground, often sheltered by and usually on the northern side of, a clump of vegetation or low rock. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–13 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 9–11 days, hide nearby and then fly at 15–16 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 4,000,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



COMMON NAME: **ZITTING CISTICOLA**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cisticola juncidis*

ARABIC NAME: نملة مخبطة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10 cm / M: 7–12 g; F: 5–8 g (30% lighter)



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in southern Europe, Africa, southern Asia, southwestern Arabia and northern Australia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this tiny, streaked bird is found mainly in the far southern Tihamah, south of Abha. **HABITAT:** Mainly below 500 m in hot, dry, open and well-vegetated country, typically grasslands and crop fields, especially sorghum. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other small invertebrates, such as spiders and snails taken mainly by gleaning prey from the base of plant tufts or by hawking insects in the air. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded foraging alone, in pairs or small family groups. Dispersing juveniles may form flocks of up to 10 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Generally socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs or sometimes polygynous with one male nesting with up to 11 females simultaneously or sequentially. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory and builds the nest. The female lines the nest, incubates and tends the young. *Nest:* A pear-shaped flask of grass, plant down and cobwebs with an entrance at the top, bound with cobwebs around several upright stems of tall grass or crops, placed 10–90 cm above ground and well-hidden amongst vegetation in an open area. The male builds several nests, the female selects one and lines it with fine grass, plant down, cobwebs and occasionally wool. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 13 days. *Nestling period:* 13–14 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

This tiny bird gets its name from the insect-like “zzzit” calls that it delivers repeatedly in flight with each note corresponding to a flurry of wing beats.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya

COMMON NAME: **GRACEFUL PRINIA**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Prinia gracilis*

ARABIC NAME: نملة ذنوب

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

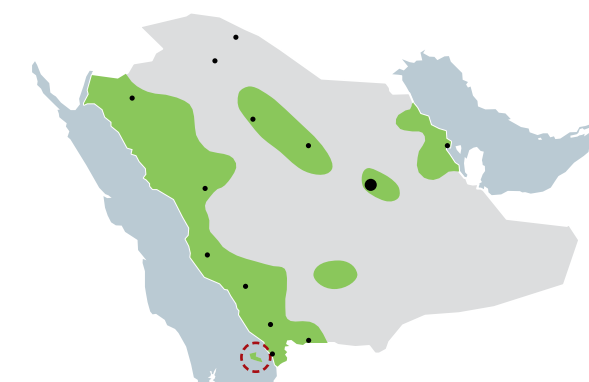
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10–13 cm / 6–8 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in the eastern Mediterranean, Nile Valley, Horn of Africa, Arabia and the Middle East to Bangladesh. Twelve subspecies are recognized, including two that are endemic to Arabia and occur within the Kingdom: *P. g. hufu-fae* occurs in northeastern Saudi Arabia and Bahrain; and *P. g. yemenensis* occurs in Yemen, southern Oman and on the west coast of Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. This delicate songbird breeds in western, central and eastern areas. **HABITAT:** Thick vegetation often with surface water, such as irrigation ditches, wastewater farms, reed and juncus beds, tamarisk thickets, halophytic scrub and damp grassland. It also occurs in drier places, including crops, date plantations, terraced farmland, suburban gardens and bushy areas in city parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, spiders and some plant matter. It gleans prey in thick vegetation from less than 2 m above the ground, often hanging on plant stems while feeding. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary, pairs or family parties. Dispersing juveniles form flocks of up to 10–12 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, with apparently long-lasting pair bonds. *Parental roles:* Both adults build and defend the nest, incubate and tend the young. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* An oval-shaped dome made of grass, rootlets, plant down, cobwebs and occasionally string, with an entrance near the top, lined with plant down or hair and placed usually 30–90 cm above ground in long grass, or a reedbed, juncus, tamarisk, flowerbed or bush. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–13 days. *Nestling period:* 12–14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This tiny bird – the lightest in Saudi Arabia – maintains year-round territories. The boundaries are contested by song duels and tail displays between neighboring males.

and placed usually 30–90 cm above ground in long grass, or a reedbed, juncus, tamarisk, flowerbed or bush. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–13 days. *Nestling period:* 12–14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 45,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



COMMON NAME: **OLIVACEOUS WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Iduna pallida*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء زيتونية شرقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

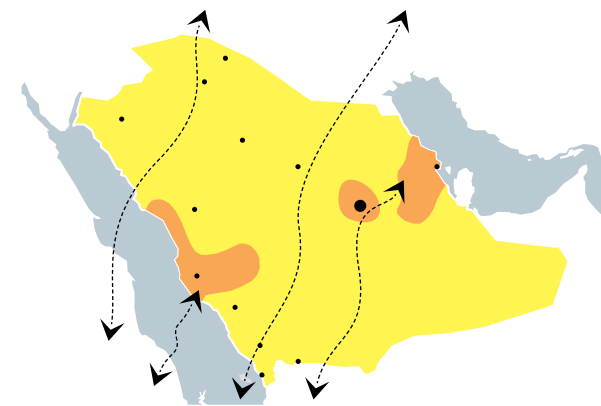
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–14 cm / 8–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in scattered patches through northern Africa; migratory populations breed from northern Africa and southeastern Europe through Arabia to western China and winter 4,000 km south in eastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, this tiny warbler occurs widely on migration (Apr–May, Sep–Oct) and breeds mainly in the middle third of the Kingdom. It is locally common in the Eastern Province and central parts of the Kingdom. **Habitat:** Trees with dense canopies (especially tamarisk) near water, such as irrigated plantations, date groves, parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, spiders and some fruit. It usually takes prey from the leaves and twigs high in the canopy, but on migration it will also feed in very low scrub. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in a loose



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



cluster in very good habitat. **Parental roles:** The female builds the nest (with the male providing some material) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. **Nest:** A neat, compact cup made of grass, plant stems, leaves, thin twigs and cobwebs, lined with plant down, fine grass and sometimes hair or feathers, placed 1–9 m above ground in the outer branches of a tree, especially tamarisk. **Clutch:** 3–4 eggs. **Incubation:** 11–13 days. **Nestling period:** 11–15 days. **Broods:** Double-brooded. **NOTE:** It constantly flicks or dips its tail down and back up again, with each dip typically coinciding with a single note.

This warbler tries to build the neatest and smallest nest it can, because in this species females that build smaller nests suffer significantly less nest predation.

COMMON NAME: **UPCHER'S WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hippolais languida*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء وادية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

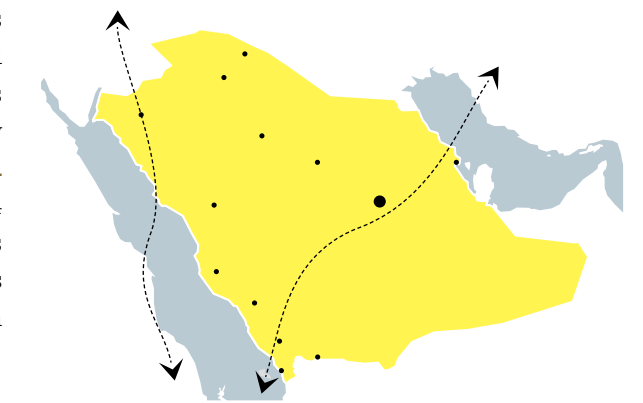
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 10–20 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Palestine and Turkey to Afghanistan and Kazakhstan and winters 4,000 km south and southwest in eastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This active, little, gray-brown bird is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia. Its migratory behavior is unusual in that most are often already in pairs when they pass through the Kingdom quite late in spring (late May). **HABITAT:** Open scrub, low desert vegetation (including halophytes), acacia bush and scrub covered hillsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes insects and other small invertebrates, which it finds by gleaning bushes and low vegetation, hopping actively between stems and branches. It routinely flicks its wings and wags its tail, almost as if the tail is loose, perhaps to expose invertebrates resting on nearby foliage. It also regularly

This warbler constantly fans, wags, twists and cocks its long tail with brisk exaggerated movements, perhaps as a way of flushing insect prey from the surrounding foliage.

flycatches and descends to the ground to feed. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is usually found solitary, in pairs or very small groups of 3–4 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird constantly engages in seemingly exaggerated tail movements, which is often the first thing that draws one's attention to the bird, especially if it is in deep cover.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **OLIVE-TREE WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hippolais olivetorum*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء شجر زيتون

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 14–23 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in coastal regions of the eastern Mediterranean and western Black Sea and winters 7,000 km south in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant*. In Saudi Arabia, this relatively large gray warbler is a rare passage migrant in both spring and autumn. Given its global distribution is primarily west of Arabia, most birds probably migrate through Africa, with only a few migrating along the eastern side of the Red Sea presumably crossing at the Bab al-Mandab Strait off Yemen. Thus, it is usually found along coastal areas of the Red Sea with only a few records from Riyadh and the Arabian Gulf region. **HABITAT:** Scrub and orchards, often near water or damp areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, mainly invertebrates as well as berries and figs. It feeds mainly in the upper canopy of bushes and trees and sometimes on the ground. Like some of its close relatives it has a habit of wagging its tail from side to side while foraging, possibly to help flush invertebrates from nearby foliage. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found alone or in pairs or in small groups of 3–4 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This large billed warbler is rather skulking, with sluggish movements through bushes and has a heavy but direct flight.

After nesting in olive trees in the eastern Mediterranean, this rare warbler migrates 7,000 km south to southern Africa, with some passing through western Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **ICTERINE WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hippolais icterina*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء ليمونية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

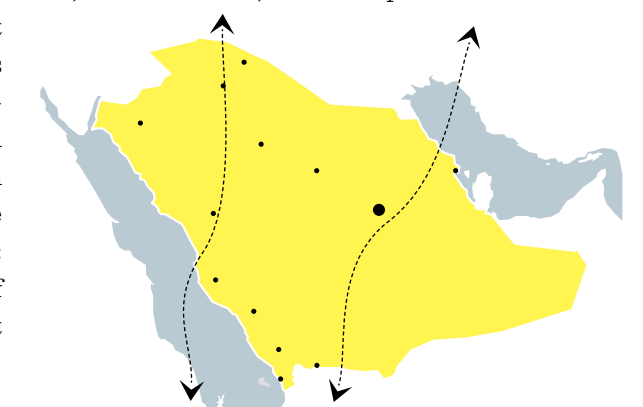
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 11–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe and Scandinavia to northern Kazakhstan and winters 8,000 km south in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant*. This greenish-gray warbler is a rare passage migrant through Saudi Arabia with records of individual birds scattered throughout the Kingdom. These records of single birds are either individuals dropping out of the migration, which possibly passes completely over Saudi Arabia, or alternatively they indicate that the majority of passage migrants take a more western route through Africa. **HABITAT:** Somewhat isolated shrubs or acacia bushes, often in the desert or wadis. It is not found especially in the green areas typical of most other migratory warblers. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and their larvae, including butterflies, moths, dragonflies, locusts, beetles and flies, as well as spiders and small mollusks. It also feeds on berries and fruits. It is a canopy feeder on its breeding grounds and limited observations in Arabia suggest it likewise forages in a restless and active manner in the higher more open parts of trees and bushes. It also flycatches and occasionally comes to the ground to feed. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Most records in Saudi Arabia are of single birds. It tends to keep to itself rather than mixing with other species. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

Even tiny yellowish warblers are fascinating – not only does this species migrate an astonishing 16,000 km per year, it can also closely mimic the calls of many other birds.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadis near Riyadh



COMMON NAME: **MOUSTACHED WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء مشجورية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

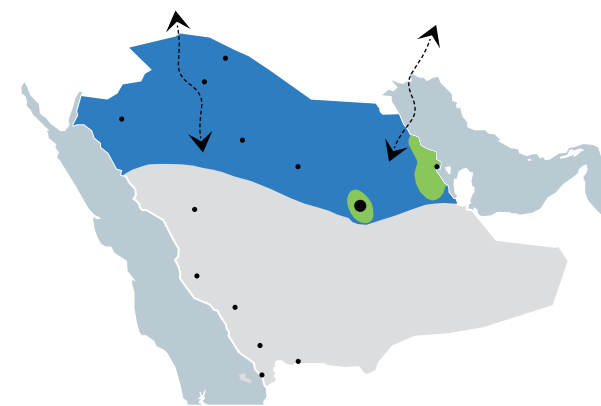
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–13 cm / 8.5–13 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean to Iran and Arabia; migratory populations breed across southern Europe to southern Kazakhstan and winter around the Mediterranean, northern Arabia, Pakistan and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, scarce winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this dark-crowned warbler with a strong white eyebrow stripe and black “moustache” is recorded over winter (Nov–Mar), mainly in the north of the Kingdom. Most breeding occurs in the Eastern Province, with a few pairs near Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Extensive wetlands with reedbeds and other thick vegetation growing in or beside water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small arthropods, especially beetles, bugs, insect larvae, spiders and water snails, as well as occasional fruit and berries.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



When breeding, the male sings a two-part song: first a short sharp whistle designed to repel rival males; and second a long and pretty warble designed to attract females.

It forages amongst the vertical stems of reedbeds. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest. Both adults incubate, tend the young and defend the territory. *Nest:* A deep cup made of reed strips, plant stems and coarse grass, lined with fine grass, reed flowers and sometimes feathers and woven around vertical stems of reeds or juncus, placed 0.3–1.3 m above water in a reedbed. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 12 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

COMMON NAME: **SEDGE WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء سعديّة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

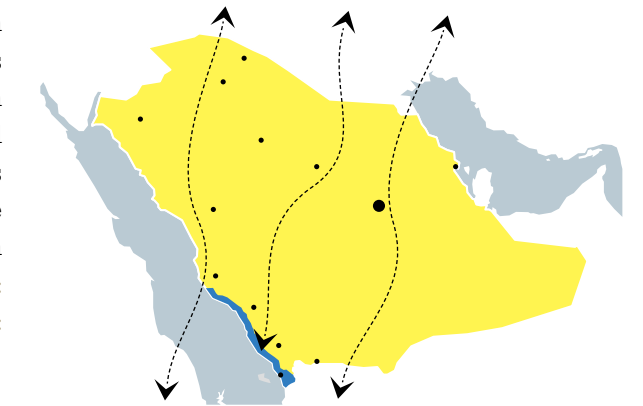
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 8.1–18 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the British Isles and Scandinavia to central Russia and winters 7,000 km to the south in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, local winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this small brown warbler is generally rather scarce as a passage migrant (Feb–Jun, Sep–Oct), but for a short period in May it can be quite numerous in the Riyadh region with many in full song. It possibly winters in the southern Tihamah where it has been found at a number of sites in January. **HABITAT:** Wetlands and marshy sites with overgrown dense vegetation, especially reedbeds and tamarisk thickets beside standing water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and larvae, especially damselflies, caddis flies, mosquitos, grasshoppers and aphids, as well as spiders and small snails. It is also known to feed on some fruit, berries and seeds, including *Salvadora* berries

This little warbler almost doubles its body weight to fuel its migration; but this extra weight comes at a high cost – fatter birds are less able to evade predators.

and seeds of sedges. It forages actively and acrobatically as it clammers about in the lower levels of dense vegetation, hanging head down to reach insects hiding on the undersides of leaves. It also flycatches and feeds on the ground occasionally. It flicks its tail frequently, perhaps to flush invertebrates from nearby foliage. Flights tend to be low and over short distances ending with a dive to cover. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in small loose groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **MARSH WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus palustris*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء مستنقعية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

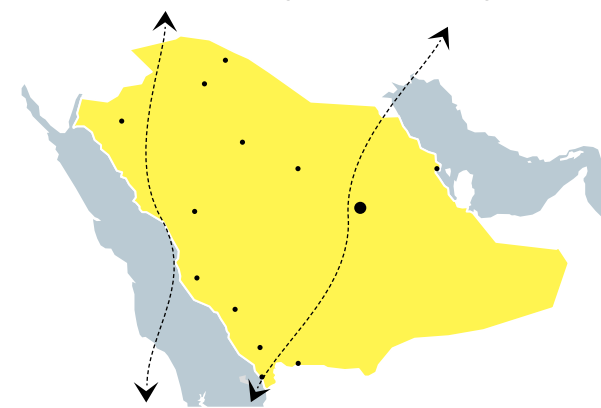
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 10–13 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to central Russia and winters over 8,000 km away in southeastern Africa.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common passage migrant.* This extraordinary long-distance migrant is common and widespread on passage through Saudi Arabia (May, Aug–Sep). In spring, almost all birds pass through the Kingdom in mid-May when for a short time it is very common, with some in song and then it is gone again. It is rare in autumn, suggesting it migrates south through Africa. **HABITAT:** Dense waterside vegetation, especially reedbeds, cattail stands and tamarisk thickets. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, including bugs, aphids, lacewings, damselflies and various larvae, as well as spiders, woodlice, small snails and occasional berries. It forages within dense vegetation, often near ground level, moving up and down stems searching for food items, including under leaves. It grabs some insects in the air and also takes them from the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This species is difficult to separate in the field from the Common Reed-warbler, so much so that many observers merely lump the two species together resulting in it not being reported from many areas. However, careful identification and ringing studies show that the species is at least as frequent as the Common Reed-warbler on migration but only during a very narrow time period.

This bird races to its breeding grounds, travelling 8,000 km at 250 km per day. It then dawdles back to its winter quarters at 100 km per day – the urgency to breed is over.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **COMMON REED-WARBLER**

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Eurasian, Caspian, Red Sea, and Mangrove Reed-warbler

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء أوراسية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 8–20 g

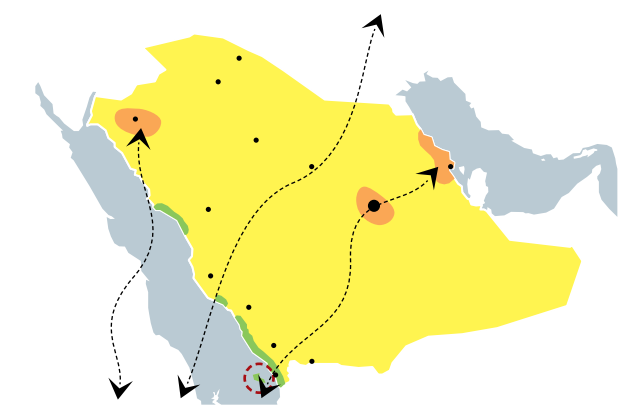


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur throughout Africa and western Arabia; migratory populations breed from Western Europe to Kazakhstan and migrate 6,000 km south to winter in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:**

Reed-warbler populations that migrate have long, narrow wings specialized for long distance flight; resident populations have short, rounded wings for speed and agility.

Uncommon breeding resident, uncommon breeding migrant, common passage migrant. Three sub-species (sometimes regarded as distinct species) occur in Saudi Arabia: *A. s. scirpaceus* (Eurasian Reed-warbler) passes through the northwest; *A. s. fuscus* (Caspian Reed-warbler) is a breeding migrant to the east and a passage migrant; and *A. s. avicenniae* (Mangrove or Red Sea Reed-warbler) is resident in the west. **HABITAT:** Caspian and Eurasian Reed-warbler: shallow reedbeds and nearby bushes with thick undergrowth. Mangrove Reed-warbler: dense Black Mangrove stands along the Red Sea coast.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, spiders and occasionally some fruit. Most prey is taken from reed stems and blades, or from bushes or on the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs, though several may be foraging within the same general area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small, loose colonies. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A deep cup made of grass, leaves and flowering stems of reeds, lined with finer material, woven around upright stems in a reedbed (or occasionally a bush). *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 9–12 days. *Nestling period:* 10–12 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident, breeding migrant, passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,900

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **BASRA REED-WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus griseldis*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء بصرية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

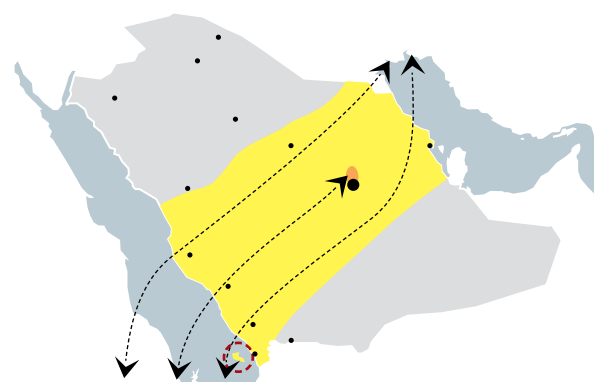
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–18 cm / 12–29 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds mainly in the wetlands of southeastern Iraq (on the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers), as well as in northern Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Palestine and possibly southwestern Iran and winters 5,000 km south in eastern Africa (southern Somalia to Mozambique), travelling southwest through Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, scarce passage migrant.* This endangered warbler passes through Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant, entering the Kingdom around Kuwait and travelling south-southwest to exit the Kingdom somewhere around Jazan. In addition, up to 20 pairs may nest at Riyadh River, though perhaps not every year. **HABITAT:** Breeds in wetlands with tall reeds and nearby tamarisks. On migration it also occurs in fodder fields in the Eastern Province. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes insects. It presumably

has similar foraging ecology to Common Reed-warbler. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in loose groups of up to five birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Unknown. *Nest:* A deep cup made of strips of reed leaves and reed heads, woven around two to four upright stems in a reedbed. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (9–15 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (11–15 days in similar species). *Broods:* Single-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** This species underwent a very rapid decline in the past (1950–2003) when its shallow, marshy, wetland breeding habitat was drained. Drought and future water management issues further threaten the small population.

This endangered warbler breeds almost entirely in wetlands in southeastern Iraq before migrating through Saudi Arabia to spend the winter in eastern Africa.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **GREAT REED-WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

ARABIC NAME: دخناء كبيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

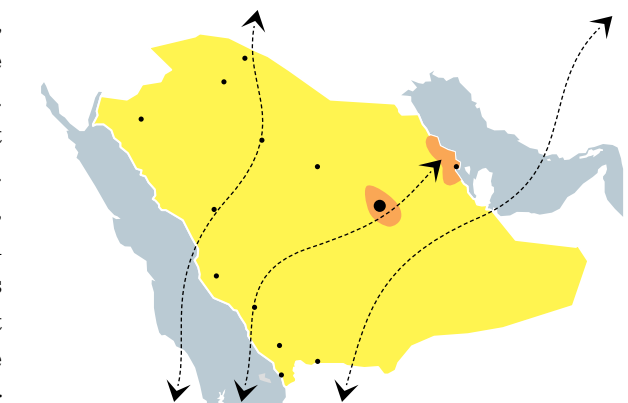
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–20 cm / 22–31 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Africa and Western Europe to Mongolia and south into Arabia and winters 8,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant.* This highly migratory reed-warbler occurs widely on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Oct) through Saudi Arabia and breeds in small numbers in the Eastern Province and south of Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Breeds in wetlands with tall dense reedbeds standing in shallow water. On migration it prefers wetlands, but also shelters in any vegetated habitat, even dry scrub in deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, as well as spiders, snails and occasionally small vertebrates, such as frogs, small lizards, or fish. It forages in reeds, making short leaps through the vegetation or sometimes by flycatching. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs, though several birds may occur in the same general area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Usually socially monogamous breeding pairs, nesting either solitary or in loose association,

This large warbler often forms harems – by selecting the best and safest territories, high quality males can attract and nest with up to four females simultaneously.

or sometimes polygynous with one male nesting with 2–3 females simultaneously. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A deep cup made of plant stems, leaves, reed flowers and plant down, lined with finer stems, leaves and sometimes hair and feathers, bound around upright reeds, usually placed 0.6–1.2 m above water in a reedbed. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 12 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 170
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



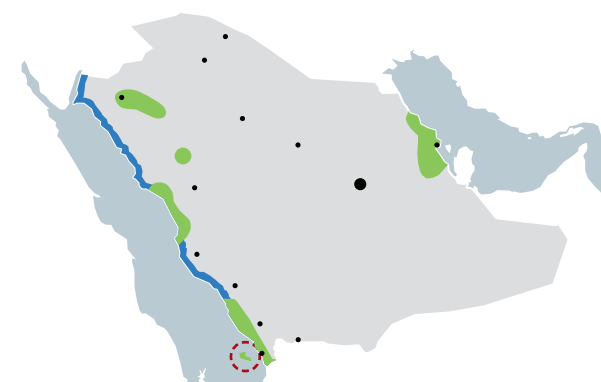
COMMON NAME: **CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acrocephalus stentoreus*
 ARABIC NAME: دخناء صحباء
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–20 cm / 23–34 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur patchily from the Nile Valley and Red Sea coast through Arabia to China; migratory populations breed in northern Iran and Afghanistan to Kazakhstan and winter up to 2,500 km south in the Indian subcontinent (and possibly in Arabia). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, local winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this large reed-warbler, the largest in the family, breeds mainly along the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea coasts and in several inland wetlands. Some migratory populations may visit over winter. **HABITAT:** Low bushy mangroves. It also occurs inland at freshwater wetlands with reedbeds and areas of open water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Diet: Mainly insects, as well as snails, slugs, small frogs and aquatic seeds. It usually forages low down amongst reeds or in nearby trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded foraging alone or in pairs, though several birds can occur within the same general area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, with some polygyny where one male nests with multiple females. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building and incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A bulky, deep cup made of grass, feathers, mangrove fibers or reed leaves, supported by typically three upright branches or reed stems, placed 1.5–3 m above ground or water in a mangrove tree or reedbed. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–15 days. *Nestling period:* 11–14 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.

To keep warm over winter, this bird quickly gains body fat each day only to lose it again a few hours later while shivering through the cold Saudi Arabian night.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail



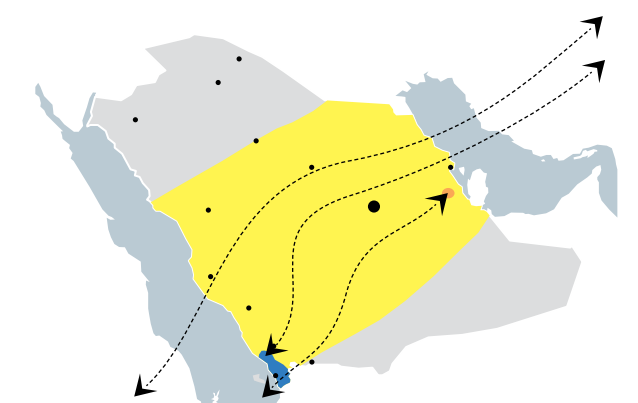
COMMON NAME: **SAVI'S WARBLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Locustella luscinioides*
 ARABIC NAME: دخلة سافية
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 12–21 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Africa and Western Europe to Kazakhstan with a few pairs in Arabia and winters 5,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This warmly colored but somewhat plain grasshopper-warbler is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia on migration, though it is mostly recorded in the east. It is occasionally recorded over winter in the southwest. Small numbers breed in dense reedbeds, though perhaps not every year. **HABITAT:** Dense reeds and other tall aquatic vegetation in extensive wetlands, including swamps, wastewater settling ponds and other artificial wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects along with spiders and small snails. It forages among low vegetation. Picking items from the stems, ground or water surface. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates

As if competing in a breeding lottery, males race 5,000 km to the breeding sites, find the best territories and then mate with the first (and thus best) females to arrive.

at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs, though several birds can be recorded in the same general area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of firmly woven grass stems, lined with smooth, finer leaves and surrounded by a loose outer layer of leaves of waterside plants, usually placed less than 30 cm above water (occasionally above dry ground) in a clump of reeds, sedges or other dense aquatic plants. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 12 days. *Nestling period:* 12–14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **NOTE:** This cryptic bird usually hides deep within reedbeds. Most records are of its mechanical, reeling song.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Hasa lagoons



COMMON NAME: **COMMON GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Locustella naevia*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة جنديبة شائعة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–13 cm / 11–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northwestern Europe to Mongolia and winters 5,000 km to the south with eastern populations migrating southeast to India and western populations migrating southwest to western Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, possible breeding migrant.* Given its wide breeding range north of the Kingdom, this small, olive-brown grasshopper-warbler is a surprisingly scarce passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Feb–May, Aug–Nov) and has been recorded only in a band across the middle of the Kingdom from Tayif to the Eastern Province. Its rarity may be due to the widely separated winter ranges, which allow birds to pass either east or west of Arabia. Its distinctive reeling song has twice been recorded over extended periods in Saudi Arabia, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Prefers dense, prolific ground vegetation, such as scrubby herbage near wetlands or croplands with hedges and bushes, but it can occur anywhere on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Diet: Small insects and spiders as well as tiny snails. It forages in low vegetation, gleaning from the top of the stem to the bottom, or on the ground among leaves.

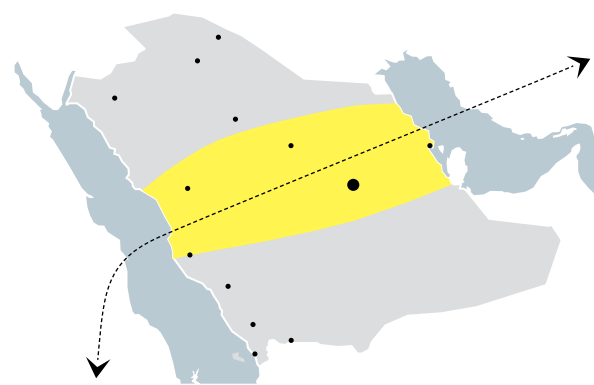
Activity: Diurnal. It migrates at night.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually solitary.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** This species gets its common and Latin name (*Locustella*) from its whirring, high-pitched, insect-like song.

It is generally a skulking species that sits quietly and does not readily flush even from a tiny piece of ground vegetation close to an observer. When it does move, it flits mouse-like through the vegetation allowing only a glimpse.

This bird struggles to migrate quickly across large deserts; therefore it usually avoids Saudi Arabia, flying instead to either western Africa or India.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **NORTHERN HOUSE MARTIN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Common House Martin

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Delichon urbicum*

ARABIC NAME: خطاف عجز

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 16–23 g

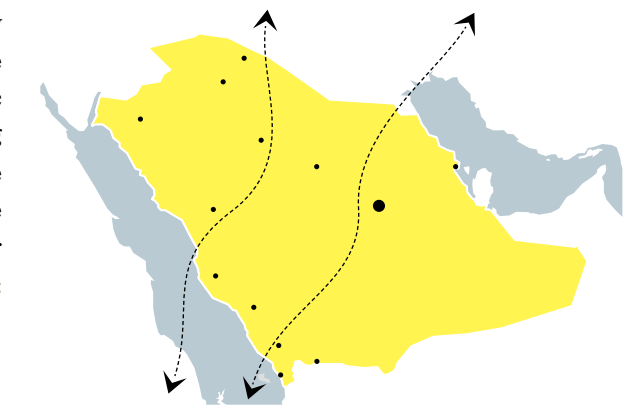


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the British Isles and northern Africa to Mongolia and winters 4,000–8,000 km south in Sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant.* This fine-looking black and white martin is common and widespread on passage throughout Saudi Arabia, though it is recorded much less often than expected considering the millions that must pass over the Kingdom each year. Presumably it migrates at high altitude over Arabia, which may also explain why it appears

This martin seems to appear from nowhere before a thunderstorm – and then, just as quickly, it disappears again.

suddenly with the approach of storms and thunderclouds. It is surprisingly rare in the southwest part of the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Entirely aerial, it never comes to ground on migration. It prefers feeding in areas with plenty of flying insects, such as wetlands, marshy ground, or green crops, such as alfalfa. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small airborne insects, such as flies, mosquitos, beetles, ants, moths and bees. It has a steady flight manner with glides and lacks the swoops and turns of the more aerobic Barn Swallow, but it often forages higher and may even join swifts feeding

very high in the air. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It forages alone or sometimes in a small group (or exceptionally to 75 or more birds) but more than 20 together in Saudi Arabia is unusual. It often associates with other hirundines, such as Barn Swallows and swifts. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tayif escarpment



COMMON NAME: **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cecropis daurica*

ARABIC NAME: سنونو أحمرعجز

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

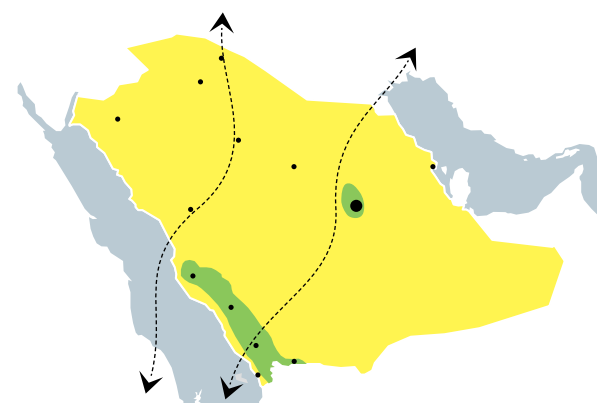
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 19–29 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, western Arabia and India to Indonesia; migratory populations breed in northern Africa and southwestern Europe to Japan and winter 3,000 km south chiefly within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, this aerial acrobat occurs widely on migration (Feb–Apr, Sep–Oct) and breeds in the southwest highlands south from Tayif and at rich feeding sites around Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Breeds usually above 1,200 m in open rocky areas with nearby cliffs and wooded slopes. On migration it occurs wherever there are flying insects, especially above fields and wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly flying insects, such as flying ants, beetles, flies, bugs and termites, usually taken in flight both low over vegetation and high in the air. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded foraging alone, in pairs or in small groups of 3–6 birds, but occasionally it is recorded in flocks of



Breeding resident, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 22,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **BARN SWALLOW**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hirundo rustica*

ARABIC NAME: سنونو شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

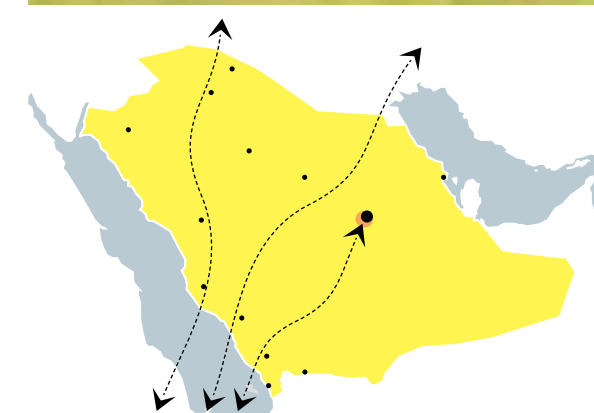
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 16–24 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory; breeds throughout North America and Eurasia (below the Arctic Circle) and winters up to 6,000 km south in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia to northern Australia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding migrant, very common passage migrant.* This is one of the most common

Female Barn Swallows prefer males with longer and more symmetrical tail streamers, even though (indeed because) long tails streamers are an aerodynamic handicap.

passage migrants in Saudi Arabia (Mar–May, Sep–Oct). It can be seen everywhere and often for much of the year. In addition, a few have recently been recorded breeding near Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Entirely aerial, it never comes to the ground on migration. It prefers areas with plentiful flying insects, such as wetlands and green crops. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small flying insects, particularly flies, aphids, bugs, beetles, ants and bees, caught on the wing. It is an elegant, skillful aerial acrobat that feeds below about 7 m but often only 1 m above ground level. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, hundreds may move together on migration feeding as they go, occasionally congregating in huge numbers where food is plentiful. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting in small colonies. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A half-cup made of mud pellets, lined with soft grass and feathers, attached to a vertical surface, usually beneath an overhang on a cliff, but also under a bridge or on a building. Nests often touch one another. The nest is often re-used in subsequent years and can last for 12 years (or exceptionally 48 years). *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–16 days. *Nestling period:* 18–27 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any city or town in April



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN CRAG MARTIN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

ARABIC NAME: عوهق جرفي أوراسي (خطاف الشواهدق الأوروبي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

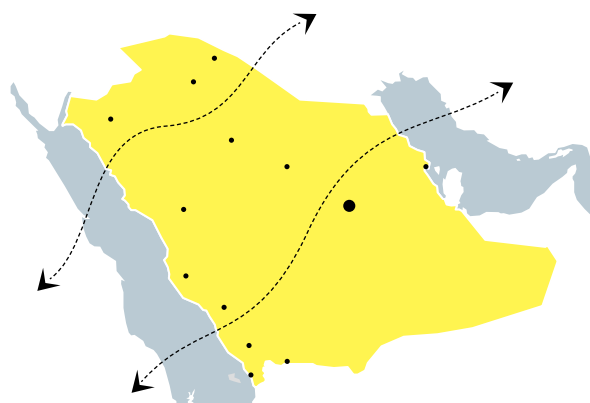
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 17–33 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean to Iraq; migratory populations breed from southern Europe to China and winter up to 2,500 km south along the Nile Valley, India and Nepal. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant*. A master of its aerial environment, this little brown bird is an uncommon passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov) with small numbers recorded from all regions. It has previously been suspected of breeding in the western highlands, but this has never been confirmed. **HABITAT:** Jabals, cliffs and inland waters with abundant aerial insect prey. It also occurs at irrigated farmlands and coastal sites. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small aerial insects, particularly flies, bugs and beetles as well as airborne spiders taken in flight. It forages in front of cliffs, along wadis and also high above the land with other hirundines. Quite a slow, even sluggish, flyer with few wing beats and long glides, it often stays close to the cliff side, making good use of its slightly forked tail for control and updrafts to minimize the energy used when making the jinking movements it often uses to catch insects. Prey is also taken from water surfaces but it does not alight on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It generally moves through as single birds or small parties of up to a dozen or so, often accompanying other hirundines. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not confirmed breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** The true status of the species is a little uncertain due to possible confusion with the common resident Pale Rock Martin.

This aerobic migrant will often fly back and forth along a cliff face, taking advantage of thermals as it hunts for flies and other flying insects.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



COMMON NAME: **PALE ROCK MARTIN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Pale Crag Martin

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*

ARABIC NAME: عوهق جرفي فاتح (خطاف الشواهدق الباهت)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–16 cm / 16–30 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from northern Africa through Arabia to Pakistan; migratory populations breed from Iran to Pakistan and winter up to 300 km south within the resident range. Eight subspecies are recognized, three of which occur in Saudi Arabia including *P. o. perpallida*, which is near endemic to northeastern Saudi Arabia, though it also breeds irregularly in Southern Iraq. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. This pale martin breeds throughout much of western Saudi Arabia and into the Eastern Province. It wanders further east during winter. **HABITAT:** Breeds below 2,800 m in areas with cliffs and rock outcrops and increasingly on buildings and structures, even in busy urban areas. It forages wherever flying insects are plentiful, such as wetlands and cultivated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Flying insects taken in the air, usually within 1 m of a cliff or jabal while gliding back and forth along a cliff face or building. *Activity:* Crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs or small groups, often mixed with other hirundines. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, strongly territorial around the nest. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An open half-cup made of mud pellets, lined with soft grass, feathers and occasionally hair, wool and plant down, attached to a vertical surface, usually beneath an overhang on a cliff, but also under a bridge or on a building (particularly under a ledge or veranda). The nest is often re-used in subsequent years. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 17 days. *Nestling period:* 19–21 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This pale, sandy-colored bird may not stand out in a crowd, but therein lies its strength. It befuddles its predators by blending into the pale, sandy-colored jabals of Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and into the Eastern Province. It wanders further east during winter. HABITAT: Breeds below 2,800 m in areas with cliffs and rock outcrops and increasingly on buildings and structures, even in busy urban areas. It forages wherever flying insects are plentiful, such as wetlands and cultivated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Flying insects taken in the air, usually within 1 m of a cliff or jabal while gliding back and forth along a cliff face or building. *Activity:* Crepuscular. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs or small groups, often mixed with other hirundines. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, strongly territorial around the nest. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An open half-cup made of mud pellets, lined with soft grass, feathers and occasionally hair, wool and plant down, attached to a vertical surface, usually beneath an overhang on a cliff, but also under a bridge or on a building (particularly under a ledge or veranda). The nest is often re-used in subsequent years. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 17 days. *Nestling period:* 19–21 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



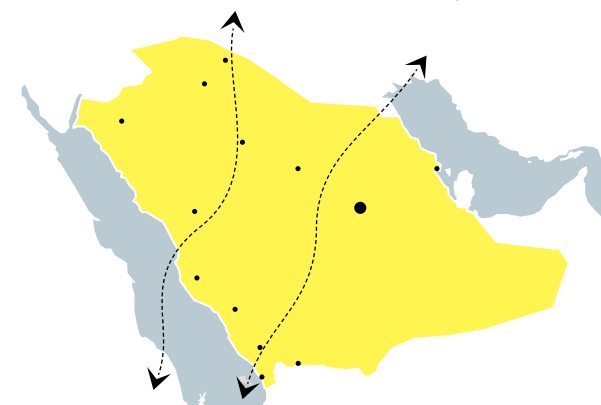
Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 75,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)



COMMON NAME: **COLLARED SAND MARTIN**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Sand Martin
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Riparia riparia*
 ARABIC NAME: خطاف رملي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 11–20 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Northern America and Eurasia (south of the Arctic Circle) and winters 3,000–8,000 km south in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant*. This small martin is a very common and ubiquitous passage migrant through Saudi Arabia with a somewhat protracted migration. It sometimes passes in huge numbers: over 2,000 were recorded at Dawmat al-Jandal reservoir on April 24th one year, with 1,000 at the same place on May 26th. A few can be seen in winter but it seems these are stragglers rather than true wintering individuals. **HABITAT:** Can occur anywhere on migration, but prefers areas with plentiful aerial insects, such as wetlands, irrigated crops and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dawmat al-Jandal



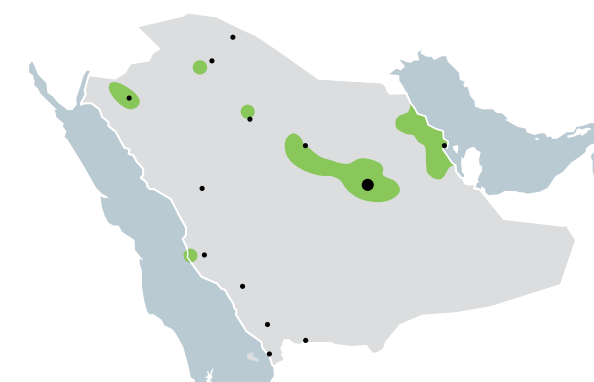
COMMON NAME: **WHITE-EARED BULBUL**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: White-cheeked Bulbul
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pycnonotus leucotis*
 ARABIC NAME: بلبل أغشى
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–19 cm / 29–35 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from southern Iraq and eastern Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident*. There is a long established population of this chirpy little bird in the Eastern Province, which has grown with urban expansion. It is not clear if this population was introduced or is native, but it has been recorded in Hofuf since at least 1923.

This musical bird is one of the most common species around cities and towns in the Eastern Province. It twitters and whistles all day long, 365 days a year.

It colonized Riyadh in 1981 where it is now common. It now also occurs in several other regions, including Jiddah, Tabuk and al-Jawf, with further spread likely. **HABITAT:** Gardens and parks (even in major cities), plantations and bushes surrounding villages. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fruit, buds, nectar and invertebrates, including caterpillars, ants and termites. It is commensal with humans and takes small food scraps, such as breadcrumbs. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in pairs or small groups of 5–6 birds, or occasionally small flocks of 20–30 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates while the male mate-guards. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of grass, thin twigs, roots and sometimes string, wool or paper, lined with fine grass, rootlets and hair and placed 1–2 m above ground (sometimes up to 7 m) in a tree, bush, palm frond or occasionally on a building. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 10–12 days. *Nesting period:* 9–11 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



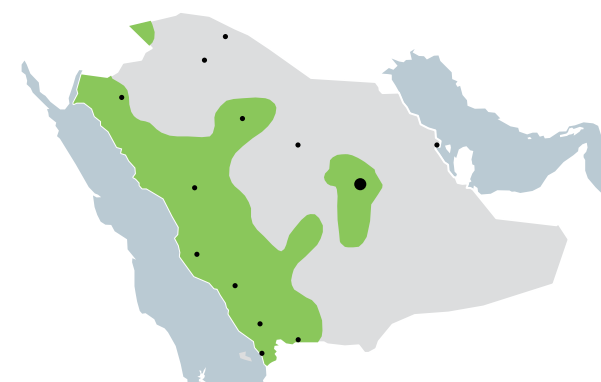
Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 140,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-SPECTACLED BULBUL**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Yellow-vented Bulbul
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*
 ARABIC NAME: كعيت (ببلب أصفر العجز)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19 cm / 31–46 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen) north through the Levant to southern Turkey. Arabia comprises more than 90% of its global range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this sweet little bird is found throughout western areas, as well as areas east to around Hayil and Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Bushy wadis and acacia scrub, thickets, plantations and date groves. It also occurs in parks and gardens in villages and suburban areas and occasionally in the center of cities. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fruit along with seeds and invertebrates. Insects are sometimes taken in an aerial pursuit. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in pairs or in groups of up to 20 at rich food sources. Larger flocks may form at the end of the breeding season. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,500,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abha



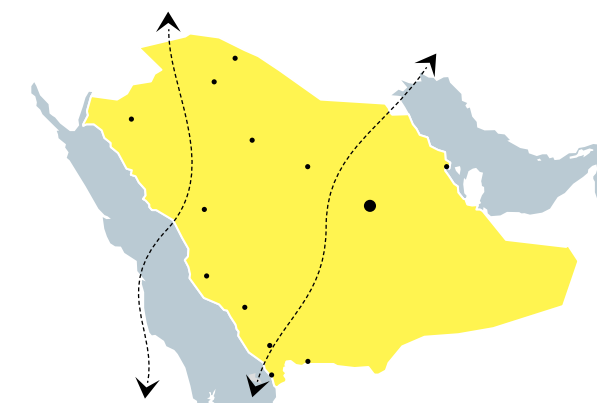
COMMON NAME: **WOOD WARBLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*
 ARABIC NAME: دخلة غابية (نقشارة الغاب)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 6.4–15 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the British Isles to northern Kazakhstan and winters 5,000 km south in Africa's equatorial forests. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant.* This beautiful bright greenish-yellow leaf-warbler is a rare but widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia with most recorded in October. It has been recorded in Tabuk, Yanbu', the southwest highlands, Sakaka, Riyadh and Dhahran, so it probably migrates on a broad front across the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Can occur in any bush on migration, but prefers lush vegetation near wetlands, orchards, city parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, notably flies, bugs, damselflies and moths, as well as caterpillars, spiders, fruit and berries. It actively forages in the upper branches of trees and bushes by preference but in Saudi Arabia it often must make do with whatever bushes are available. It actively inspects leaves,

Wood Warblers sing their sweet song in many different contexts; for example, a male that sings faster when approached by a rival is effectively declaring war.

bark and branches and may hover to take a prey item or sally after it. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded singly or in small migrating flocks containing up to 15 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When it can be closely compared to its close relatives it will be seen this is a relatively large leaf-warbler and may hold its wings in a slight droop. It also distinguishes itself from many other leaf-warblers by not flicking the wings and tail. It is unobtrusive and can be easily overlooked.



Passage migrant
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **WILLOW WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phylloscopus trochilus*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة صفصافية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

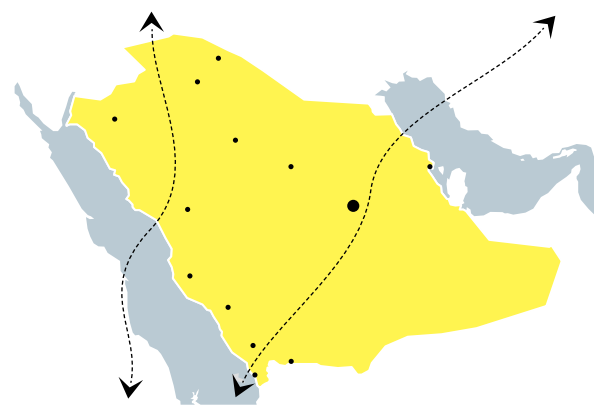
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–13 cm / 6.3–15 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in a vast area from Western Europe to eastern Siberia; the entire population winters 4,000–12,000 km south in sub-Saharan Africa, which means that millions of birds nesting in Asia pass through Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant.* This cute little leaf-warbler is a common and widespread passage migrant (Apr–May, Sep) throughout Saudi Arabia, particularly in spring when many hundreds can often be found in bushy areas. **HABITAT:** Tall trees and undergrowth, bushy areas, coastal scrub, reedbeds, parks and gardens, or anywhere with vegetation cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, including their eggs and larvae and spiders, along with some plant material, such as berries in autumn. It flits between branches, continuously inspecting leaves and crevices. It picks from leaves,

One of the world's great migrants. It flies up to 24,000 km per annum with millions crossing Saudi Arabia; yet it may weigh only 7 grams – as little as a teaspoon of honey.

sometimes stretching out for prey in a seemingly continuous motion. It also flycatches and hovers to take prey. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in loose migrating groups sometimes containing several hundred birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This active “little brown job” appears almost everywhere in green areas during late spring. It often flicks its tail vertically.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **COMMON CHIFFCHAFF**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phylloscopus collybita*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة شائعة (نقشارة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

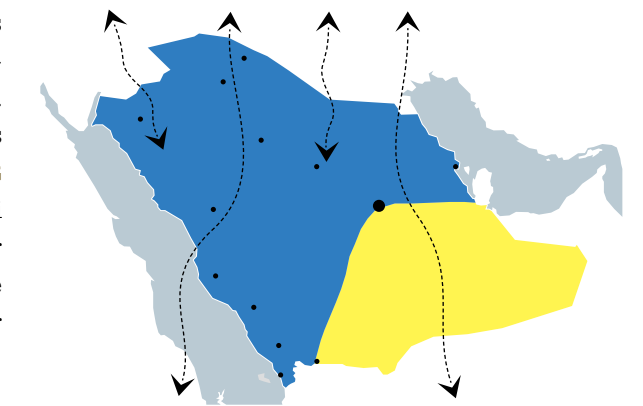
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / 6–11 g



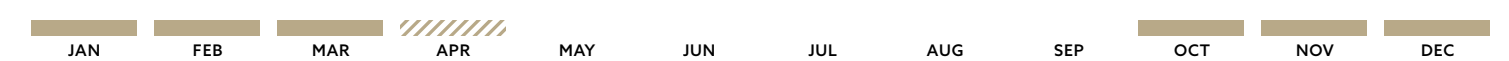
GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed in southern Europe; migratory populations breed from Western Europe to the Caspian Sea and winter up to 4,000 km south in southern Europe, northern Africa and Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This fairly plain leaf-warbler is a widespread passage migrant and winter visitor throughout Saudi Arabia, including the highlands of the southwest. **HABITAT:** Gardens, parks and orchards, or any site where there are trees and undergrowth. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, their eggs and larvae and other arthropods, as well as small mollusks. It takes some seeds and berries in autumn. It hovers to take prey and occasionally flycatches. It is an agile flyer

Like many migratory passerines, the males are larger and dominant over the females. Thus the females migrate to more distant wintering sites just to avoid male competition.

with a jerky rather fluttery progress through foliage as it searches for food. It exploits all levels of foliage from the tops of trees to undergrowth and makes short visits to the ground to feed. It has a habit of flicking its wings and wagging its tail, perhaps to flush insect prey from foliage. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Small groups may feed together in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The chiffchaffs get their name from their distinctive and repetitive “chiff-chaff” song. There is little overlap in the timing of occurrence between this species and the very similar Willow Warbler.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Deffi Park (Jubail)



COMMON NAME: **SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF**

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Common Chiffchaff

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phylloscopus tristis*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة سيبرية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / 6–11 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout most of Siberia and winters 5,000–7,000 km south and southwest in southern Arabia to northern India.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Very rare winter visitor.* This newly recognized species of leaf-warbler is a very rare winter visitor to Saudi Arabia, or possibly only a vagrant. **HABITAT:** Gardens, parks and orchards, or sites with trees and undergrowth. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Unknown. Probably includes insects, their eggs and larvae, along with other arthropods, as well as seeds and berries in the winter. It probably hovers to take prey and may occasionally flycatch. It is likely to be agile in flight making jerky progress as it flutters through foliage in search of food. It will be interesting to note whether this species exploits all levels of foliage from the tops of trees to undergrowth (as does the Common Chiffchaff) or whether it specializes in a particular vegetation level. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Unknown, perhaps likely to be found in small foraging groups over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This species was previously considered to be a subspecies of Common Chiffchaff. At present, very few data exist in Saudi Arabia on this newly recognized species.

The chiffchaffs get their name from their distinctive and repetitive “chiff-chaff” song. Significantly, Siberian and Common Chiffchaffs do not respond to each other’s song.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl

COMMON NAME: **BROWN WOODLAND-WARBLER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phylloscopus umbrovirens*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة غابية بنية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11 cm / 8.5–11 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Africa (from Eritrea south to Tanzania) and southwestern Arabia. Nine subspecies are recognized, including *S. u. yemenensis*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this fine-billed, tubby, little leaf-warbler occurs only in the southwest highlands, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Above 1,800 m in shady areas of well-vegetated juniper woodland or thick acacia woodland and scrub mainly on the moist western escarpment. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small insects and spiders picked from the tops of trees and outer branches of bushes. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs or occasionally in small groups of up to five birds. It sometimes forms mixed species flocks in winter with white-eyes and flycatchers. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. The female probably performs most or all of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A ball-shaped dome (14 cm tall, 10 cm diameter) with a side entrance (3.5 cm diameter) made of grass, stems, leaves and moss, lined with hair, plant down, feathers and grass, placed on the ground, usually amongst leaves or low vegetation on a bank or slope. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

This is one of the few warblers to breed in Saudi Arabia. It is likely that Klaas’s Cuckoos regularly dump their eggs into the nests of these tiny brown birds.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **STREAKED SCRUB-WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Scotocerca inquieta*

ARABIC NAME: دخلة شجيرية (نمنة الشجر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10 cm / 6–10 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northern Africa and Arabia to Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Eight subspecies are recognized, including two that are endemic to Arabia: *S. i. buryi* is found in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen; *S. i. grisea* is found in western Saudi Arabia, eastern Yemen and Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this lovely and tiny streaked bush warbler occurs primarily in the western highlands, Great Nafud and northern harrats. **HABITAT:** Rocky wadis and hillsides with acacia and other bushes, including scrub and rocky open juniper woodland in the 'Asir, scrub-covered dunes of the Great Nafud and northern harrats. It also occasionally occurs in gardens and cultivated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and their caterpillars, as well as spiders and small snails. It also takes seeds, especially in winter. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in pairs or family groups during the breeding season and in small winter flocks in the non-breeding season.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes retaining the same mate in successive seasons. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A dome made of grass and some thin twigs with a side entrance, thickly lined with fur, feathers and plant down, placed 0.5–2 m above ground in a bush. *Unusual site:* in a crevice in a stone terrace wall. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–15 days. *Nestling period:* 13–15 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This species is one of the most characteristic birds of Saudi Arabia, occurring in almost all rocky and mountainous areas in the Kingdom.

COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN BLACKCAP**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia atricapilla*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة مقلنسة أوراسية (أبو قلنسوة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 8.5–31 g

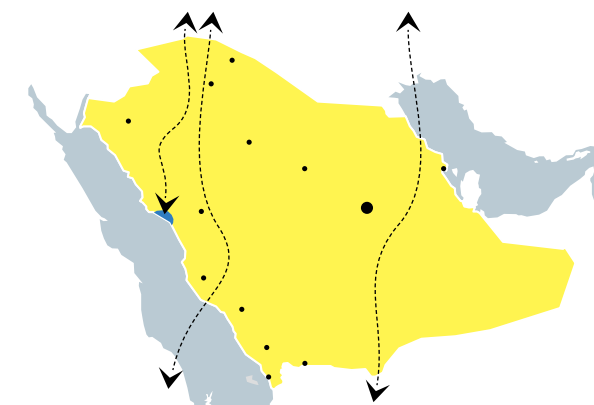


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa and western Europe; migratory populations breed from Europe to eastern Russia and winter up to 6,000 km south around the Mediterranean and western and eastern Africa. To avoid flying over the

Young birds on their first migration use the sun, the stars and/or the earth's magnetic field to guide them from their nest to their distant wintering ground.

Mediterranean Sea, these small birds migrate either through Gibraltar to western Africa or through Arabia to eastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, rare winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This delightful warbler is a common and widespread passage migrant. It may winter in Yanbu' and other mild coastal areas on the

Red Sea. It can sometimes be heard singing in spring, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Parks, gardens and orchards, or any bushy areas with good vegetation cover. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects during the breeding season, but on migration in Saudi Arabia it takes a variety of fruits, including berries of *Lantana* and *Salvadora*, which are swallowed whole and it pecks at larger fruit on trees, including dates. It feeds in the canopy of trees more often than lower down and, rarely, on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually alone or in small and loose migrating groups. Sometimes 50 or more birds may arrive suddenly in a small area if migration is disrupted by adverse weather. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** While the male certainly has a distinctive black cap, the female has an equally distinctive rufous cap. When alarmed either sex may raise the cap into a small crest and make "tacc tacc" calls.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abha



COMMON NAME: **GARDEN WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia borin*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة حدائقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 16–22 g



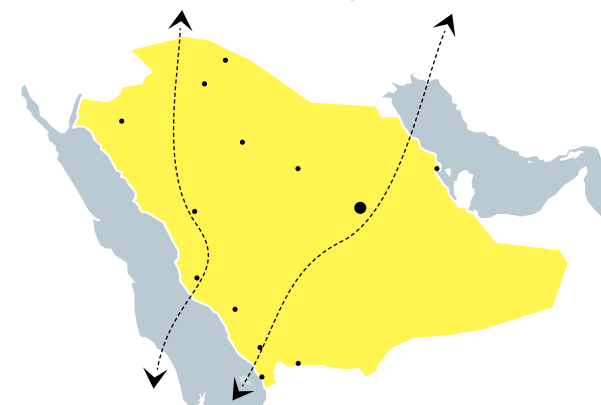
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to Kazakhstan and winters 7,000 km south in southern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant*. This plain but nonetheless extraordinary long-distance migrant is uncommon but widespread throughout Saudi Arabia on passage. There is also one record of birds wintering at Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** Can occur anywhere on migration, especially orchards and dense bushy areas. Tired birds have even been found resting in sparse plants on sand dunes.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, as well as other arthropods. It also eats small berries and pecks at larger fruit, as well as seeking pollen and nectar. It searches for food in foliage and twigs generally below 5 m and sometimes by chasing insects in flight. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually recorded in ones or twos on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:**

Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The common name is misleading because this rather shy bird usually avoids gardens. It is much more abundant than it may appear. For example, it is often caught in locally high numbers in mist nets in ringing projects, but even experienced birdwatchers in the same place generally see only very few birds. It is not a particularly active warbler and when it flies between bushes it has a confident flight manner but it soon becomes cryptic again seeking thick bush when it can.

The part of the brain used in processing spatial information (the hippocampus) grows larger during migration to cope with the extreme navigational demands.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **ASIAN DESERT WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia nana*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة صحراوية آسيوية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

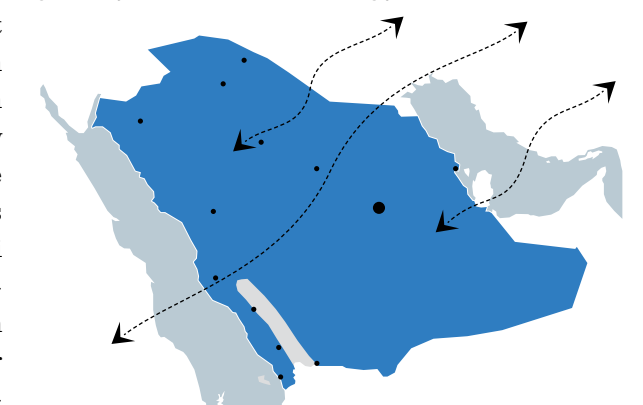
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 7–11 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from the Caspian Sea to western China and winters 4,000 km southwest (thereby avoiding the Himalayas) in northeastern Africa through Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, common winter visitor*. A large portion of the world population of this tiny warbler with piercing yellow eyes and cocked tail winters throughout the arid lowlands of Saudi Arabia, including the Tihamah and Farasan Islands. One survey suggested that about 48,000 birds might winter in the northern quarter of Saudi Arabia alone. **HABITAT:** Arid plains with low sparse vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, seeds and berries taken on or within 1 m of the ground. This tiny bird may appear unsuited for life in the desert in winter but in fact it is completely at home in this habitat. It moves around energetically in the desert, scudding just above the surface on whirring wings between low scrub. It always lands on the surface before a bush then hops in. It searches through a bush carefully and on the bare ground nearby for food items, often appearing more like a mouse than a bird. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird has the curious habit of following other desert passerines around, especially wheatears. It usually remains within about 10 m of the other bird at all times, carrying on with its feeding until the wheatear moves and then it chases after it to stay close. Presumably the warbler benefits from the wheatear's food finding or predator detecting abilities.

This tiny warbler has the curious habit of foraging close to wheatears; presumably the warbler benefits from the wheatear's extra vigilance against predators.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects, seeds and berries taken on or within 1 m of the ground. This tiny bird may appear unsuited for life in the desert in winter but in fact it is completely at home in this habitat. It moves around energetically in the desert, scudding just above the surface on whirring wings between low scrub. It always lands on the surface before a bush then hops in. It searches through a bush carefully and on the bare ground nearby for food items, often appearing more like a mouse than a bird. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird has the curious habit of following other desert passerines around, especially wheatears. It usually remains within about 10 m of the other bird at all times, carrying on with its feeding until the wheatear moves and then it chases after it to stay close. Presumably the warbler benefits from the wheatear's food finding or predator detecting abilities.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dibdibah



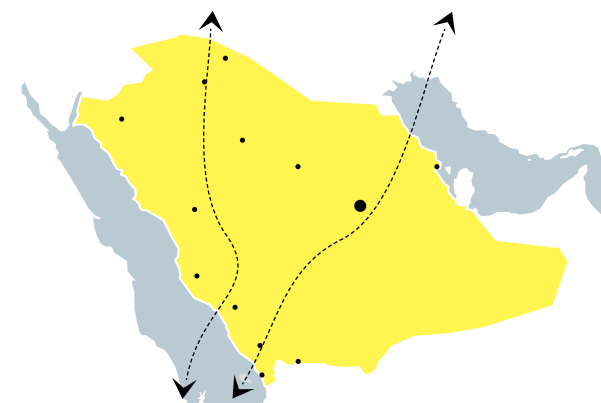
COMMON NAME: **BARRED WARBLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia nisoria*
 ARABIC NAME: هازجة كحلاء
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 20–29 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Eastern Europe to western Mongolia and winters 6,000 km south mainly in Kenya. Thus, its breeding distribution is vast compared to its rather restricted non-breeding distribution. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This distinctive Old World warbler, the largest in Saudi Arabia, is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia passing through the Kingdom nocturnally and solitarily. **HABITAT:** Woodland edges, dense undergrowth, tall scrub, overgrown gardens and hedges. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and fruits, with the latter being particularly important on migration. It forages near the ground amongst bushes, less often in the canopy of trees. It takes insects from among foliage. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in loose groups of less than 10 birds on migration.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is a large, gray warbler with crescent markings on the breast and a prominent pale yellow eye, which gives it a fierce and confident look. When surprised it will raise its crown to a crest and flick its tail nervously. It is usually furtive and shy but just occasionally appears in a very exposed position, but it will soon plunge into thick cover again. Because of its skulking manner it may be more common than it seems. It sometimes sings in spring.

While migrating across the deserts of Arabia, Barred Warblers lose around 25% of their body mass due to physical exertion – and yet they still have another 2,000 km to go.



Passage migrant
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN WARBLER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia leucomelaena*
 ARABIC NAME: هازجة عربية
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 11–16 g

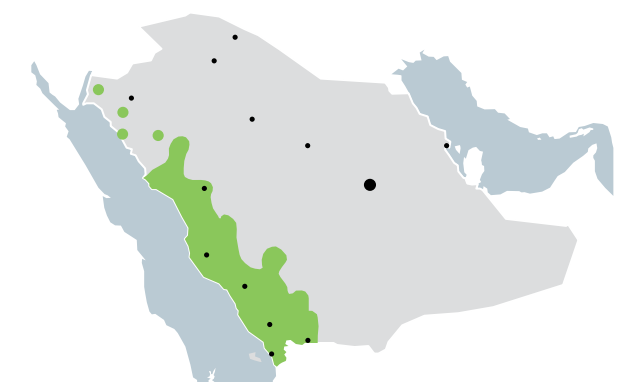


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs on both sides of the Red Sea, from Somalia to southwestern Egypt in the west and in western and southern Arabia in the east, with a separate population in Palestine and Jordan. Thus despite its name this species is not endemic to Arabia. Four subspecies are recognized, including *C. l. leucomelaena*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring in western Saudi Arabia, Yemen and southwestern Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this black-headed warbler is found south from around al-'Ula in the northern Hijaz. It is absent from islands in the Red Sea.

This is the most abundant breeding warbler in Saudi Arabia. Territorial males unreservedly sing their loud warbling song from the tops of trees and bushes, much to our delight.

HABITAT: Usually below 2,000 m (though it can be found as high as 2,800 m in sheltered areas) in thick acacia scrub in arid areas, especially scrub-covered hillsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, including mainly insects and other arthropods as well as berries. It gleans insects from foliage and bark amongst the tops of trees and taller bushes. *Activity:* Diurnal.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually recorded in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate, tend the young and defend the territory. *Nest:* A cup made of thin twigs, grass and fibers, bound with hair and cobwebs, lined with fine grass, rootlets and hair, placed 1–1.5 m above ground in the dense parts of a bush, or occasionally more than 3 m above ground in the outer branches of an acacia tree. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 15–16 days. *Nestling period:* 14–17 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 65,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda



COMMON NAME: **EASTERN ORPHEAN WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia crassirostris*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة حدائقية شرقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

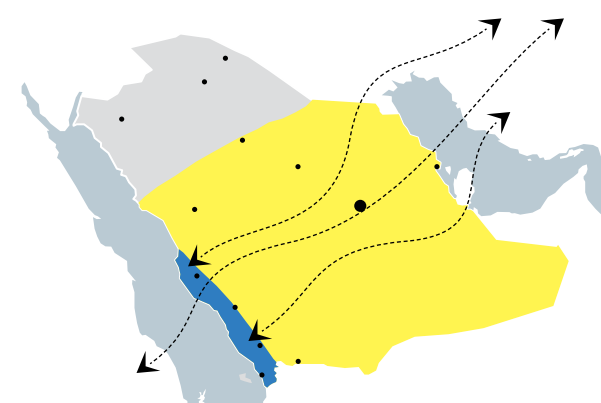
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 15–35 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Croatia through Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean to Iran, Pakistan and Kazakhstan and winters up to 3,000 km south in northeastern Africa (Sudan to Ethiopia) through Arabia to India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This large, black-headed warbler is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia (though absent in the northwest) and winters in the southwest. **HABITAT:** On migration it occurs in thick scrub, including high bushes or hedges with taller trees. Over winter it prefers scrub-covered mountainsides, including juniper. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and their larvae and other small arthropods, as well as berries, such as *Salvadora*. It feeds in taller trees and bushes, searching for prey items on the outer branches and leaves, generally not very low down unless it is descending to the ground to feed. It occasionally flycatches and often spreads the tail when feeding. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hadda Escarpment



Usually recorded in small migrating groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is quite a strong, direct flyer but alternates glides with short bursts of wing beats. The black cap is more prominent in the male. The Orphean Warbler has recently been split into two species, the Western Orphean Warbler (*S. hortensis*) and this one. It is named after Orpheus, a musician and poet from Greek Mythology who could enchant all living things and even stones with his exquisite music. A fitting appellation, for each spring this lovely little warbler sings from the treetops producing a spirited and far-reaching warble, charming all who hear it.

Most warblers migrate in several hops separated by periods of refueling. This bird refuels for 30 days before starting the most arduous leg of its journey – crossing Arabia.

COMMON NAME: **YEMEN WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia buryi*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة يمنية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 22 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this poorly known warbler occurs only in the highlands, south from al-Bahah. **HABITAT:** Mainly above 2,400 m in juniper woodland, especially with a mixture of acacia, other deciduous trees and thick undergrowth. It also occurs in acacia thickets or other dense bushes around cultivated fields and wadi bottoms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:**

Only 9,000 pairs of Yemen Warbler remain anywhere in the world. More than half occur in southwestern Saudi Arabia while the rest are in western Yemen.

Diet: Poorly known, mainly insects, as well as fruits when available. It searches for prey by creeping along the trunks and branches of trees and bushes, especially acacia. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, with pairs remaining together for much of the year. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A flimsy cup made of fine twigs, grass, rootlets and lichens, sparsely lined with finer rootlets and hair, occasionally attached to (and partially screened by) trailing lichen, placed usually 0.2–2 m above ground in a dense bush, or up to 4.5 m high in a juniper tree. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (14–16 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (14–15 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



COMMON NAME: LESSER WHITETHROAT

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Small Whitethroat, Hume's Whitethroat, Desert Whitethroat

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia curruca*

ARABIC NAME: زوراء صغيرة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

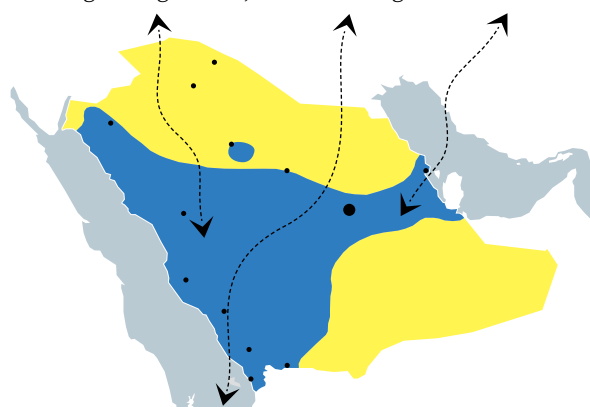
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 9.5–18 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to northern China and winters up to 5,000 km south in the Sahel region and northeastern Africa through Arabia to India and Sri Lanka. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* Four of the six recognized subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia, three of which are sometimes regarded as distinct species:

“Lesser Whitethroat” *S. c. curruca* (from Europe) is a common and widespread passage migrant and sometimes overwinters; “Small Whitethroat” or “Desert Whitethroat” *S. c. minula* (from western China), “Hume’s Whitethroat” *S. c. althea* (Kazakhstan to Iran) and *S. c. halimodendri* (Kazakhstan to Mongolia) all spend the winters in Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** On migration it occurs in overgrown gardens, woodland edges and small thickets with dense undergrowth. Over winter it is rarely found far from acacia. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, especially caterpillars and other arthropods, slugs and other small mollusks. It finds its food by closely inspecting leaves, twigs, bark and tree trunks and occasionally on the ground where it progresses by hops and short runs. It is not a very inquisitive bird and it tends to stay in cover a long time if it can. Ringing studies near Riyadh have shown that these birds often spend the winter in the same group of trees in consecutive years. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in small loose groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

This cute warbler can pass through the Kingdom in enormous numbers. Once 25,000 were recorded on a farm near Tabuk with every tree holding at least 60 birds.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: MÉNÉTRIES'S WARBLER

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia mystacea*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة رأساء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

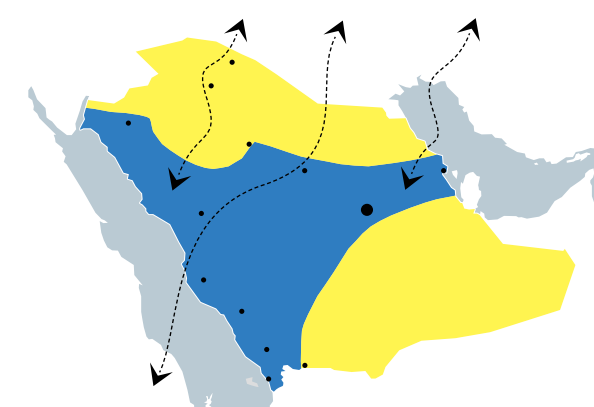
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 7–12 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from eastern Turkey east to Kazakhstan and south to Iraq and Pakistan and winters up to 2,000 km southwest in southern Iran, the Arabian Peninsula and northeastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This tiny, wide-eyed warbler is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia as a rather uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to central and western regions. Over winter, it is not recorded from the northern plains and sand seas and is scarce in the southwest highlands. Individually ringed birds recaptured near Riyadh have shown that some individuals

Migratory warblers have excellent long-term spatial memory. For instance, some ringed birds recaptured near Riyadh winter in exactly the same bush year after year.

winter in the same bushes in subsequent years. **HABITAT:** Low scrub in sheltered locations, such as parks and gardens (even in city centers), orchards, semi-arid treeless scrub and dry mountainsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly insects and their larvae, as well as other arthropods. In winter, it takes a large proportion of seeds and fruits, for example *Lycium* berries. It is rather secretive when feeding, quietly and methodically searching leaves and twigs for food and then flying onto the next bush, often from the bottom of one to the top of another. It sometimes sings in Saudi Arabia in spring. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In winter, both a male and a female may be found in the same area as if they are a pair, perhaps suggesting that the pair bond is long lasting. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **SARDINIAN WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia melanocephala*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة سردينية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 12–25 g

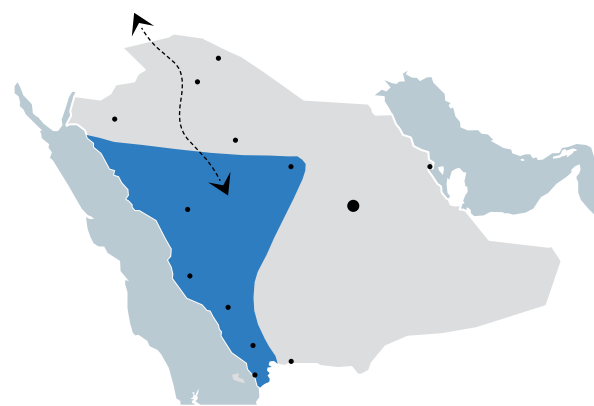


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean; migratory populations breed from Macedonia to Turkey and winter up to 2,000 km south in northern Africa and western Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor.* This black-headed, red-eyed warbler occurs regularly over winter in western areas and east as far as Qasim.

HABITAT: Mainly below 2,000 m in lowlands with dry open scrub and low trees (such as acacia and tamarisk), bushes at the base of hills, gardens and parks and agricultural areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, spiders and small snails, as well as a significant quantity of small fruits and berries, especially in winter. It forages mostly within scrub and less often on the ground or in low trees. It also comes to bird feeders in Jiddah. It is a rather bold and inquisitive species that seems quite happy to spend the winter in a private garden but can be difficult to see despite its noisy rattling call.

One moment it will boldly pop up on the top of a bush and the next it can be furtive and shy, darting between bushes or diving into cover. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in small loose groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

Although many warblers may appear superficially similar, they are genetically distinct and therefore unable to interbreed; thus, they are separate species.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **SUBALPINE WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia cantillans*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة مغردة شرقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

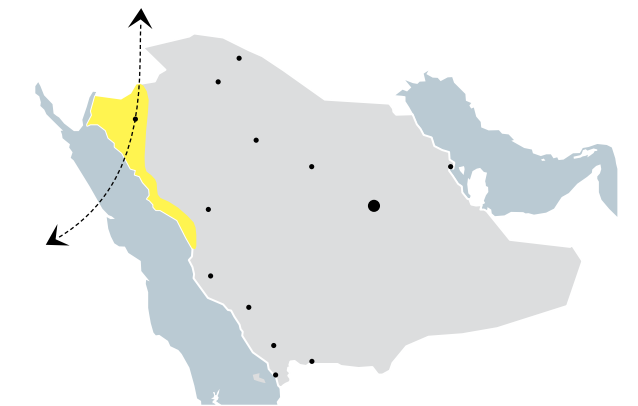
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 7–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the Mediterranean basin to Turkey and winters 2,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare passage migrant.* This relatively colorful warbler is very rare in Saudi Arabia and may even be considered a vagrant. Because of its global distribution, the main migration route largely passes west of Saudi Arabia with just a few records from Jiddah, Yanbu', Tabuk and the Gulf of Aqaba. It is regular in March at Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Dense prickly scrub interspersed with tall bushes and low deciduous trees, especially on hillsides and in ravines. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, as well as berries and seeds, including grass seeds. It forages by picking insects from leaves and stems as it gleans through vegetation. It does not feed on the ground. Instead it tends to keep in low to middle levels amongst scrub vegetation. It has a horizontal stance in bushes when feeding with an attitude of constant activity, flicking its wings and cocking its tail as it moves.

Because this warbler breeds west of Turkey and winters in Africa, it is scarce through Saudi Arabia, with most reports occurring in the west.

Activity: Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded singly or in small, loose migrating groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is usually somewhat secretive though it will sometimes unexpectedly show itself well to observers.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **RÜPPELL'S WARBLER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia ruppeli*

ARABIC NAME: هازجة روبلية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 9–15 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in a restricted range around the eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Turkey and Syria) and winters 2,500 km south in an equally restricted range in eastern Africa (Chad to the Red Sea coast in Sudan). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant*. Given that both its breeding range and wintering range occur largely to the east of Saudi Arabia, it is not surprising that only a few passage migrants pass through the extreme northwest of the Kingdom each year. Accordingly in the west it has been recorded only in Tabuk and Yanbu' and is likely to occur along the Gulf of Aqaba. Since no birds have been recorded in autumn it presumably migrates in a loop, heading north entirely through Africa and bypassing the Arabian Peninsula. **HABITAT:** Dry thorny scrub, particularly on hillsides or in ravines. It also occurs in low woodlands with good undergrowth and open bushy woods. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, including invertebrates and their larvae, as well as small berries, notably capers and other fruit during the non-breeding season. It picks prey mainly from leaves and stems in low or middle portions of trees and bushes, or sometimes descends to the ground where it hops about picking from the surface. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in very small numbers. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is not shy but rather skulking in attitude and somewhat slow in its movements. It appears noticeably less active than many other *Sylvia* warblers. It occasionally flicks its wings and tail and raises its tail to a half cock.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



The male of this rare warbler sports a black head, red eye and an imperious white moustache.

COMMON NAME: **COMMON WHITETHROAT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sylvia communis*

ARABIC NAME: زوراء شائعة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

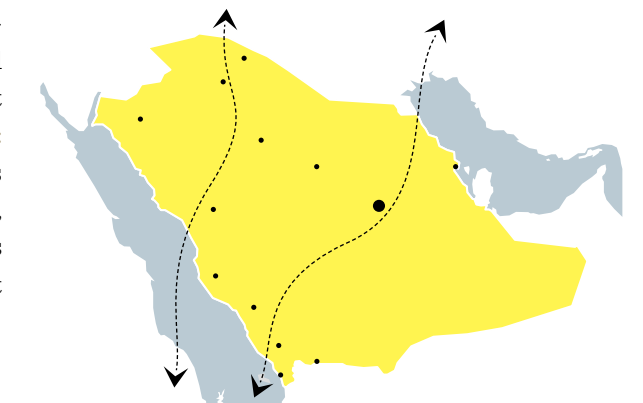
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 14–17 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northeastern Africa and Europe to Mongolia and winters 6,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant*. This adorable little warbler with its fluffy white "beard" is a common and widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia, especially in spring. It has been recorded a few times

Whitethroats that forage efficiently over winter grow longer wing feathers; thus they fly faster, arrive at the breeding grounds first and obtain the best territories and mates.

in January at Yanbu' and Riyadh, which might suggest wintering; however, these may well have been early passage migrants rather than wintering birds. **HABITAT:** Open areas of tall herbage near wetlands, low acacia scrub, tamarisk thickets, overgrown hedgerows and overgrown gardens and parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, particularly beetles, during the breeding season, but in Saudi Arabia on migration it takes a good deal of fruits and berries. It finds food inside bushes and herbage and occasionally on the ground. It will also chase and catch flying insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in loose migrating flocks. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird can be quite tame and curious, showing itself well when gleaning on the outside leaves of bushes. It holds its head high and sometimes cocks its tail. Flight between bushes is somewhat erratic and jerky.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **ABYSSINIAN WHITE-EYE**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Zosterops abyssinicus*
ARABIC NAME: مغربة حبشية (أبيض العين الحبشي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10 cm / 7.2–12 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from Ethiopia to Eritrea, Somalia and southwestern Arabia. Four subspecies are recognized, including *Z. a. arabs*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring in southwestern Saudi Arabia, southern Oman and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this sweet little white-eye is found in the southwest highlands, south from Tayif. Curiously, isolated populations occur in mature mangrove stands along the Red Sea coast. **HABITAT:** Usually above 1,000 m in well-wooded areas, including hillsides, valleys, gardens and juniper woodlands. It also occurs at sea level in dense mangrove stands in the far southwest. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Aphids and other small insects, including caterpillars, as well as fruit. It forages in the canopy of tall bushes. It feeds at flowers often resulting in the bird's forehead being lightly dusted with pollen. One individual on Socotra Island (Yemen) was recorded to use a small, thin stick to probe into holes and crevices in bark in search of food. *Activity:*

Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in flocks of 10–20 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A neat cup made of fine grass, cobwebs and occasionally string and cotton, lined with hair and sometimes decorated with pieces of lichen, placed 2–4 m above ground, either attached to the underside of several trailing outer branches in a juniper tree, or slung like a hammock between lateral branches in an acacia. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 11 days. *Nestling period:* 14 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.

This tiny white-eye has been reported using tools. One bird was seen using a short, thin stick to probe for insects among nooks and crannies in tree bark.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 200,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN BABBLER**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Argya squamiceps*
ARABIC NAME: بلنصي عربي
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 26–29 cm / 64–83 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: near endemic to Arabia, which comprises more than 98% of its global range. It occurs in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and UAE and north to eastern Sinai, southern Palestine and southern Jordan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident*. It is widespread in the west to Hayil and Riyadh. Two of the three recognized subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia: *A. s. yemensis* occurs in the southwest; *A. s. squamiceps* occurs in western and central areas, overlapping with *yemensis* in the southwest.

With its exceptionally complex social behavior and intense cooperative breeding, this is, without question, one of the most fascinating birds in the world.

HABITAT: Acacia woodland and scrub, especially savannah-like areas, shelterbelts, thickets and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, occasionally small lizards and snakes (up to 20 cm) and plant material taken from the ground or undergrowth. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Groups of up to 25 birds, usually 7–12. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Highly complex cooperatively breeding groups with a dominant breeding pair supported by a generally stable social group of 7–21 helpers at the nest. Occasionally more than one male or female will breed at the same nest as they strive for dominance. *Parental roles:* The dominant breeding pair performs most of the nest building. All females incubate the eggs. All group members tend the young and defend the territory. *Nest:* A deep, bulky cup, made of grass, plant stems and sometimes twigs and bark, lined with hair, fine grass and rootlets, placed usually 1.5–2 m above ground (sometimes up to 5 m) in a tree or bush, especially acacia. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs (though other females may add more eggs). *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING GROUPS: 75,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda



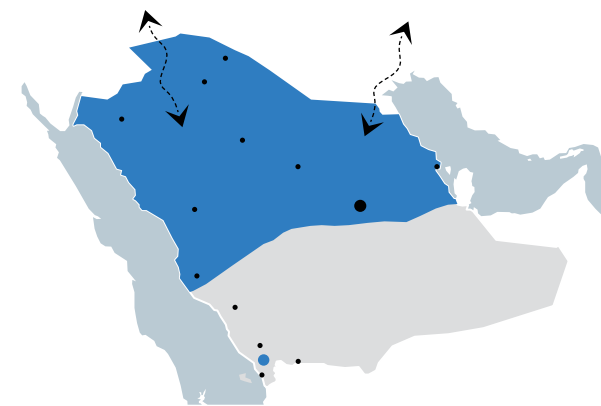
COMMON NAME: **COMMON STARLING**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sturnus vulgaris*
 ARABIC NAME: زجور شائع
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21 cm / 55–100 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations breed from the British Isles through Turkey and Iran to Pakistan; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia and central Europe to Mongolia and winter 3,000 km south around the Mediterranean and northern and eastern Arabia to northern India. Furthermore, the species has been introduced to North America and Australasia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common winter visitor.* This highly vocal bird occurs as a winter visitor to the northern half of the Kingdom. Flocks of several hundred have been reported from the Eastern Province but it is scarce elsewhere with only a single record from the southwest. **HABITAT:** Crops, meadows, urban areas, wastewater treatment works, rubbish dumps, date groves and urban parks. It often roosts in tall trees in towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Omnivorous and opportunistic, it can eat a wide range of animal or vegetable food, including insects, spiders, crabs, worms, snails, centipedes, as well as small vertebrates, such as frogs and small lizards and also berries, seeds, cultivated plants and food scraps. It usually forages on the ground and has a bustling attitude with a jerky head walk. It has triangular shaped wings, flies directly and swiftly but is flexible enough to be able to hawk insects high in the air when they are numerous. It uses smell to help locate and identify food. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages in small groups or in flocks of up to several hundred where food is abundant. It is generally rather quarrelsome, being aggressive both to others within a flock and against other species near food. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.

Starling song is an elaborate series of whistles, warbles and mimicry. Adults that received a healthy diet as chicks sing more than those that were raised on a poor diet.



Winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail

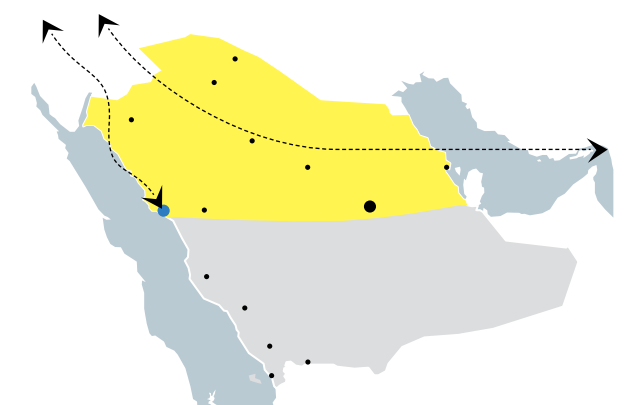


COMMON NAME: **ROSY STARLING**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: Rose-colored Starling
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pastor roseus*
 ARABIC NAME: زجور ورد
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 21 cm / 60–88 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Greece and the Black Sea to Iran and Kazakhstan and winters 3,000 km southeast in India and Sri Lanka. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, occasional winter visitor.* The normal migration route of this lovely bird usually bypasses Saudi Arabia to the north and east. Fortunately, birds from the eastern part of the breeding range occasionally pass through the north of the Kingdom, especially in autumn. It is also an erratic visitor at other times of year and has been recorded spending the winter at Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** Gardens, agricultural sites, such as ploughed fields and manure heaps, rubbish dumps and wastewater treatment areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Over winter in Saudi Arabia it eats insects, fruit, seed and nectar, with a penchant for grasshoppers. Fruits include dates, figs and numerous cultivated varieties. It does not appear as frenetic as the Common Starling, going about its feeding and other business in a more placid, methodical manner. Birds at the back of a feeding flock tend to leapfrog birds at the front of the flock, causing the group to move steadily over a patch. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Social at all times, most records in Saudi Arabia are of 2–6 birds with the largest group recorded being 40 near Riyadh. It freely associates with other starlings and mynas when feeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The male has a crest but this is rarely raised while migrating or spending the winter in Saudi Arabia.

Rare, elusive and pastel pink – needless to say, this gorgeous bird is particularly sought after by birdwatchers and photographers.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **TRISTRAM'S STARLING**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Tristram's Grackle

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Onychognathus tristramii*

ARABIC NAME: ضواعة (زجور أسود)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25 cm / 115–131 g

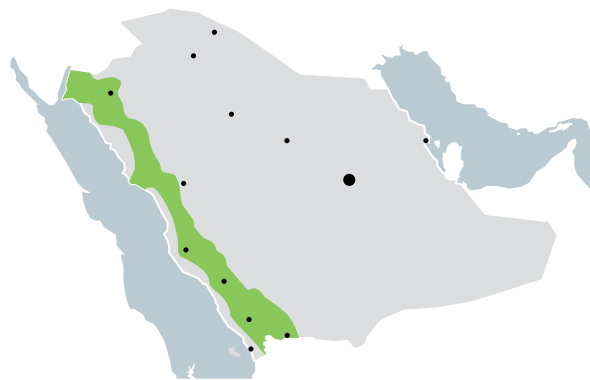


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: near endemic to Arabia, which comprises more than 98% of its global range. It occurs in western Saudi Arabia, western Oman and Yemen, with small populations in eastern Sinai, Palestine and Jordan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This rather plucky black bird breeds throughout the western highlands. Curiously, while it is restricted to highland areas in Saudi Arabia, it is also found at low altitudes and near the coast in eastern Yemen and Dhofar (Oman). **HABITAT:** Rocky areas with high cliffs, gullies, ravines and rock outcrops. It often occurs near human dwellings, settlements and rubbish dumps. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly fruit and insects, as well as small snails and human food scraps. It plucks the ticks off ibex, camel, donkeys and other large mammals. Birds living in natural habitats sometimes travel to cities and towns to forage. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or family groups during breeding season, or in larger flocks of up to 100 birds during the non-breeding season.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR:

Mating system: Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, nesting either solitarily or in loose colonies. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of grass, twigs and leaves, lined with fine grass and sometimes hair, feathers, wool, paper and cloth, placed more than 5 m above ground in a crevice or cave, or occasionally on a sheltered ledge on a cliff, or sometimes on a deserted building. Unusual site: lamppost in the 'Asir. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 16 days. *Nestling period:* 28–31 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

Large mammals like ibex and camels will come to traditional "cleaning stations" so that these sociable birds will remove ticks from their hides.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 35,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah Escarpment

COMMON NAME: **VIOLET-BACKED STARLING**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

ARABIC NAME: زجور مچوف

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 33–56 g

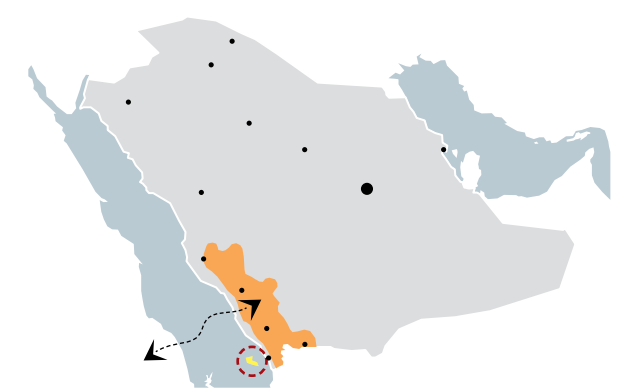


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed in southwestern Arabia and winter at least 500 km southwest (perhaps much more) within the resident range in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant.*

Every year around 40,000 pairs of these absolutely exquisite starlings migrate across the Red Sea to nest in the highlands of southwestern Saudi Arabia.

Surely one of the prettiest birds in Saudi Arabia, this violet-backed jewel breeds mainly on the western escarpment (south from Tayif), but also on the eastern edges of the Tihamah. **HABITAT:** Between 600–2,800 m in woodlands, open areas with scattered trees, orchards, parklands and sometimes gardens with suitable tree holes for nesting. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fruit, as well as insects. It forages primarily in trees and thus is unlike most other starlings in that it spends little time on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A pad made of green leaves on top of a foundation of twigs and grass, placed more than 2 m above ground in a tree hole, especially a disused (or recently usurped) nest hole of an Arabian Woodpecker. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 20–22 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly fruit, as well as insects. It forages primarily in trees and thus is unlike most other starlings in that it spends little time on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A pad made of green leaves on top of a foundation of twigs and grass, placed more than 2 m above ground in a tree hole, especially a disused (or recently usurped) nest hole of an Arabian Woodpecker. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 20–22 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40,000

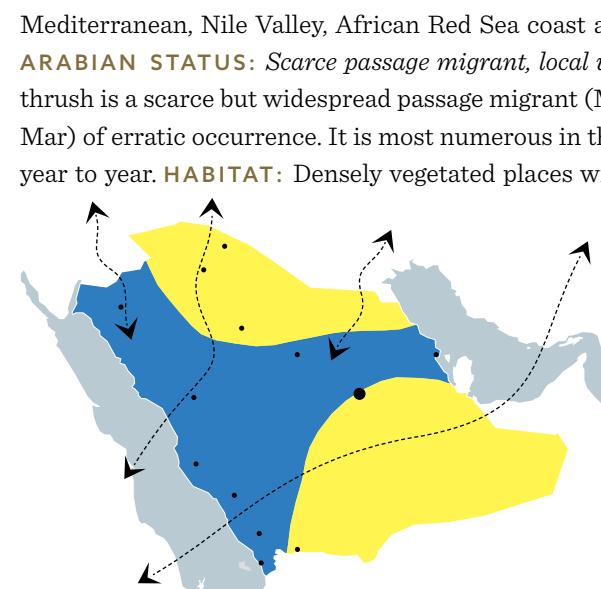
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **SONG THRUSH**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus philomelos*
 ARABIC NAME: سمنة مفردة
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–23 cm / 50–107 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles and Western Europe to northern Iran; migratory populations breed from central Europe and Scandinavia to northern Mongolia and winter up to 6,000 km southwest around the Mediterranean, Nile Valley, African Red Sea coast and the Middle East south to Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Scarce passage migrant, local winter visitor. In Saudi Arabia, this speckled thrush is a scarce but widespread passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov) and winter visitor (Nov–Mar) of erratic occurrence. It is most numerous in the western highlands but numbers vary from year to year. **HABITAT:** Densely vegetated places with plenty of undergrowth, such as orchards,



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



The Song Thrush is well known for two things: its superb vocal skills and using a stone anvil to smash snail shells so it can eat the snail.

date groves, woodlands and scrubby rocky hillsides. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, berries and fallen fruits. It will take almost any prey it can catch, including small reptiles. One characteristic prey is snail, which it opens by striking it sharply against a stone. Collections of broken snail shells surrounding a regularly used stone, called an anvil, may betray its presence. It usually feeds in or very close to cover, searching ground litter by brushing or pulling away debris with its bill. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is shy and secretive and when disturbed it flies well away fast and straight, moving nimbly through woodland.

COMMON NAME: **REDWING**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus iliacus*
 ARABIC NAME: حمراء جناح
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–24 cm / 46–80 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Iceland and northern Europe to northeastern Siberia and winters 2,000–8,000 km southwest in northern Africa and Western Europe to the eastern Mediterranean and southern Caspian, with some occasionally reaching northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Very rare winter visitor. Saudi Arabia is south of the normal wintering range for this orange-winged bird; thus, it is a very rare winter visitor to the Kingdom, with most records from the Arabian Gulf region. **HABITAT:** Areas

Unlike humans, birds can see ultraviolet color; thus Redwings can assess the ripeness of fruit using their ultraviolet vision even though the fruits appear identical to us.

with trees and open wet ground. It possibly also occurs in open fields of short grass, grasslands and stubble fields (as recorded in winter in Europe). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, fruit and berries, with the latter particularly important in winter. It searches for prey on the ground or picks insects and berries from low vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** A generally gregarious species, up to five have been seen together in Saudi Arabia. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Smaller and less upright than the Song Thrush with which it can be confused; Redwings have prominent pale eyes and “moustache” stripe and rusty-colored flanks. When a bird is feeling confident it will come out of cover to feed in the open followed by each bird, one at a time, until the whole group is foraging again, but at the first sign of danger the whole flock will return to high trees.



Winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Abqaiq



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN BLACKBIRD**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus merula*

ARABIC NAME: شحرور أوراسي

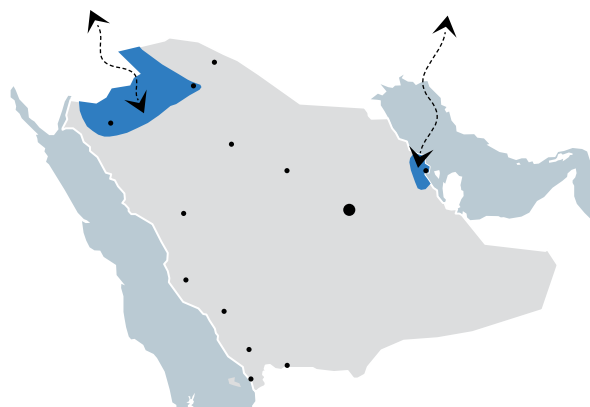
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–27 cm / 85–105 g



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa and Europe to western China; migratory populations breed in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia and winter up to 3,500 km south in northern Africa and the Middle East, occasionally reaching far northern Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf region.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Very rare and erratic winter visitor.* The normal wintering range for this musical bird is to the north of Saudi Arabia; thus, it is a very rare winter visitor to the Kingdom, with most records from the northwest and the Arabian Gulf region. **HABITAT:** Wooded areas (often near large reedy wetlands) and orchards. It possibly also occurs in well-wooded large public parks (as recorded elsewhere). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates but also fruit and seeds, especially in winter. It finds the majority of its food on the ground. It sometimes forages by flicking ground debris out of the way to expose prey or it may dig in the ground with its bill. It makes short hopping bounds with an abrupt stop to look and listen for prey. It also occasionally steals food from other birds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Unlike the upright stance of some thrushes, this bird has a rather horizontal posture when on the ground, with its tail held out straight or slightly cocked and wings held forward in a loose droop. Shy and secretive in Saudi Arabia, it has a rapid escape flight, moving with agility through trees and dense cover.

Famous for singing in the dead of night, Blackbirds in cities sing at a higher frequency to overcome traffic noise and stay up even later at night to forage under streetlights.

COMMON NAME: **YEMEN THRUSH**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus menachensis*

ARABIC NAME: سمنة يمنية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23 cm / 72–79 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this plucky, olive-brown bird occurs only in the highlands, south from Tayif.

HABITAT: Usually above 2,100 m in well-vegetated juniper woodlands often with a mixture of acacia. It also occurs in overgrown gardens, cultivated areas, leafy terraces and wadi bottoms with thick undergrowth. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, but likely to include mainly invertebrates during the breeding season and fruit from late summer until late winter. It forages mainly on the ground, typically amongst bushes and undergrowth, often tossing leaf litter and debris aside with a rapid flick of the head as it searches for invertebrate prey. It possibly uses stone anvils to smash snail shells upon (as has been well documented in Song Thrush). *Activity:* Diurnal.

Half of the world's population of this increasingly rare bird occur in Saudi Arabia's southwest highlands. The rest occur in Yemen.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually found in pairs or family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A firm cup of grass, twigs, moss, bark strips and sometimes paper, with an inner cup made of mud and lined with grass and rootlets, placed typically 2 m above ground (sometimes 1–5 m) in a tree (or occasionally a large bush), often concealed by dense foliage or trailing lichen. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (12–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13–15 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



COMMON NAME: **FIELDFARE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus pilaris*

ARABIC NAME: سمينة حقلية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

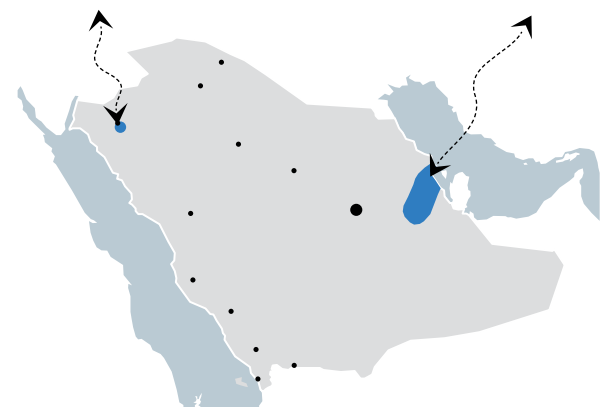
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–28 cm / 81–141 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northern Europe to western Russia; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia to Siberia and winter up to 6,000 km southwest in western Europe, the Mediterranean region, the Caspian basin and occasionally south into Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This large and boisterous thrush is a rare winter visitor to the Arabian Gulf region and Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Open places with trees, such as pivot-irrigated fields with low growing crops or stubble and nearby wind-break trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, as well as berries and fruit, especially



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



This gregarious thrush often forages alongside Redwings, which looks quite similar. It carefully watches the Redwings' behavior for clues to help it find prey.

in winter. It forages for invertebrates mostly on the ground amongst short vegetation and takes fruit directly from trees and shrubs. It does not dig for food with its bill like some thrushes and proceeds by hops. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is generally a gregarious species but it has only ever been recorded solitarily or in groups of 2–3 birds in Saudi Arabia. It will also mix with other thrushes. Flocks are noisy in flight. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** While on the ground it has an upright stance, a long tail and slightly drooping wings. Flight is leisurely with bursts of wings beats and glides producing slight undulations. It typically emits a characteristic call during flight. If disturbed on the ground it tends to fly to the safety of nearby trees where it may sit prominently on the top branches until the danger has passed.

COMMON NAME: **BLACK-THROATED THRUSH**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Turdus atrogularis*

ARABIC NAME: سمينة سوداء زجر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

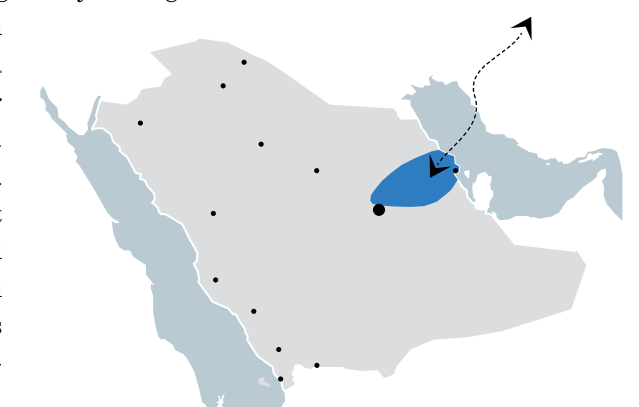
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 24–27 cm / 54–110 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in central Russia and winters 1,000–5,000 km southwest from Iran to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare and erratic winter visitor.* This aptly named thrush occasionally spends the winter in Saudi Arabia – in other years it is largely absent. It presumably arrives more often during years when conditions are especially severe in its more usual winter quarters in central Asia to the northeast. When it does arrive, it is more common in the Eastern Province west to the Riyadh region. **HABITAT:** Grassy areas with trees adjacent to wetlands. It also occurs in Date Palm groves and pivot-irrigated fields with nearby trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, fruits and seeds, foraging mainly on the ground and in and under bushes and trees.

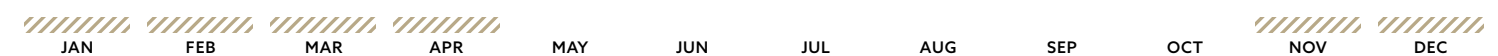
on the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, groups of 30 or more have been counted in Saudi Arabia. It also joins other species in mixed flocks. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is found not very far from bushes and trees and because it is shy it soon retires to cover or a tall tree when disturbed. It flies with short strong bursts of wing beats, straight and fast with slight undulations. When landing on the ground it may cock its tail with an upright profile. This bird is sometimes regarded as the same species as Rufous-throated Thrush (*T. ruficollis*).



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

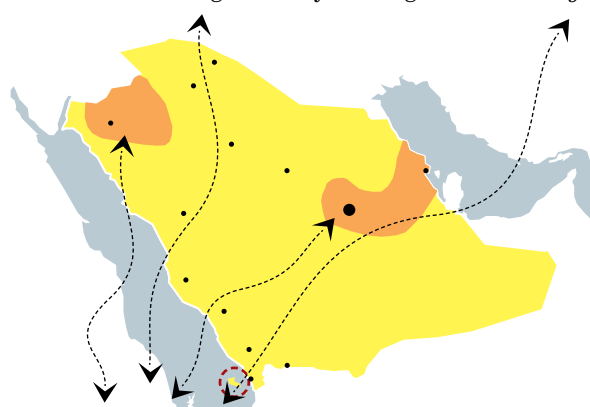
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Deffi Park (Jubail)



COMMON NAME: **RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB-ROBIN**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Rufous Scrub Robin, Rufous Bush Chat
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cercotrichas galactotes*
ARABIC NAME: شوالة (أبو الحناء الأحمر)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 20–28 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa; migratory populations breed around the Mediterranean through Arabia to Pakistan and Kazakhstan and winter 3,000 km south and southwest within the resident range in Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant.* In Saudi Arabia, this sweet little flycatcher is widespread on migration (Mar–May, Aug–Sep). Furthermore, some birds fly to Saudi Arabia to breed, mainly in the Eastern Province, and migrate across the Red Sea for the winter. **HABITAT:** Breeds in shady, leafy areas, including parks and gardens, date groves, cultivated fields with hedgerows and other areas with good vegetation cover. It may occur anywhere on migration, including the most arid localities. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects along with spiders, centipedes, worms, fruit, seeds and berries. It forages mostly on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING**



Breeding migrant, passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build and defend the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of twigs, grass, bark fragments and occasionally string or wool, lined with hair, palm fiber and sometimes a feather, placed usually less than 2 m above ground (sometimes up to 5 m) in a tree, or on the trunk of a palm, amongst vines or in an open tree cavity (or perhaps on the ground, as recorded elsewhere). *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 12–13 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

Nesting is difficult, but it gets easier with practice. Older, more experienced scrub-robins produce more chicks and heavier fledglings than young, inexperienced ones.



COMMON NAME: **BLACK SCRUB-ROBIN**
OTHER COMMON NAME: Black Bush-robin
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cercotrichas podobe*
ARABIC NAME: سوادية (أبو الحناء الأسود)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18–20 cm / 24–27 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the Sahel region and western and southern Arabia; some populations that breed in Saudi Arabia and Palestine appear to winter up to 1,500 km south within the resident range. Two subspecies are recognized, including *C. p. melanoptera*, which is nearly endemic to Arabia occurring mainly in western Saudi Arabia and Yemen, though it is has

This approachable bird is a great songster. It is often the only bird singing in the middle of the day in the Tihamah.

recently been recorded breeding in the Levant. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* Until 1970, this distinctive, black, cocked-tailed flycatcher was restricted to the southwest. However, it has since spread north and east following agricultural expansion, though it is still most common in the southwest. **HABITAT:** Below 1,500 m in dry scrubland and acacia thickets with undergrowth or well-vegetated wadis. It also occurs in more open situations around villages, gardens, date plantations and cultivated areas with good cover, such as thorny hedges around fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes insects and other invertebrates, as well as fruits and probably also seeds, with plant matter becoming increasingly important in winter. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs or small family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Unknown. *Nest:* A sturdy cup made of twigs, grass, leaves and rootlets, lined with hair, fine grass and occasionally wool or plant down, placed 0.2–1 m above ground (exceptionally to 6 m) usually deep in cover in a thorny bush or sometimes a tree. Unusual sites: cavities in trees, walls, rock faces, or inside the domed nest of a White-browed Coucal). *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (10–13 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 250,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya wastewater lagoons



COMMON NAME: **GAMBAGA FLYCATCHER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Muscicapa gambagae*

ARABIC NAME: صائد ذباب جامباجي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–13 cm / 12–14 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in dryland patches in Africa (from Ghana to Somalia); migratory populations breed in southwestern Arabia and winter to the southwest in Africa, though precisely where in Africa is unclear. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding migrant*. This sweet little gray-brown flycatcher migrates across the Red Sea to breed in Saudi Arabia. It occurs in the southwest highlands, south from Makkah. **HABITAT:** Above 700 m in highlands in lightly wooded areas and in woodlands adjacent to open country, especially in acacia above 1,500 m. It also occurs in mixed juniper and acacia woodlands at higher areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, perhaps mostly or exclusively flying insects taken with sallies from a perch. It often forages from the middle levels of trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, presumably territorial. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:*

A neat cup made of fine grass, thin twigs and sometimes strips of bark and plant down, bound with cobwebs and lined with finer grass, plant down, hair and feathers, placed 1.5–3 m above ground on a lateral branch or in the fork of a tree, mainly acacia or juniper; often exposed, but well camouflaged. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably single-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird is named after the Gambaga region in Ghana where it was first discovered.

This species is rather mysterious. It arrives in Saudi Arabia in March, breeds in May and leaves in September – though precisely where it goes is unknown.



Breeding migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **SPOTTED FLYCATCHER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Muscicapa striata*

ARABIC NAME: صائد ذباب أرقط

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

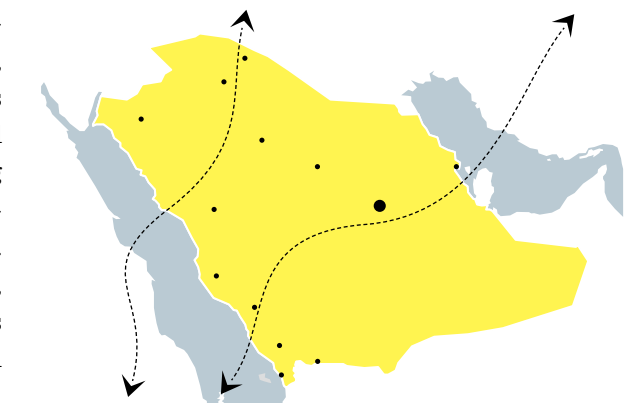
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 11–22 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northeastern Africa and Western Europe east to Mongolia and south to Iran and winters 9,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant*. This subtly beautiful flycatcher is a common and widespread passage migrant across Saudi Arabia, with migration more concentrated in spring (Apr–May)

Look at this bird's subtle ornamentation: the white, black and brown streaks on the crown, the fine specks on the chin and breast, the white trim on the wing... it's wonderful.

than in autumn (late Aug–Nov). **HABITAT:** Bushy spots with suitable perches to see prey, including gardens, city parks, open scrublands, hedgerows and any place with plentiful insects, including near human sites and houses. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Flying insects. It sets itself up on a vantage perch over bushes or near water, often appearing hunched with its head sunk into its shoulders. From its perch it makes sallies to catch nearby flying insects. These sallies can be straight glides launched by a dive direct to prey or a flutery affair in pursuit of more agile prey, but it is usually successful and returns quickly to its original perch. The normal fight pattern involves bursts of wing beats and glides creating an undulating profile. It flicks its tail and wings but does not cock its tail like some other flycatchers. It is often seen perched on overhead wires and rarely on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary, though dozens can be seen in a day during a spring “fall” when migration is temporarily interrupted. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN ROBIN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Erithacus rubecula*

ARABIC NAME: حنائي أوروبي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

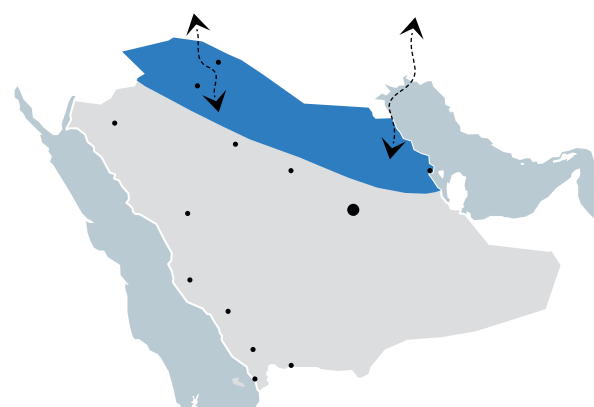
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 14–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in north-eastern Africa, Western Europe and southern Europe to Northern Iran; migratory populations breed in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia to central Russia and winter 3,000 km south around the Mediterranean to Kazakhstan and Iran, with a few birds reaching south into northern Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* There are merely a couple of dozen records of this sweet little robin from the north-east corner of Saudi Arabia in winter (and a single record from August). **HABITAT:** Thick low bushes and vegetation often on the edge of wooded areas or in clearings, especially with nearby surface water, such as a stream or pool, including quiet overgrown gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects but also fallen fruit and some seeds. It relies on sight rather than searching to locate live, moving prey, which it catches after a characteristic pounce from a low perch or a fast hop on the surface. It is a bird of cover, a ground feeder that avoids all open spaces. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is known in the British Isles as bold and tame and accompanying gardeners, but on the European continent this bird is shy and skulking and these are the ones that come to Saudi Arabia. When not wary it appears as an upright chat with its red chest pushed out and a half-cocked tail. It regularly flicks its tail and wings and bobs up and down giving a “tic tic” call, which allows ready identification of unseen birds in undergrowth.

Robins sing their pretty song all year round, but this comes at a cost – birds that spend more time singing have less time to forage causing them to lose weight over winter.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khafji



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-THROATED ROBIN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: White-throated Irania

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Irania gutturalis*

ARABIC NAME: حنائي أزور

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

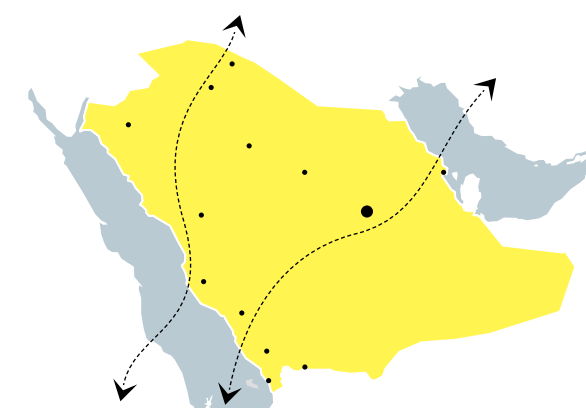
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–17 cm / 18–30 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Turkey and Palestine to Tajikistan and Iran and winters 5,000 km south in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* This undeniably classy looking bird is a scarce but widespread passage migrant throughout most of Saudi Arabia (though it has not been recorded in Tabuk). It appears to cross the Red Sea in a narrow front around the Bab al-Mandab Strait (Yemen) with many staging (resting and foraging) in the ‘Asir Highlands along the way. **HABITAT:** Any dense patch of bushes, including parks, gardens, agricultural areas and thick acacia scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, especially beetles and larvae and other invertebrates, as well as some fruit and berries.

Most of the world’s population of this boldly marked robin passes through Arabia in spring. Fortunately for us, it delivers its loud and melodious song along the way.

Insects appear to be especially important in winter. It feeds mostly on the ground and among low twigs but always keeping to the undergrowth. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This fine-looking bird tends to be somewhat of a skulking species that retreats through low branches when alarmed. It does not flush easily and is especially reluctant to show itself to observers, but when it does it rewards viewers with its elegant plumage and robust nature, upright, drooping wings and often cocked black tail. It is sometimes heard in full song in spring with males giving a loud, energetic and musical warble, often while in flight.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area

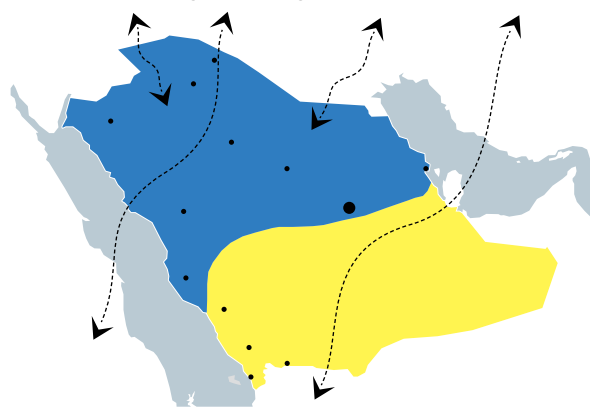


COMMON NAME: **BLUETHROAT**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cyanecula svecica*
 ARABIC NAME: زرقاء جوج
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 12–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout northern Eurasia and northern Alaska from the Arctic Circle south to France, Iran and China and winters up to 10,000 km south and southwest in the Mediterranean, the Sahel region of Africa and southern Asia, including the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This delicate little bird with such exquisite plumage coloration is common and widespread throughout Saudi Arabia both as a passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct) and a winter visitor (Oct–Mar). **HABITAT:** Wet areas, such as wastewater treatment areas, marshy ground, dense crops, reedbeds and dense herbage. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, especially insects found mostly on the surface or amongst low vegetation. It also takes some fruit and seeds. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is shy and skulking, never far from dense undergrowth. It hops out onto bare ground, although it soon flies low or runs for cover when disturbed. Anxiety may also cause it to cock its tail and bob up and down. It sometimes sings in spring. Several subspecies occur in Arabia, each with different color schemes in the male's delicately adorned throat.

Higher quality male Bluethroats have a wider chestnut breastband and a purer blue throat patch with more UV coloration – and they attract more mates as a result.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



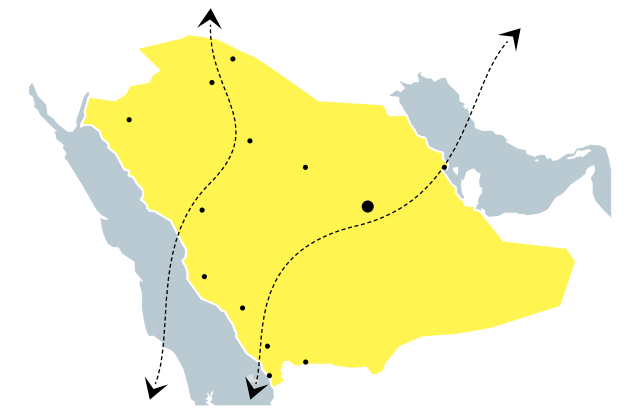
COMMON NAME: **THRUSH NIGHTINGALE**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Luscinia luscinia*
 ARABIC NAME: العندليب
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 14–37 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southern Scandinavia and Eastern Europe east to northern Kazakhstan and winters 9,000 km south in Zambia and neighboring states. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* This very long distance migrant is probably widespread throughout the kingdom during migration, but records are limited to a relatively narrow band between Yanbu' and Jiddah in the west and Jubail and Haradh in the east. Although it is rarely recorded by birdwatchers, ringing studies suggest it is as numerous as the Common Nightingale. **HABITAT:** Damp areas with dense cover and leaf litter, such as wastewater treatment lagoons and ornamental ponds with dense herbage. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, other arthropods and small snails, as well as some fruit and berries. It searches for food in secluded, shady and quiet places and rarely flies after insects. It is seen mostly on the ground where it finds its prey. It is a shy and skulking bird, running on the ground or hopping through undergrowth when disturbed. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Compared to the Common Nightingale, this species shows diffuse streaking on the breast, a paler throat and less rufous tail and rump. Both species hold the wings in a slight droop.

Much of the world's Thrush Nightingale population passes through Saudi Arabia every year. It flies silently through the night and rests undetected in bushes during the day.

as numerous as the Common Nightingale. **HABITAT:** Damp areas with dense cover and leaf litter, such as wastewater treatment lagoons and ornamental ponds with dense herbage. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, other arthropods and small snails, as well as some fruit and berries. It searches for food in secluded, shady and quiet places and rarely flies after insects. It is seen mostly on the ground where it finds its prey. It is a shy and skulking bird, running on the ground or hopping through undergrowth when disturbed. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Compared to the Common Nightingale, this species shows diffuse streaking on the breast, a paler throat and less rufous tail and rump. Both species hold the wings in a slight droop.



Passage migrant
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **COMMON NIGHTINGALE**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Luscinia megarhynchos*

ARABIC NAME: هزار شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

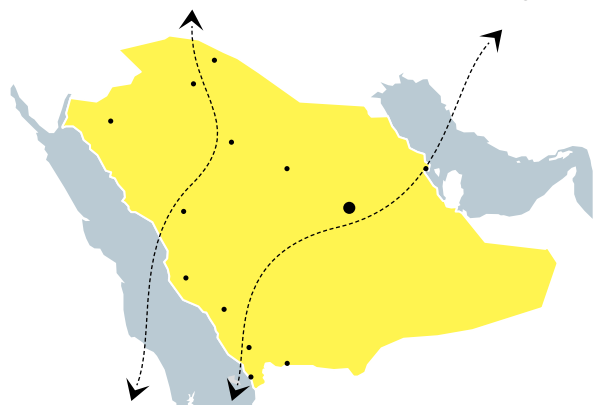
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 16–39 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northwestern Africa and Western Europe to western China and southern Iran and winters 4,000 km south in Africa below the Sahel region. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* This warm brown nightingale is widespread throughout much of Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant. **HABITAT:** Wet areas with low thick vegetation, such as wastewater treatment wetlands and inundated overgrown corners of parks and gardens. Tired birds may occur anywhere on migration, including in deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, especially beetles, but also fruit, berries and seeds. It searches for and consumes most of its food on the ground. This skulking bird forages by gleaning lower branches and leaves of bushes, dropping onto ground prey from a perch, or chasing flying insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It may feed on the ground in the open near cover, but it will soon dive quickly into cover or move in a characteristic low-level flight when disturbed. It regularly cocks its tail, flicks and droops its wings. The sweet song is heard regularly in spring, but strangely not at night as is typically the case throughout its European range.

Many say the nightingale sings the sweetest song of any bird in the world. Each male can sing over 180 different song types and will gradually learn more songs with age.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ficedula parva*

ARABIC NAME: صائد ذباب أحمر الصدر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

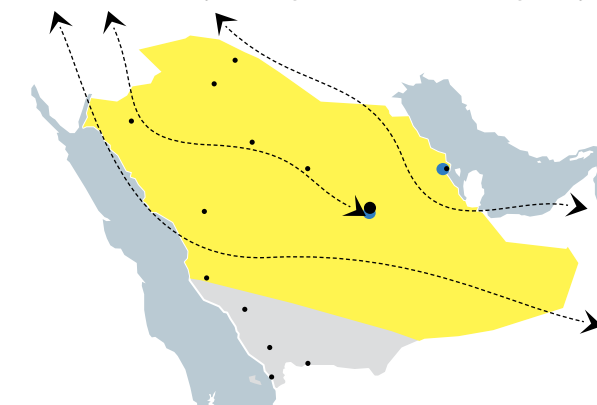
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12 cm / 8.5–12 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Eastern Europe to western Russia and Iran and winters 5,000 km southeast in Pakistan, India and Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This tiny bird, the smallest flycatcher in Saudi Arabia, is a rare passage migrant (Feb–Mar, Sep–Nov) throughout most of the Kingdom, though it avoids the southwest highlands. It has been recorded over winter (Nov–Jan) at rich foraging sites in Riyadh and Dhahran. **HABITAT:** Thick vegetation and scrub, often in wet areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly insects and other invertebrates, including spiders, snails and even earthworms. Surprisingly for a flycatcher it does not catch much food by flycatching. Instead it obtains most of its food from gleaning or hovering in front of vegetation or from on the ground. Only an estimated quarter of its prey is caught in mid-air during its typically very agile sallies, often just above the ground. It launches itself from a perch, often out of view. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This colorful bird is somewhat of a skulking species, which soon disappears into dense foliage when disturbed and may then be seen to flick its wings or cock its tail.

The male's red breast develops only after the second year. Young males look like females and encounter less aggression from older males, but they are less likely to find a mate.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **SEMI-COLLARED FLYCATCHER**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ficedula semitorquata*

ARABIC NAME: صائد ذباب شبه مطوق

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

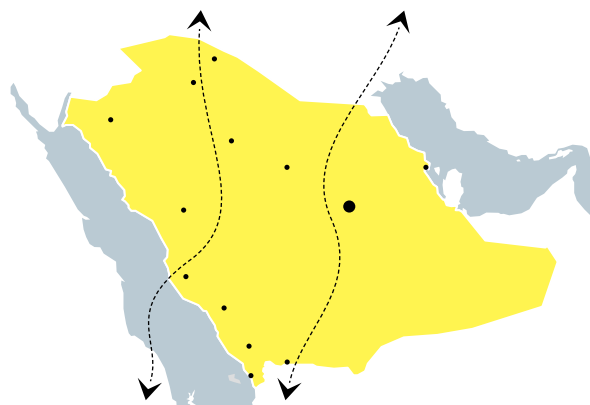
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 8–17 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in a narrow range from the Balkans through Turkey to the Caucasus and northern Iran and winters 4,500 km south in the Rift Valley region of eastern Africa. Populations breeding in the east migrate in a loop, south through Africa in spring and north through Arabia in autumn. Western populations may likewise migrate in a loop passing through Saudi Arabia in spring. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* This highly dimorphic bird is widespread throughout Saudi Arabia as a passage migrant. **HABITAT:** Anywhere with trees, including overgrown gardens, orchards, city parks and even isolated acacias.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mostly small flying insects, including mayflies, bugs, flies, bees, ants, termites and beetles, caught following a sally from a branch or other perch. It does not always return to the same perch like some other flycatchers. It also takes caterpillars and other prey from leaves and branches or sometimes by hovering. It also occasionally comes to the ground to feed, taking items, such as spiders and small snails. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Like many of its close relatives, it flicks its wings and tail and droops its wings slightly when perched.

As the name suggests, flycatchers prey mainly on small flying insects, which they capture in mid-air with superb maneuverability, extraordinary eyesight and perfect timing.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **EVERSMANN'S REDSTART**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Rufous-backed Redstart

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phoenicurus erythronotus*

ARABIC NAME: حميراء عصماء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

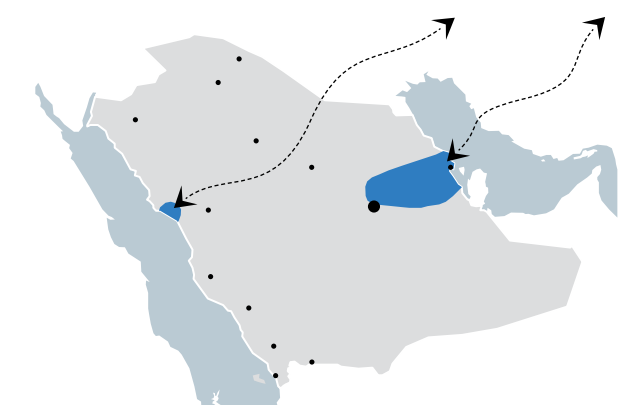
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 15–22 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Tajikistan to western Mongolia and winters 2,000 km southwest from southern Kazakhstan to Iran and northern India. It appears to be somewhat nomadic in winter and can arrive in Saudi Arabia and other gulf states if it is pushed out of its normal winter range by poor weather and food shortages. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare and erratic winter visitor.* This vibrant bird has been recorded as a winter visitor to Saudi Arabia mainly between Riyadh and the Eastern Province and a few in Yanbu'. It is very rare and may even be regarded as a vagrant. **HABITAT:** Areas with bushes and trees (notably acacia and *Prosopis*), including cultivated areas, orchards and public parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly invertebrates during the breeding season, but its winter diet is poorly known. Observations of this bird in the Eastern Province over winter suggest that it continues to take a significant amount of insects and other ground arthropods primarily by waiting on a perch and pouncing on prey below. It also actively hunts on the ground for prey and chases flying insects. It also takes fruit and seeds. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It often sits out on a prominent perch, lacking the retiring nature of other redstarts in the region and further differs from them by not shivering its wings. The wings are often held low in a slight droop. It also jerks its tail up and down.

This colorful migratory bird usually winters in Iran but it will occasionally move to the Eastern Province when winter in Central Asia is particularly bleak.



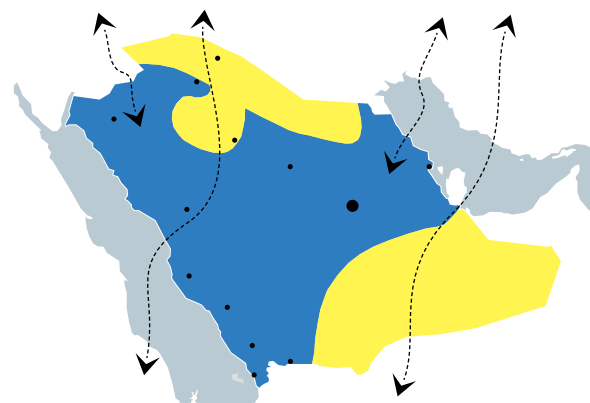
Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **BLACK REDSTART**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phoenicurus ochruros*
 ARABIC NAME: حميراء سوداء
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 12–20 g



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean to Iran; migratory populations breed across much of Europe and China and winter up to 3,000 km south in northern and eastern Africa through Arabia to Myanmar. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This colorful bird is widespread as a passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep–Nov) through Saudi Arabia. It is also widespread over winter (Nov–Feb), avoiding only the sand seas and treeless northern plains. **HABITAT:** Rocky wadis with acacia or other shrubby vegetation, large vegetated gardens, cultivated areas with cover and throughout the 'Asir highlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, such as spiders, mollusks and earthworms and fruit, berries and seeds. In winter it forages for insects mainly on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Compared to the Common Redstart, this bird is less shy, spends more time on the ground, runs more readily and also digs into the surface layer to locate food. It appears to establish winter feeding territories. It is certainly faithful to the same locale in consecutive winters, as noted from ringed individuals near Riyadh. Furthermore, this species does not quiver its tail quite as regularly as the Common Redstart.

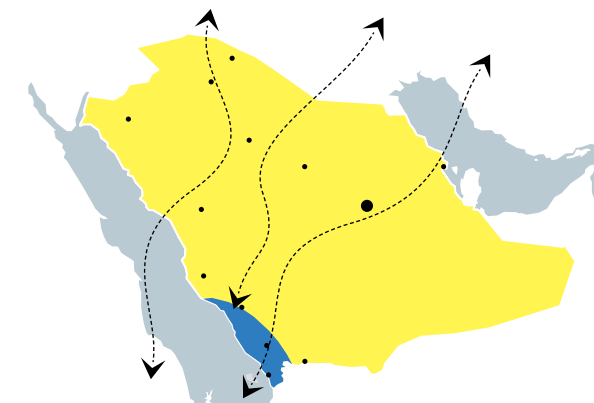
This bird changes its foraging technique during the year: in summer it picks insects off foliage or catches them in flight, while in winter it hunts for insects on the ground.

COMMON NAME: **COMMON REDSTART**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
 ARABIC NAME: حميراء شائعة
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 11–23 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Western Europe to Mongolia and Iran and winters 3,000–6,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia this boldly-colored bird is usually recorded in the north and east as a passage migrant in spring (Mar–May), but in the south and west it is more common in autumn (Sep–Nov). It also spends the winter (Nov–Feb) in the southwest, probably more on the Tihamah than the highlands. **HABITAT:** On migration it usually occurs in large overgrown gardens, parks and rough bushy areas near wetlands, though birds can appear anywhere if migration is disrupted. Over winter it occurs in semi-arid areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, with seeds becoming increasingly important in winter. It feeds by pecking from leaves and branches or pouncing on ground prey from a low perch and returning to the perch to eat. It also hovers near vegetation and flycatches. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone, though in a "fall" up to 30 can appear in any patch of desert for an hour or two when migration is disrupted. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is rather upright on the ground. When perched it almost constantly shivers its tail and often bobs up and down. It has a slightly undulating flight. Two subspecies occur: *P. p. phoenicurus* (a passage migrant) has gray wings whereas *P. p. samamisisicus* (a winter visitor) has a distinctive white-wing bar.

When migrating from Russia to Africa, redstarts pause to fuel up at the Caspian Sea to prepare for the hardest part of their epic journey – crossing the deserts of Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

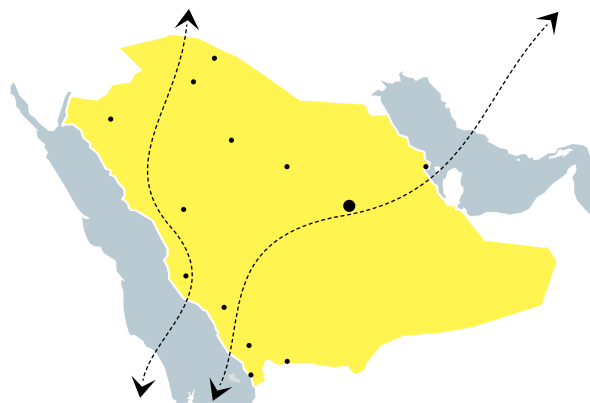


COMMON NAME: RUFIOUS-TAILED ROCK-THRUSH
OTHER COMMON NAME: Common Rock Thrush
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Monticola saxatilis*
ARABIC NAME: سمنة صخرية
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–19 cm / 40–65 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northwestern Africa and southern Europe to Mongolia and winters 4,000–9,000 km south and southwest in eastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant.* This distinctly beautiful bird is a regular but uncommon passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia, mainly in spring. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration, especially rocky or bushy places, large buildings, ruins and public parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and other invertebrates, such as worms and snails, as well as small lizards and frogs if it can catch them. It also eats some fruit and berries. It finds prey by watching from a perch and dropping onto the ground to take the item. It occasionally sallies after insects and takes fruit directly from the tree. It is seen mostly on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in ones or two but occasionally larger, loosely connected groups might move through the Kingdom together. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This highly sexually dimorphic bird is short tailed and long billed with an upright stance. It is rather shy and often flies off around an obstacle like a rock till it is out of view.

Nesting as far to the east as Mongolia, this bird nonetheless winters in eastern Africa, often passing through Saudi Arabia along the way.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

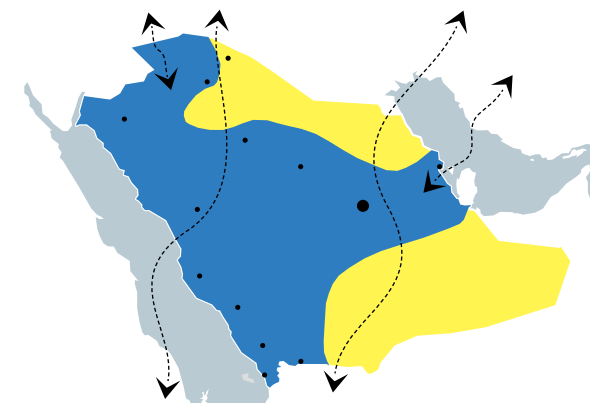


COMMON NAME: BLUE ROCK-THRUSH
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Monticola solitarius*
ARABIC NAME: سمنة صخرية زرقاء
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 20–23 cm / 37–70 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Mediterranean and from the Himalayas to China; migratory populations breed from Turkey and Iran to northeastern China and Japan and winter up to 3,000 km south in eastern Africa through Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, scarce winter visitor.* This distinctive blue flycatcher, the largest member of its family in the Kingdom, is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Mar–May, Sep–Oct). In the Eastern Province, it is much more common in autumn than in spring. It is also widespread as a winter visitor (Oct–Mar) occurring throughout the kingdom except the sand seas and northern plains. **HABITAT:** Over winter it occurs in rocky habitats and sometimes in built-up areas. It can appear anywhere on migration. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, especially grasshoppers and caterpillars and other invertebrates, such as worms and snails, as well as small vertebrates like lizards, snakes and frogs. It also takes some fruit, seeds and berries. It hunts by dropping onto prey from a raised perch, such as a rock or a branch. It is generally a ground feeder but will also pick from plants and occasionally flycatch. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary, in pairs or small, loose migrating groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This is the only blue bird likely to be seen in Saudi Arabia. It is more “thrush-like” than the Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush being longer tailed and less upright.

Testosterone is needed to produce blue feathers in birds, but it subdues the immune system; thus a male with bluer plumage is displaying its ability to overcome this obstacle.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Fayfa



COMMON NAME: **LITTLE ROCK-THRUSH**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Monticola rufocinereus*
ARABIC NAME: سمنة صخرية صغيرة
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–16 cm / 20–27 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Africa (from Tanzania to Ethiopia and Eritrea) and southwestern Arabia. Two subspecies are recognized, including *M. r. sclateri*, which is endemic to southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This neat, slate and burnt orange bird occurs in the southwest highlands (except for the arid eastern fringes), south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Mainly above 1,500 m in rocky highlands with thick vegetation, including open woodland (especially mature junipers), acacia thickets, trees around houses and gardens and the edges of cultivated areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, including caterpillars, beetles and grasshoppers, as well as fruit. It scans from a perch on a tree before dropping onto prey on the ground. It also sallies after insects in flight or actively searches for insects amongst bushes. *Activity:* Crepuscular and diurnal. *Social Behavior:* Found solitarily, in pairs or small family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, presumably territorial. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy platform (size varies according to the available space) made of grass, bark strips, twigs, rootlets and moss, lined with fine grass, bark and sometimes hair and feathers, placed 1–3 m above ground in a cavity, usually in a mature tree (especially juniper), or in a rock, wall, building or exposed tree root. The cavity is often open, with the nest clearly visible. Unusual sites: hollow metal rocking horse in a children’s play area, electricity junction box. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13–15 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (16–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 12,500
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



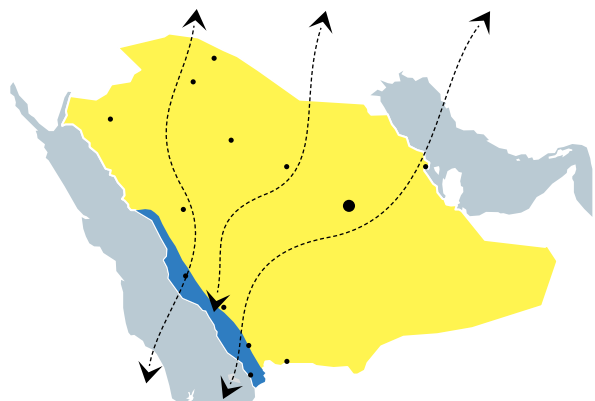
COMMON NAME: **WHINCHAT**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Saxicola rubetra*
ARABIC NAME: برقش أحمر (القليعي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–14 cm / 13–26 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from across Europe to northern Kazakhstan and northern Iran and winters 4,000–7,000 km south and southwest in the Sahel region and eastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this boldly marked bird is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant (Mar–May, Aug–Oct), more common in spring.

Whinchats readily mimic other birds. One bird that mimicked a nightingale was then mimicked by its neighbor and then by half of the local population only a few days later.

It also winters (Nov–Feb) in small numbers in the southwest. **HABITAT:** Open habitats, especially marshy areas, edge of crops and coastal scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, especially smaller insects. It hunts by scanning from a raised perch usually around 1–1.5 m above open ground before dropping onto prey from above. It also hunts by flycatching and also takes some fruits and seeds. *Activity:* Crepuscular. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found alone, though dozens or even 100 can be found in the same general area if the migration is temporarily disrupted in a “fall”. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It has similar behavior to the stonechats but can be distinguished from them by a prominent supercilium (“eyebrow”) and white sides to the tail. It flicks the tail and wings and bobs when alarmed or excited and has a rather whirring flight with fast wing beats.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: COMMON STONECHAT

OTHER COMMON NAMES: African, European, Eastern, Siberian and Arabian Stonechat

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Saxicola torquatus*

ARABIC NAME: برقش (القليعي الشائع)

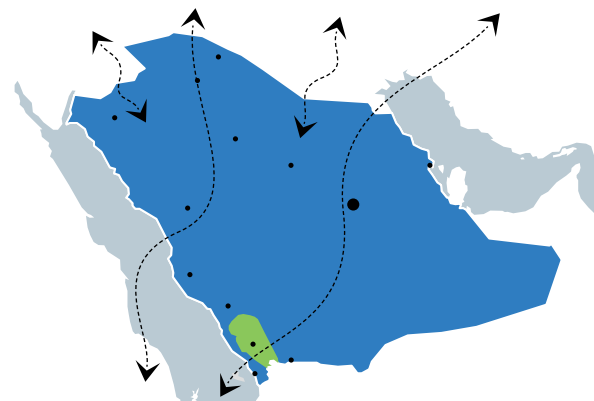
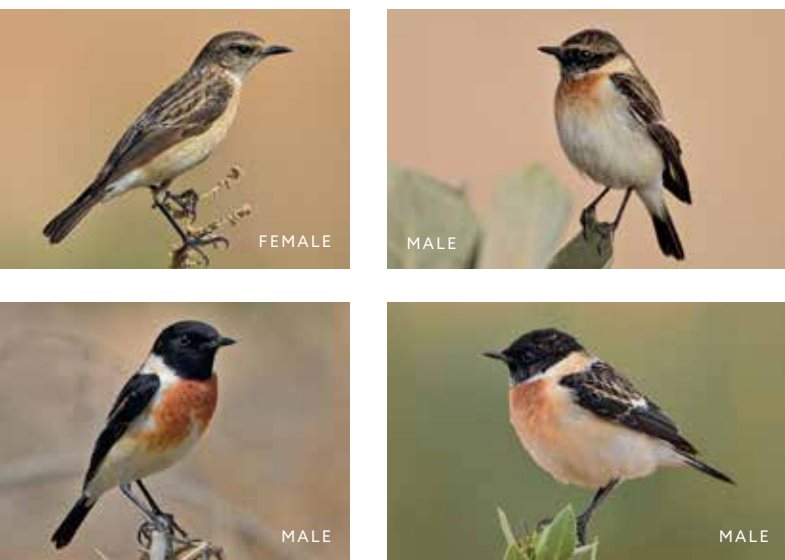
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (probably)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 13–17 g



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Sawda'



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southern Africa, southwestern Arabia and southern Europe to Iran; migratory populations breed across Eurasia and winter in northern and eastern Africa, Arabia and southern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident, uncommon passage migrant, common winter visitor.* Three of the 24 recognized subspecies regularly occur in Saudi Arabia and are sometimes regarded as distinct species: *S. t. rubicola* (European Stonechat) is an uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to the north, east and west; *S. t. maurus* (Eastern or Siberian Stonechat) is a common and widespread winter visitor; and *S. t. felix* (Arabian Stonechat) is an endemic resident of southwestern Arabia (and sometimes called African Stonechat).

HABITAT: European Stonechat: coastal scrub, upland plateaus. Eastern Stonechat: marshes. Arabian Stonechat: above 2,000 m in open mostly flat areas with patches of low vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, small vertebrates and seeds. It hunts by pouncing on prey from a prominent perch. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in small groups of up to five birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, occasionally polygynous with one male nesting with two females. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of grass, moss and hair, lined mainly with hair, some moss and string, on a foundation of short twigs and thin strips of bark, placed on the ground in thick vegetation, beneath a low bush or in a grass tussock. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 13–16 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

The males of this species exhibit highly variable plumage. At least three subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia – each so distinct they are often regarded as separate species.

COMMON NAME: NORTHERN WHEATEAR

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe oenanthe*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق شمالي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

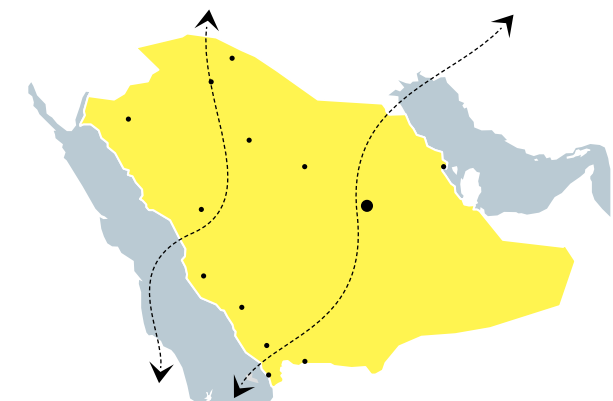
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–16 cm / 18–33 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds throughout Eurasia, Alaska, eastern Canada and Greenland; the entire population winters 3,000–15,000 km away in sub-Saharan Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant.* This extraordinary bird is a common and widespread passage migrant (Mar–May, Sep) throughout Saudi Arabia, particularly in spring when dozens or even hundreds can be seen in a day, though numbers can vary widely from year to year. Birds recorded in winter are probably early passage migrants rather than true wintering individuals.

This bird defies belief. Populations breeding in Alaska migrate up to 15,000 km – across Asia and Arabia – to southern Africa, and then race back to Alaska to breed again.

HABITAT: Coastal scrub, sandy wastes, stubble fields, golf courses and open rocky stony places. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, such as spiders and centipedes. It also takes a few berries. It hunts actively on the ground, bounding after prey or jumping up for flies or digging in the ground with its bill. It bobs its body and flicks its tail and wings in a restless manner. It flies just above the ground, often escaping by moving from perch to perch rather than embarking on a long single flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitary or in loose migrating groups. It can form local feeding territories on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The male is distinctive among wheatears with its ash gray crown and back. This species has one of the largest breeding ranges of any songbird on earth, and migrates further than any songbird on earth, travelling at 290 km per day. It is truly one of the world's greatest migrants from any taxa.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **BUFF-BREASTED WHEATEAR**
PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Isabelline, Heuglin's, or Rusty-breasted Wheatear
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe bottae*
ARABIC NAME: أبلق أحمر صدر
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–16 cm / Unknown



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, it occurs in the highlands, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Above 2,300 m in flat or slightly sloping open areas, including cultivated and terraced fields (especially with banks or walls for nesting) and stony plateaus with scattered bushes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes insects and their larvae. It is likely to eat ants, beetles, other invertebrates, seeds, berries and perhaps small lizards. It searches the ground for prey or scans from a perch and drops onto prey from above. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs in pairs or small family groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, tend the young and vigorously defend the territory. The female incubates. *Nest:* A cup made of grass and straw, lined with fine grass and hair, placed in a hole or crevice (less than 1 m deep) in a rock, bank or wall, or in a rodent burrow or under a boulder. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (15 days in similar species). *Broods:* Double-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird was previously regarded as the same species as Isabelline Wheatear, Heuglin's Wheatear (*O. heuglinii*), or Rusty-breasted Wheatear (*O. frenata*). It has only recently been recognized as a distinct species confined to Arabia and thus endemic.

This endemic species vigorously defends its territory, forcefully evicting any species of wheatear that has the misfortune to wander into its airspace.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 13,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah

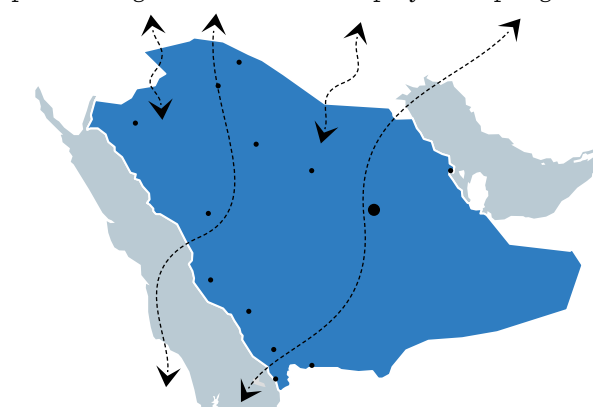


COMMON NAME: **ISABELLINE WHEATEAR**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe isabellina*
ARABIC NAME: أبلق درجي (أبلق أشهب)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 21–39 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Turkey and Jordan through Iran and Oman to Mongolia and winters up to 5,000 km southwest in the Sahel, northeastern Africa and Arabia to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor.* This heavy, pale-colored wheatear is common and widespread throughout Saudi Arabia on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep) and as a winter visitor (Oct–Feb). **HABITAT:** Open sandy desert, steppe and arid mountains. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, including ants, flies, bugs, ticks, beetles, cockroaches, antlions and their larvae, as well as a few seeds. It typically sits on a rock or small plant and drops onto prey below and eats it there before returning to the perch. Large prey items, such as locusts and grasshoppers are beaten on the ground before breaking up and eating. It also bounds after prey over open ground with its distinctive long, loping run. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in small numbers on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** In winter it is a typical inhabitant of open arid lands. It has a long legged and upright stance on the ground, often bobbing its head and flicking its short tail, ever alert for prey items and foe.

Wheatears often sing in mid-air before performing a dramatic nosedive to the ground. This perilous display dive is often done in total darkness to maximize sound transmission.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **HOODED WHEATEAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe monacha*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق مقلنس

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

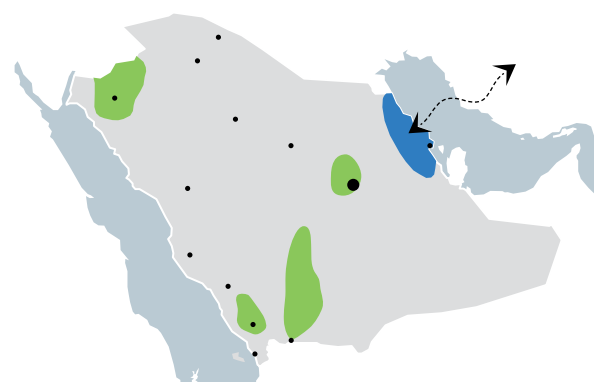
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 18 cm / 18–23 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident with some winter dispersal: occurs patchily from northeastern Egypt through Arabia to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia, this sharply dressed, highly dimorphic wheatear is mainly sedentary, but there is a small influx in winter, especially in the Gulf region with birds presumably arriving from the larger local population in Iran. **HABITAT:** Below 1,240 m in remote, dry, rocky areas with cliffs, canyons and scree slopes. Over winter it is often found away from cliffs at small rocky hills and around isolated buildings. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Because they nest in desert environments containing very little food, Hooded Wheatears need to defend large territories in excess of two square kilometers.* **Diet:** Insects, such as grasshoppers, beetles, dragonflies, butterflies, bees and ants and other invertebrates, such as ticks and spiders. It forages mainly in the air, chasing insects vertically up to 100 m above the ground. It also scans from a perch before dropping down onto prey on the ground. It often forages on and around goats and camels, eating large ticks. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs, it forms temporary feeding territories over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of dried grass and weeds, lined with wool and feathers and placed in a deep crevice in a rock. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 14–15 days. *Broods:* Unknown.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,750
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tuwaiq Escarpment



COMMON NAME: **DESERT WHEATEAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe deserti*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق صحراوي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

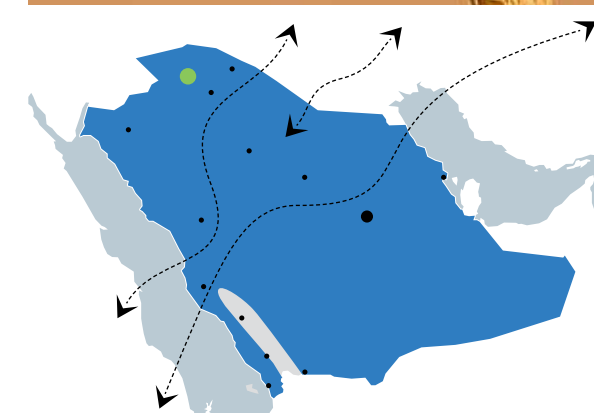
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 15–34 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northern Africa to Syria, Jordan and far northern Saudi Arabia; migratory populations breed in northwestern Africa and from Iran and Kazakhstan to Mongolia and winter 3,000 km southwest in arid northern Africa and Arabia to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident, very common passage migrant, very common winter visitor.* This desert-adapted wheatear occurs widely throughout Saudi Arabia on passage migration (Apr–May, Aug–Sep) and over winter (Oct–Mar). A small population breeds in the far north of the Kingdom, though perhaps not every year. **HABITAT:** Below 2,700 m in flat open plains with low scrub and grasses, cultivated areas, lava plateaus and scrubby patches within dune systems. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects and other invertebrates, including spiders and worms, as well as seeds occasionally. It hunts on the ground, bounding after prey and grabbing it in its bill. It also sallies for insects from a perch or from the ground. One or two Asian Desert Warblers often forage alongside this species, presumably obtaining anti-predator and food finding benefits. **Activity:** Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of plant stems and grass, lined with fine grass, hair, wool or feathers and placed in a hole in the ground (often a disused rodent burrow), amongst rocks or on the ground under a bush. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13–14 days. *Broods:* Often double-brooded.

Wheatears living in open arid habitat usually have a sandy-colored body for camouflage and black tips to the tail and wings because black feathers are resistant to abrasion.



Breeding resident, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe hispanica*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق أغشى شرقي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 12–21 g



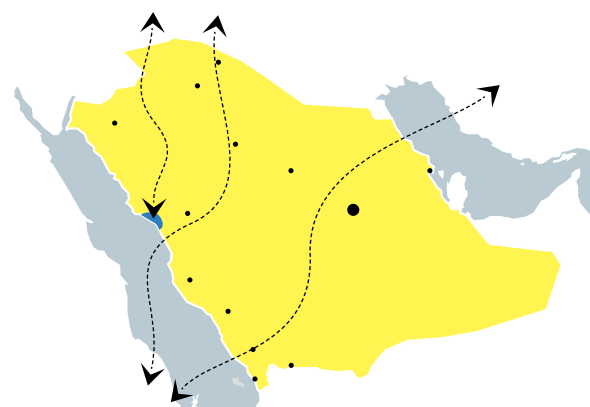
NARROW-MASKED MORPH



WIDE-MASKED MORPH

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds around the Mediterranean to Iran and winters 3,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, local winter visitor.* This small wheatear, the smallest in Saudi Arabia, is an uncommon but widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia. Spring migration is concentrated over only a few days, usually in March or April where it can sometimes be locally common, with a smaller and more protracted return in autumn. Individuals have wintered near Yanbu'. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration, but prefers open bushy places, such as weedy edges of fields or wetlands, large parks and any place with low vegetation and plentiful invertebrates. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, especially insects and their larvae, as well as small amounts of berries and seeds. It perches relatively high compared to most other wheatears, often on a telephone wire and drops to ground on prey or pursues prey on the ground in bounds. It also hovers to glean from foliage and makes short flycatching sallies. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates at night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in small loose groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is rather slim and elongated and has an elegant air. It is often quite tame. Both sexes can occur in either of two plumage morphs. One has a relatively narrow dark facial mask, while the other has a dark face and throat. The proportion of dark-throated males ranges from 42–80% and is greatest in populations breeding further east.

Males leave the breeding grounds 10–15 days earlier than females resulting in two distinct migratory waves through Saudi Arabia in autumn.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jubail



COMMON NAME: **CYPRUS WHEATEAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe cypriaca*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق قبرصي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / Unknown



FEMALE



MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds only on the island of Cyprus and winters 2,500 km south in northeastern Africa (Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Chad). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant.* This rare wheatear is known in Saudi Arabia from only a few March and September records between Yanbu' and Jiddah (north of the city) and inland at Ashayrah (north of Tayif). Most birds probably pass over the Kingdom without stopping, while others presumably migrate over eastern Africa. **HABITAT:** Wadis and scrublands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, especially on migration. It is known to eat insects, including caterpillars. Its diet and foraging behavior are likely to be similar to the closely related Pied Wheatear, which eats invertebrates, especially ants and beetles and fruits. It scans from a bush or rock perch before dropping onto prey on the ground. Like most wheatears, it has been known to eat small lizards. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This species has only recently been identified as a distinct species separate from the closely related Pied Wheatear, which also occurs in the Kingdom. Thus there is little information recorded about this bird in Saudi Arabia. Its vocalizations are very different from those of the Pied Wheatear.

Breeding only in Cyprus, this rare wheatear can fly 2,500 km to northeastern Africa in a single flight lasting two and a half days.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah hinterland



COMMON NAME: **PIED WHEATEAR**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe pleschanka*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق أبقع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–16 cm / 16–22 g



MALE



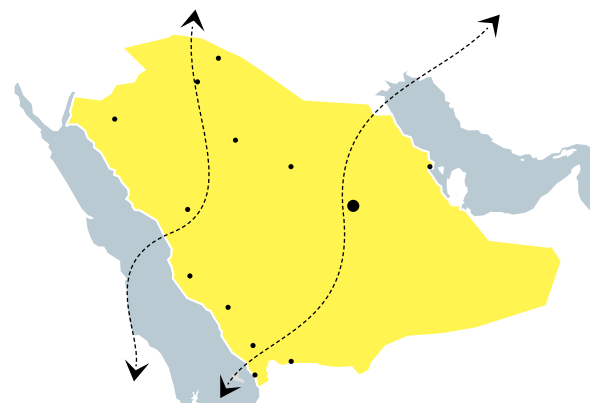
FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Romania to northeastern China and winters 4,000–8,000 km south and southwest in northeastern Africa, with most of the world's populations likely to pass through Saudi Arabia.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Common passage migrant.* This good-looking, sexually dimorphic wheatear is a common and widespread passage migrant through the Kingdom, especially in spring. A few possibly winter in Saudi Arabia at Tabuk and far southern Tihamah. **HABITAT:** It can appear anywhere on migration, but prefers open bushy areas with bare ground with abundant invertebrate prey, especially green areas such as pivot-irrigated fields or scrub near wetlands.

Wheatears living in broken country are usually black and white, which breaks up the bird's outline in a landscape of rocks and shadows, thereby befuddling potential predators.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly insects, especially ants and beetles, with fruit increasingly important in autumn. It hunts by scanning from a quiet, low perch above bare ground and then dropping onto its prey from above. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in apparent pairs moving together in spring. Also in spring there may be "falls" of several dozen in a small area, the result of a disruption in the migration, with most moving on by the end of the day. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is upright when perched; its profile accentuated by a tail that hangs down, but on the ground its short legs give it a more horizontal appearance. A rare white-throated form of this species exists and has been recorded in Saudi Arabia alongside the normal black-throated form.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **BLACKSTART**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe melanura*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق أسود الذنب

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 13–18 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Africa's Sahel region and Red Sea coastal fringe and from Arabia north to the Sinai and southern Syria. Two of the six recognized subspecies occur in Saudi Arabia, including *O. m. neumanni*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and western Oman and *O. m. melanura*, which is near endemic to Arabia occurring in central Saudi Arabia and north to Syria. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This small blue-gray wheatear occurs in the southwest highlands (*O. m. neumanni*) and central and northwestern Saudi Arabia (*O. m. melanura*).

When nesting in a crevice, the female builds a stone rampart near the crevice entrance. The rampart collapses loudly if a predator touches it, thus alerting the female to escape.

HABITAT: Below 2,150 m in wadis and arid, rocky areas with acacias. It occurs regularly near villages in the southwest but otherwise avoids human habitation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects, especially ants, beetles and caterpillars and berries taken by scanning from a low perch before pouncing on prey on the ground or by flycatching. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Often in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs.

Parental roles: Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The role of adults in incubation is not known. *Nest:* A cup made of grass, occasionally with string or cloth, lined with fine grass, hair and sometimes feathers, usually placed in a hole or crevice amongst low rocks or directly on the ground, often with a pavement of small flat pebbles leading from the cavity entrance to the nest (less often placed in a hole in a wall, building or tree). Unusual site: a vehicle exhaust pipe. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13–15 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 900,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal al-Lawz



COMMON NAME: **WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe leucopyga*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق أبيض فنة

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17 cm / 23–29 g



ADULT



JUVENILE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across northern Africa to eastern Saudi Arabia. Two subspecies are recognized, including *O. l. ernesti*, which is near endemic to Arabia, extending into the Sinai and southern Jordan.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Very common breeding resident.* This glossy wheatear is widespread in the west, but absent from the highest peaks and western escarpment. It also occurs on the central plains, Tuwaiq Escarpment and eastern edge of the Summan Plateau (Eastern Province). **HABITAT:** Deserted and arid areas, including rocky escarpments, boulder slopes, cliffs, dry wadis and lava fields.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects, especially ants, flies and beetles and other invertebrates, such as ticks on camels, as well as worms and spiders. It also takes small lizards, berries and seeds. It drops onto prey after scanning from a perch, bounds after prey, or flycatches. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or pairs.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs with apparently lifelong pair bonds, nesting either solitarily or in small loose colonies of up to five pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of fine twigs and grass stems, thickly lined with wool, camel hair, feathers and plant down, placed usually 1.5–6 m above ground in a crevice (up to 50 cm deep) in a rock outcrop, cliff or talus slope or under a boulder. Small pebbles, placed inside the nesting crevice, form a pavement leading to the nest. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 14–16 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **NOTE:** The juvenile has a black crown.

White-crowned Wheatears readily mimic birds and other noises. One mimicked the shutter click and motor drive of a camera even as its photograph was being taken.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)

COMMON NAME: **FINSCH'S WHEATEAR**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe finschii*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق فينشي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / 22–32 g



FEMALE

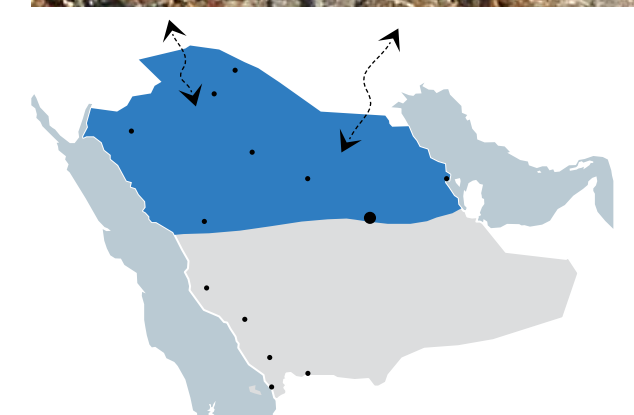


MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: resident populations occur in Syria to Afghanistan; migratory populations breed from Turkey to northern Pakistan and winter up to 1,000 km south from Palestine through northern Arabia to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* In Saudi Arabia,

After migrating to Saudi Arabia this rare wheatear will establish a winter territory and then fiercely defend it. It may return to the same territory for several years in a row.

this glossy, pied, stocky wheatear is a rare but widespread winter visitor to the north and the Arabian Gulf region. **HABITAT:** Remote stony plains with sparse vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, especially ants and grasshoppers, along with a wide range of other arthropods. It spends more time on the ground compared to most other black and white wheatears. It perches on boulders, rocks and low vegetation rather than bushes and trees. It uses these low perches to spot its prey and then it drops onto it or pursues it over bare ground, or sometimes makes sallies after flying insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It may cock its tail if anxious. It is rather wary and its long escape flight means it is often difficult to get a good view. Most observations are of males, which suggests females are even shyer or, perhaps more likely, that females winter in different areas.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Nariya



COMMON NAME: MOURNING WHEATEAR

PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Arabian Wheatear

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe lugens*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق حزين شرقي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

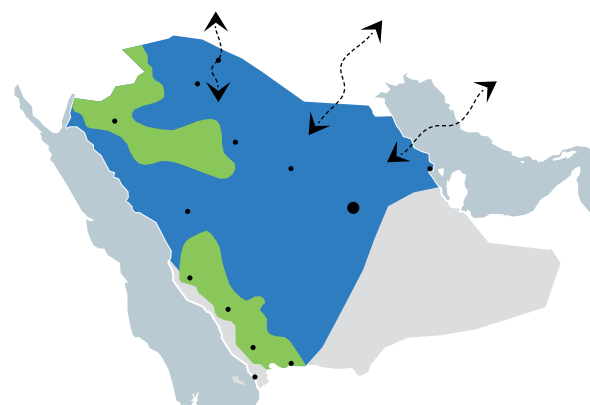
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–16 cm / 19–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur across northern and eastern Africa and Arabia to Syria; migratory populations breed in Iraq and Iran and winter 800 km south in Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor.* Three of the nine recognized subspecies occur regularly in Saudi Arabia: *O. l. lugens* (Mourning Wheatear) is resident in north-western Saudi Arabia; *O. l. persica* (Persian Wheatear) winters in eastern Arabia; and *O. l. lugentoides* (Arabian Wheatear) is endemic to southwestern Saudi Arabia (south from Tayif) and Yemen. **HABITAT:** Mourning Wheatear: below 1,000 m in arid sandstone canyons and outcrops. Persian Wheatear: outcrops, escarpments, gorges, stony deserts and village outskirts. Arabian Wheatear: above 1,000 m in rocky, bushy areas, rocky hillsides, cliffs, terraced fields with stonewalls and village outskirts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Ants, beetles, grasshoppers and other invertebrates taken by bounding, dropping from a perch, or sallying. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. If a second brood is attempted, sons from the first brood may help tend the second brood. *Nest:* A shallow cup of grass, lined with finer grass, wool and feathers, placed 0–6 m above ground in a rock crevice, a cliff, terraced wall or bank. Flat stones placed inside the nesting crevice form a rampart (20–35 cm long) at the outer edge of the nest. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–15 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **NOTE:** Arabian Wheatear was previously regarded as a distinct species.

The population in southern Arabia was once regarded as a distinct species called the Arabian Wheatear, but it is now thought to be the same species as Mourning Wheatear.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 445,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Nariya



COMMON NAME: RED-TAILED WHEATEAR

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق أحمرذنب

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

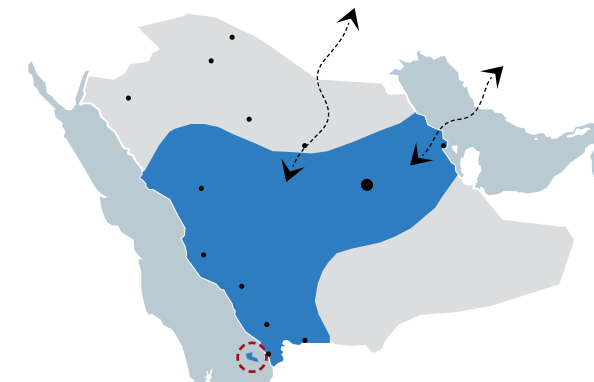
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 18–29 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Armenia to Pakistan and winters up to 2,000 km south in Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* This subtly-colored wheatear is widespread in winter over the southern half of Saudi Arabia and absent from the northern plains and sand seas. **HABITAT:** Rocky habitats, including mountainsides, ravines and boulder fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly invertebrates, especially ants and beetles taken from the ground, as well as seeds and berries. It very occasionally also takes small lizards. It will perch on bushes and vegetation, but it usually hunts from a rock, dropping onto prey nearby. It may also hunt on the ground by digging with its bill, or it actively chases prey over the surface. It also pecks from vegetation and makes short flights after flying insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird appears at first to be a rather drab wheatear that tends to sit quietly or hide behind rocks and in gullies whilst danger passes, but once it flies it reveals a distinctive red rump and tail. This species was recently separated from the Kurdish Wheatear.

When displaying, the male energetically fans his tail and performs short pirouettes into the air in bouts lasting up to 50 minutes, singing all the while.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Bahah



COMMON NAME: **KURDISH WHEATEAR**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Kurdistan Wheatear

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oenanthe xanthopyrma*

ARABIC NAME: أبلق كردي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / Unknown



MALE

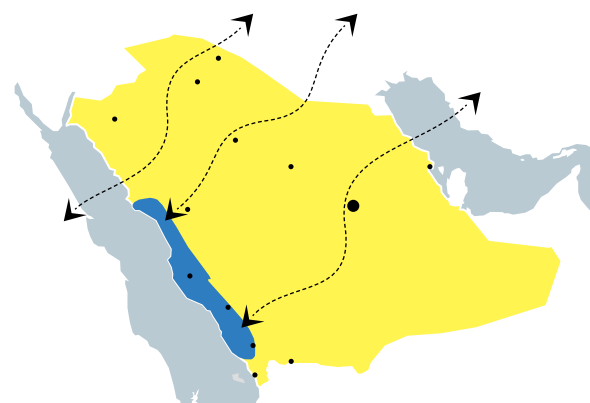


FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southeastern Turkey to southwestern Iran and winters 1,800 km southwest on the northeastern side of the Red Sea (Egypt to Somalia) with a few in western Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This chestnut-rumped wheatear spends the winter along the central Tihamah and foothills, mainly between Yanbu' and al-Birk. Some individuals are recorded on migration across the Kingdom between its west Asian breeding grounds and its Red Sea wintering grounds. **HABITAT:** Arid rocky hills and rocky wadis. It also occasionally occurs in acacia grasslands and rocky deserts.

This bird breeds in a very narrow strip of dry mountain slopes from eastern Turkey to western Iran and winters in an equally narrow strip along the Red Sea.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Poorly known, but it appears to have a typical wheatear diet consisting of ants, beetles, termites, caterpillars, along with other types of invertebrate prey. It also occasionally takes small lizards, as well as seeds and fruit. It forages by waiting and scanning from a perch before dropping onto prey on the ground, or bounding after prey over the ground. It also flycatches, perhaps more regularly than most other wheatears, which suggests flying insects are especially important prey items for this bird. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually solitary. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird tends to prefer rockier, hilly country, which separates it from Isabelline Wheatear and Desert Wheatear. Until recently this species was lumped with the far more numerous Red-tailed Wheatear, which has obscured its status within Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Faqir



COMMON NAME: **HYPOCOLIUS**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hypocolius ampelinus*

ARABIC NAME: سويداء (الخنق الرمادي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 23 cm / 48–57 g

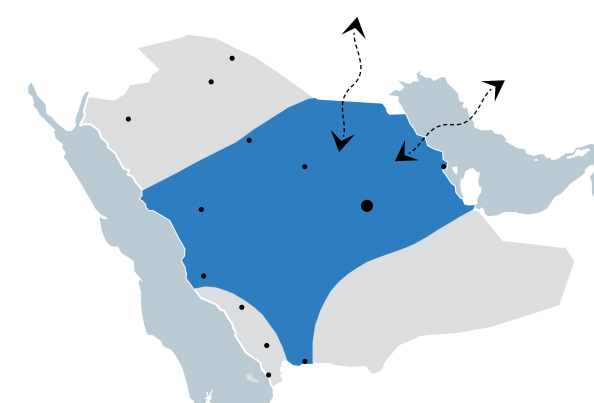


MALE (LEFT) AND FEMALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Iraq, Kuwait and southern Iran to western Pakistan and winters 500 km southwest mainly in the Arabian Peninsula and also southern Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common winter visitor.* This unique bird, the only member of its family, arrives in variable numbers each year and not consistently in any particular region. **HABITAT:** Roosts in tall Date Palms or deciduous trees and makes daily commutes to open desert with low bushes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Berries and fruits. It usually forages simply by leaning from a perch. It is also observed to take locusts and other insects and to flycatch. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In Saudi Arabia, it is essentially a flocking bird, usually recorded in groups of 10–20 but often 60 or 80 and once 120 birds at Salasil. Towards the end of winter pairs become evident within each flock, and often sing and display as the breeding season approaches.

This distinctive bird is the only member of its family. It has no close relatives. Half the global population winters in Saudi Arabia, foraging on Toothbrush Trees and Date Palms.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The Hypocolius is the only member of its family, meaning it has no close living relatives. It flies high and directly and when anxious it may descend quickly and fly fast into cover slowing at the last moment by fanning its tail and wings. It is also fond of sitting boldly on top of a bush when not alarmed. It chatters in flight and at roosts, in a manner resembling bulbuls, but is quiet when feeding.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: as-Safarat

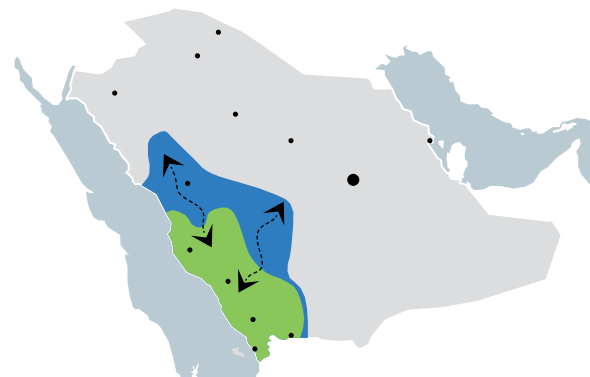


COMMON NAME: NILE VALLEY SUNBIRD
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hedydipna metallica*
ARABIC NAME: تمير نيلي
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 9–17 cm / 7–7.5 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from the Nile Valley in Egypt south to Sudan and east to Somalia, Eritrea and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This glittering jewel of a bird breeds in the southwest, south from around Thawl. After breeding and over winter it can wander well beyond this range in search of flowering plants. **HABITAT:** Usually below 1,500 m (possibly higher on the dry eastern side of the highlands) in open, often sandy, dry bush country. It also occurs in cultivated areas around human settlements, even nesting in tree-lined streets in cities. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Nectar taken by hovering or perching at flowers and insects taken by gleaning. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs, but can congregate in groups during the non-breeding season with 70 once recorded in a single acacia bush beside a watercourse in the Tihamah in July. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, possibly with high levels of extra-pair paternity as recorded in other highly sexually dimorphic sunbirds. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* An elongated, ovoid dome with an overhanging “porch” above a side entrance, made of plant fibers, rootlets, leaves and plant down, bound with cobwebs and lined with down and feathers, suspended from a branch or drooping twig 2–10 m above ground in a thorny tree, often an acacia. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

The elegant tail streamers of the iridescent male, which extend 7 cm beyond the rest of the tail, are sexual ornaments used to attract females.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah

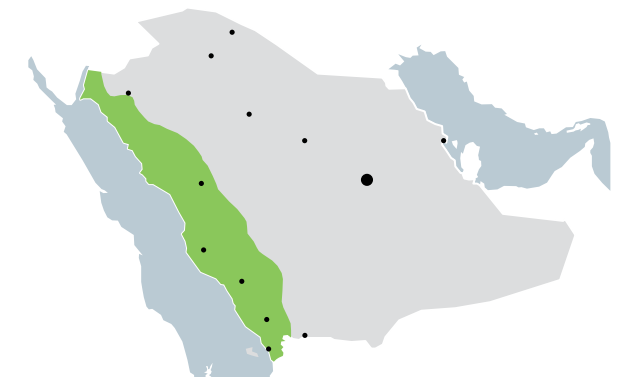


COMMON NAME: PALESTINE SUNBIRD
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cinnyris osea*
ARABIC NAME: تمير فلسطيني
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 8–10 cm / 6.8–7.6 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in the Middle East and Arabia (from Syria and Sinai through western Saudi Arabia and Yemen to the Dhofar) and in scattered pockets in central Africa. Arabia comprises more than 70% of its global range. Two subspecies are recognized, including *C. o. osea*, which is near endemic to Arabia, also occurring in the Sinai Peninsula and north to Syria. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This sparkling, seemingly metallic sunbird, the smallest bird in Saudi Arabia, is found mainly throughout the Hijaz and ‘Asir highlands. **HABITAT:** Mainly above 1,500 m, but occasionally from sea level on the northern Red Sea coast and from 250 m in the Tihamah in well-vegetated areas with tall shrubs and flowering trees, including juniper forests. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Nectar, fruit, seeds, spiders and insects. It feeds by hovering or perching in front of flowers. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Singles or pairs during the breeding season, or in groups of up to eight when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Highly promiscuous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* A pear-shaped, elongated dome with a “porch” above a side entrance, made of grass, leaves, plant down and occasionally paper or polythene, bound with hair, wool and cobwebs and lined with fine grass, plant down, feathers and hair, suspended from a branch or drooping twig 0.3–5 m above ground in a tree or bush. *Clutch:* 2 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13–14 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

This sunbird is sometimes known in Arabic as Sultan az-Zahar (King of the Flowers). Almost half of all nests contain at least one young not fathered by the male at the nest.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN SUNBIRD**
PREVIOUSLY REGARDED AS: Shining Sunbird
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cinnyris hellmayri*
ARABIC NAME: تمير عربي
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13 cm / 7–12 g



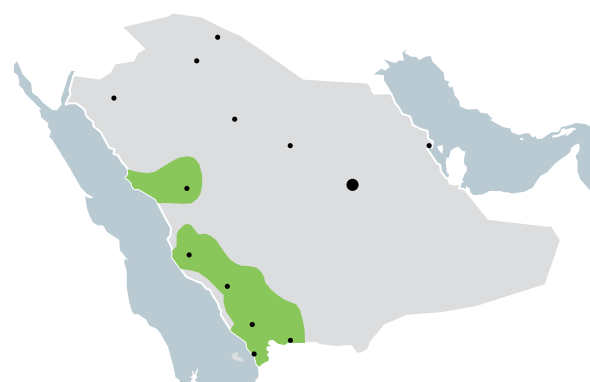
MALE



JUVENILE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. Two subspecies are recognized: *C. h. kinneari* is endemic to Saudi Arabia; *C. h. hellmayri* occurs in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* This kaleidoscopic sunbird occurs in the west around Umm Lajj and from Makkah south to near Najran (*C. h. kinneari*) and in the extreme southwest, south from near Najran (*C. h. hellmayri*). **HABITAT:** Between 250–1,800 m in areas with thick green vegetation, including gardens, orchards and cultivated fields. It also occurs in steep-sided wadis, rocky areas, hill-sides and occasionally in dry scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Nectar taken by perching or hovering in front of flowers and invertebrates taken in flight. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, perhaps with high levels of promiscuity (as recorded in some other sunbirds). *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. The male defends the territory. *Nest:* An elongated, ovoid dome with an overhanging “porch” above a side entrance, made of grass and plant down, bound with fibers and cobwebs and lined with plant down, cobwebs, wool and sometimes feathers, suspended from a branch or drooping twig 2–5 m above ground (sometimes up to 9 m) in a thorny tree, often an acacia. *Clutch:* 1 egg. *Incubation:* Unknown (12–15 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13–17 days in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly single-brooded. **NOTE:** This bird was previously regarded as a subspecies of Shining Sunbird (*C. habessinicus*).

The entire global population of this exceptionally beautiful bird occurs only in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and western Oman.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 250,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Rayda



COMMON NAME: **RÜPPELL'S WEAVER**
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ploceus galbula*
ARABIC NAME: تبشیر (نساج روبلي)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14 cm / M: 20–29 g; F: 16–21 g (25% lighter)



MALE

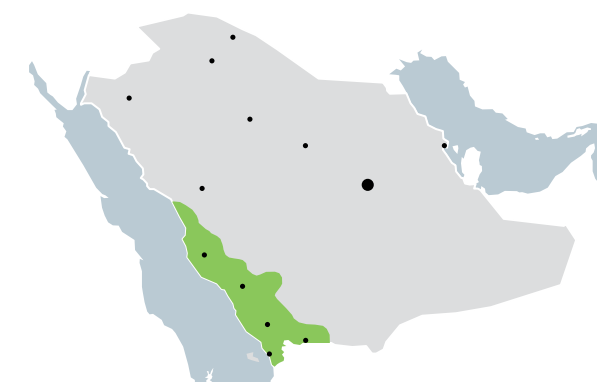
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northeastern Africa (eastern Sudan to Somalia) and southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this industrious golden bird is found in the southwest, south from Rabigh. A small population derived from escaped cage birds may occur around Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Below 2,800 m in dry scrub, thickets and cultivated areas, especially near cereal crops, often near towns and villages. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds taken by perching on seed heads. It also takes nectar and insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in groups of 10–20 birds, often alongside Arabian Golden Sparrow or House Sparrow. It can form roosts containing hundreds of birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Polygynous and colonial: each male builds numerous nests (usually 5–15) and can breed with

The glorious golden male is a compulsive nest builder. It sometimes weaves twelve or more impeccable nests in its territory in an attempt to attract one or more females.

2–3 females simultaneously or sequentially. Colonies usually contain 30–50 nests, often in a single tree. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory and builds multiple nests (occasionally assisted by the female). The female (presumably) selects a nest and incubates. Initially only the male brings food to the hatchlings, delivered via regurgitation. Both adults tend the young after 4 days. *Nest:* A round or flask-shaped dome, sometimes sparsely lined with plant down and leaves, with an entrance in the underside, made of grass (green when new) and occasionally strips of palm fronds, plastic or polythene, suspended from the end of a drooping thin twig more than 2 m above ground in a tree (typically a thorny species). *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 17 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



FEMALE



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 50,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Malakiyah Lake



COMMON NAME: ARABIAN WAXBILL

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Estrilda rufibarba*

ARABIC NAME: شمعي المنقار العربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10 cm / 8.5 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in far southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident*. This delicately beautiful, red-browed waxbill occurs in the highlands south from around Tayif and Makkah. **HABITAT:** Usually between 1,000–2,500 m (occasionally down to 600 m in the Tihamah lowlands) in thick vegetation, especially near running water or boggy ground, including scrub in wadi bottoms or rocky hillsides, subtropical forest, gardens, highland junipers and cultivated terraces of bananas, cereals and coffee. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Small seeds of rushes, sedges, flowering plants and native and cultivated grasses taken directly from the seed head or stripped and taken from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in pairs and small groups and forms larger flocks of usually less than 30 in winter.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the main nest structure using material collected by the male. Both adults build the false nest and incubate. The role of adults in feeding the chicks is unknown (in similar species both adults feed the chicks). *Nest:* A bulbous, messy dome made of long grass stems with a down-sloping entrance and a false nest on top, placed on the ground at the base of a stone wall in a shaded location (one record). *Clutch:* 5 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (11–13 days in similar species).

Nestling period: Unknown (18–21 days in similar species). *Broods:* Unknown (possibly double-brooded). **NOTE:** This bird is so poorly known that it was not until 2016 that the nest and eggs were first discovered (for this book).

The global population of this delicate little finch is confined to far southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. The first nest was not discovered until 2016.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thee Ain Village (al-Bahah Province)



COMMON NAME: AFRICAN SILVERBILL

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Euodice cantans*

ARABIC NAME: فضي المنقار الأفريقي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

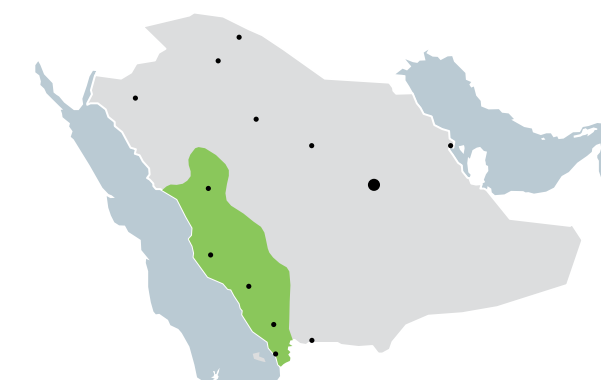
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11 cm / 10–14 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs across the northern tropics of Africa, eastern Africa and into southwestern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. This lovely, earthy-colored, large-billed waxbill is found in the west, mainly south of Jiddah. **HABITAT:** Acacia scrub, cultivated areas in the Tihamah and drier parts of the western highlands. It is not usually recorded close to settlements apart from suburban areas of Jiddah. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, especially grasses, weeds and small shrubs, as well as some insects. It forages mainly by picking seeds from the ground or directly from the plant. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Forages in small flocks usually containing less than 25 birds but sometimes up to 120 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with material collected by the male) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A loosely built, rounded dome with a short projecting side entrance, made of dry grass and lined with fine grass, grass heads and feathers, placed 1–4 m above ground in a bush or tree (typically acacia, or occasionally a fruit tree), or in a disused, dome nest of a House Sparrow or Rüppell's Weaver. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–14 days. *Nestling period:* 16–18 days. *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

Nestlings in this family have vivid yellow and black markings inside their mouths to ensure their parents feed them and not any cuckoo chicks that may also be in the nest.

and small shrubs, as well as some insects. It forages mainly by picking seeds from the ground or directly from the plant. Activity: Diurnal. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Forages in small flocks usually containing less than 25 birds but sometimes up to 120 birds. BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Mating system: Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. Parental roles: The female builds the nest (with material collected by the male) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. Nest: A loosely built, rounded dome with a short projecting side entrance, made of dry grass and lined with fine grass, grass heads and feathers, placed 1–4 m above ground in a bush or tree (typically acacia, or occasionally a fruit tree), or in a disused, dome nest of a House Sparrow or Rüppell's Weaver. Clutch: 2–4 eggs. Incubation: 11–14 days. Nestling period: 16–18 days. Broods: Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 14,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jazan



COMMON NAME: **INDIAN SILVERBILL**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Euodice malabarica*

ARABIC NAME: فضي المنقار الهندي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

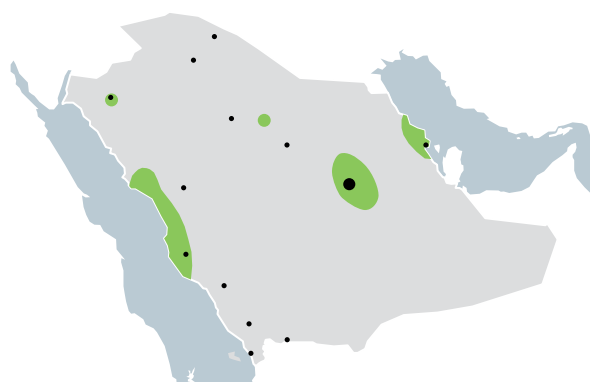
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11 cm / 10–14 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Arabia and southern Iran to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident*. This gregarious little brown bird may have naturally colonized the Eastern Province in the early 20th century following habitat modification by humans, or it may have originated from introductions or escapees from captivity. Either way, it now breeds mainly in the Eastern Province along the Arabian Gulf coastal fringe and the Riyadh region. Additional populations in western Saudi Arabia are almost certainly the descendants of escapees. **HABITAT:** Acacia scrub, grasslands, farms, cultivated areas (especially crop fields), parks, gardens and landscaped areas in cities and towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, especially of grasses, weeds and small shrubs, as well as a few insects. It picks seeds from the ground or directly from growing plants. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in flocks of less than 20 birds, or occasionally in flocks as large as 70 birds.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:*

Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. Some pairs may have a helper at the nest. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with material collected by the male) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy dome with a side entrance often projecting as a short tube, made of grass, grass heads and strips of palm fiber and leaves, lined with fine grass and occasionally a few feathers, placed 1–5 m above ground in a bush or tree.

Clutch: 2–7 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 21–23 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **NOTE:** Nesting activity has been recorded in every month of the year.

Attracted to modified landscapes, this social finch may have self-colonized the Gulf coast in the early 20th century once increasing development provided enough suitable habitat.

COMMON NAME: **HOUSE SPARROW**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Passer domesticus*

ARABIC NAME: عصفور دوري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable (possibly increasing)

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–17 cm / 21–33 g



FEMALE

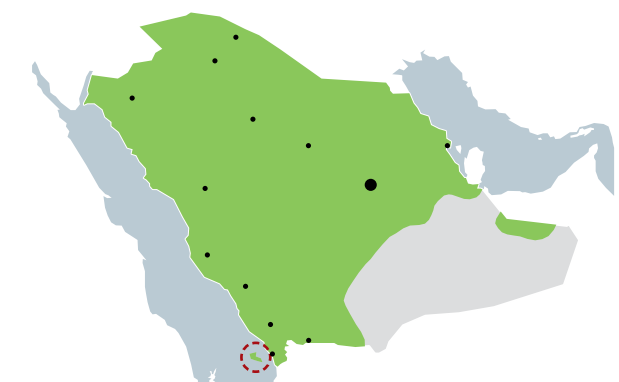


MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in Western Europe and northern Africa through Arabia to northern China and Southeast Asia and introduced to many parts of the world. Twelve subspecies are recognized, including *P. d. hufufae*, which is endemic to the Eastern Province and *P. d. indicus*, which is ubiquitous in Arabia (and southern Asia) after a dramatic range expansion in recent decades following the creation of new farms and settlements. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant breeding resident*. This very familiar bird

Males that find more food develop a larger black throat patch and become socially dominant. Not surprisingly, males with smaller throat patches tend to avoid them.

breeds throughout Saudi Arabia. **HABITAT:** Farms and settlements, including the smallest camp and occasionally in remote areas with cliffs. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds, buds, berries, human vegetable food scraps, as well as some invertebrates, especially in summer. It picks from vegetation or the ground and occasionally catches invertebrates in flight. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Small flocks, increasing in size during the winter. Roosts of 2,000 have been reported. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs, nesting solitary or in loose colonies of up to 20 pairs, sometimes mixed with other sparrows. *Parental roles:* The male begins nest construction. If a pair is formed, the female then assists, especially with lining the nest. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* Variable: either a dome with a side entrance, made of grass and lined with feathers and often paper, cloth and wool, placed in a tree or bush, or a partial dome or pad made of grass and feathers placed in a crevice in a building, rock outcrop, earthen bank, well or tree hollow. *Clutch:* 4 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–16 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 4,000,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Any city, town or camp



COMMON NAME: **SPANISH SPARROW**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Passer hispaniolensis*

ARABIC NAME: عصفور أسباني

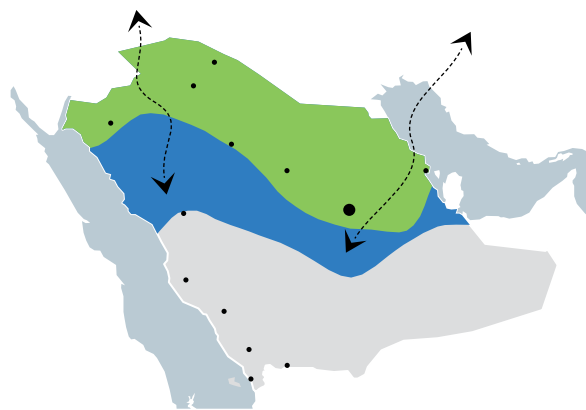
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–16 cm / 22–38 g



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 3,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Haradh



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the western Mediterranean and from Azerbaijan to Tajikistan; migratory populations breed around the eastern Mediterranean and winter 1,000 km south in northern Africa through northern Arabia to northwestern India.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding resident, very common winter visitor.* This frequently overlooked sparrow self-colonized northern and eastern Saudi Arabia following the expansion of farming around 1980. **HABITAT:** Open cultivated areas around villages, farms, date groves, reedbeds and plantations of tall trees, especially eucalyptus. Over winter it is also found in deserts. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds of grasses, crops and herbs taken from the plant or ground, as well as invertebrates taken by searching the ground or foliage. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in flocks of less than 50 birds, though it occasionally forms flocks containing several hundred birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in highly synchronized, dense colonies of 10–1,000 pairs, sometimes with nests touching. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A dome with a side entrance, made of grass, leaves, flower heads and sometimes string and plastic strips, lined with fine grass, feathers and plant down, placed 15–20 m above ground in a tree (or as low as 1.5 m in a bush), or in a building crevice. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–12 days. *Nestling period:* 11–12 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

Unlike the closely related House Sparrow, the Spanish Sparrow is not usually found in towns – it prefers cultivated areas instead.

COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN GOLDEN SPARROW**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Passer euchlorus*

ARABIC NAME: عصفور مذهب عربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–13 cm / 12–17 g



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 25,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabya

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs mainly in southwestern Arabia, with small populations in Djibouti and northern Somalia. Arabia comprises more than 76% of its global range. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This bright yellow sparrow occurs only in the southern Tihamah, generally south from al-Wasaqah, though it regularly wanders north to Jiddah. Escapees have recently formed breeding populations along the Riyadh River.

HABITAT: Breeds below 600 m in acacias, often in areas with scattered thickets, away from human habitation. It also occurs in cultivated areas, particularly millet fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, mainly seeds of grasses and millet. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Highly gregarious, it occurs in tight flocks usually containing 100 or more birds; flock sizes increase in winter. Roosts containing over 2,000 birds have been reported. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in dense colonies, usually containing several hundred nests (with about 50 nests per tree). The nests are typically about 1 m apart, sometimes touching. It often forms mixed colonies with nesting Rüppell's Weavers and House Sparrows. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A distinctively black, elongated dome with a side entrance near either the top or the bottom, the exterior is made of acacia twigs and pods, while the interior is made of grass and leaves and lined with fine grass, some wool, feathers and paper or cloth, placed 2–5 m above ground in the outer branches of a bushy acacia. *Clutch:* 2–3. *Incubation:* Unknown (11–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (11–15 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded, possibly at a different site for each brood.

These glorious golden birds breed in spectacular colonies containing several hundred nests. More than three-quarters of the world's population breeds in southwestern Arabia.

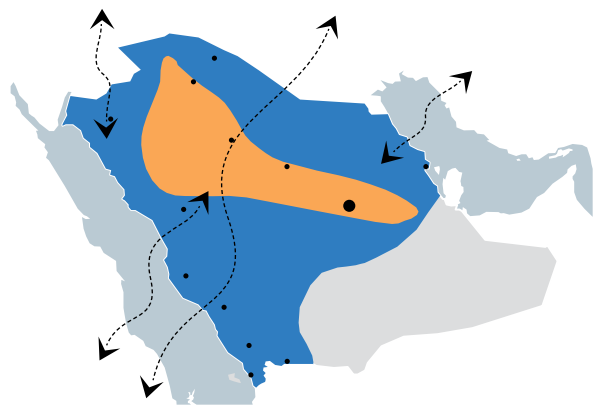


COMMON NAME: PALE SPARROW
OTHER COMMON NAME: Pale Rock Sparrow
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Carospiza brachydactyla*
ARABIC NAME: عصفور صخري شاحب
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing (probably)
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 21–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southwestern Turkey to Turkmenistan and western Afghanistan and south into Arabia and winters 1,000 km southwest in western Saudi Arabia and northeastern Africa. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon and erratic breeding migrant, uncommon passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.* This unembellished sandy-brownish-grayish bird occurs widely on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) and over winter (Nov–Feb). Winter flocks wander and hence their occurrence is unpredictable. After good rainfall, it may remain over summer and breed, sometimes in large numbers. **HABITAT:** Breeds on rocky hills and wadis with sandy areas and low bushes, especially acacia. On migration it congregates near water, especially desert rain pools and feeds at fodder and cereal farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds and green parts of plants, as well as insects during the breeding season. It forages on the ground and among low vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs or small loose feeding flocks, which increase in size in the non-breeding season. Flocks of 300 or more can occur on migration. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting either solitarily or in loose colonies. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of twigs and plant stems, lined with downy plant heads, hair and fine grass, placed 5–25 cm above ground in the base of a low bush. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 11–16 days. *Broods:* Opportunistic, single-brooded.

These birds make up for their unadorned plumage with their elaborate display-flight. Pairs then find a prominent perch near the nest and sing sweet duets together.



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Hamra (near Judah)

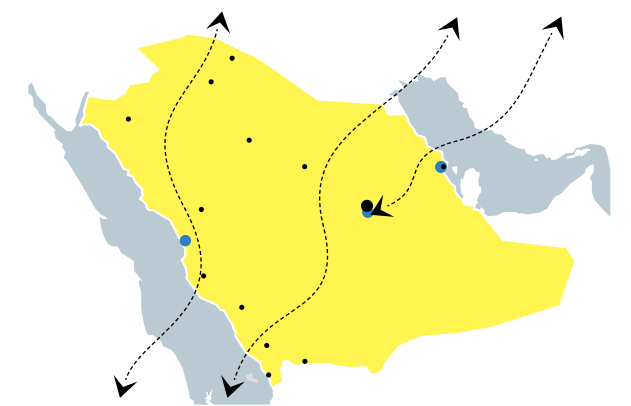


COMMON NAME: TREE PIPIT
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus trivialis*
ARABIC NAME: جيشنة شجرية (تميرة الشجر)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 15–39 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Western Europe to northern China and winters 6,000 km south and southwest in sub-Saharan Africa and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, rare local winter visitor.* This heavily streaked bird is a widespread passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) through Saudi Arabia occurring in variable numbers. It is generally less abundant in autumn. Individuals and small groups have occasionally spent the winter (Nov–Feb) at rich foraging sites such as Dhahran, Riyadh and Jiddah. **HABITAT:** Wet and green areas with bushes, including croplands, gardens and town parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, including beetles, bugs, earwigs, flies and caterpillars, as well as spiders and millipedes. It also takes a few seeds, buds and berries, especially in winter. It feeds mostly on the ground amid tufts of grass and low herbage, or occasionally perches and feeds in bushes and trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It moves through Saudi Arabia in small groups of half a dozen or so but sometimes groups of 50 or more might be present in a small area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This bird is often first identified by its call, a single drawn-out “tseep” note given in flight or when alarmed.

When more rain falls in the African Sahel, more Tree Pipits survive the winter – and consequently more migrate through Saudi Arabia in spring.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **RED-THROATED PIPIT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus cervinus*

ARABIC NAME: جيشنة حمراء زور

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–15 cm / 16–29 g

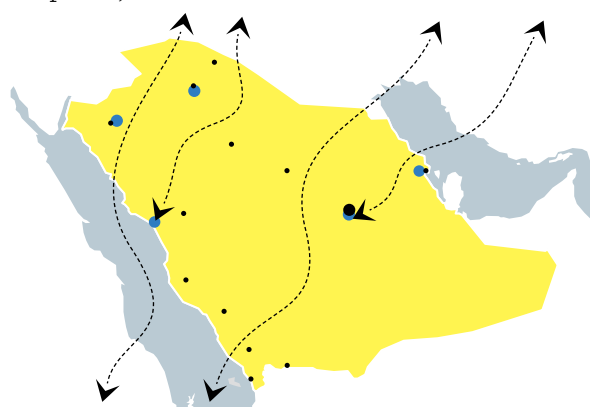


GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the high Arctic from northern Scandinavia to western Alaska and winters 7,000 km south and southwest around the Mediterranean, sub-Saharan Africa, the Nile Valley, northern Arabia and southern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, local winter visitor.* This unmistakable pipit with a burnt orange-colored throat is a common passage migrant through Saudi Arabia (Mar–Apr, Aug–Nov), with fewer in autumn. Wintering birds have been reported from rich foraging sites such as Tabuk, Sakaka, Yanbu', Riyadh and Dhahran. **HABITAT:** Irrigated crops and lawns, marshy areas and near surface water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly insects, especially flies, grasshoppers, moths, beetles and larvae, as well as spiders, worms and small snails. It also takes a few grass seeds. It forages on the ground, usually

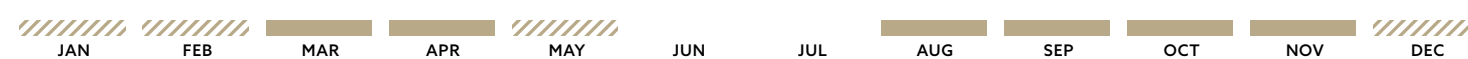
Red-throated Pipits that have spent the winter in Saudi Arabia will soon migrate to nest in the high Arctic, some 7,000 km to the north.

in low vegetation or bare ground, particularly in muddy, wet ground, where it pecks and probes amongst the vegetation.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs in groups of 5–10 or more, though it sometimes forms very large groups. For example, censuses conducted on pivot-irrigated fields north of Tabuk estimated over 1,000 were present on two recently cut alfalfa crops in mid-April. It often forms mixed feeding flocks with Western Yellow Wagtails. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **MEADOW PIPIT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus pratensis*

ARABIC NAME: جيشنة مروحية (تميرة الحقول)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 15–22 g

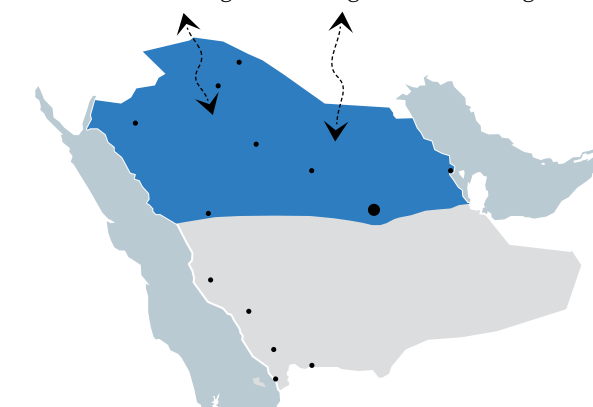


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Britain and western Europe; migratory populations breed from Greenland to central Russia and winter 1,000–3,000 km south around the Mediterranean through the Middle East to Afghanistan, occasionally venturing south to northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia is around the southern limit of this bird's normal wintering range. Thus this bird is an uncommon winter visitor (Nov–Mar) and generally found north of a line running from Medina to Riyadh and Hofuf. **HABITAT:** Open flat areas with low grasses, including agricultural crops,

Meadow Pipits migrate during both day and night, which is unusual; by day, they use the sun for navigation and by night they use the earth's magnetic field.

marshy areas and wastewater farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small invertebrates, including insects and their larvae, arachnids, centipedes and small snails. It will also take seeds and even crumbs of human food, perhaps more so in winter. It forages on bare ground or amongst short vegetation. It picks items from the ground and vegetation as it walks in a somewhat shuffling or crouched manner, although it also runs. It will also wade into shallow puddles to take surface items. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates both day and night.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually recorded in small groups of 5–10, but once a group of more than 30 was reported. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk

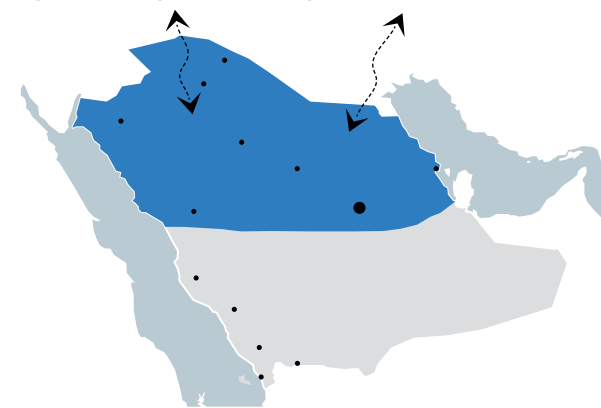


COMMON NAME: **WATER PIPIT**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus spinoletta*
 ARABIC NAME: جشنة مائية (تميرة الماء)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–17 cm / 19–23 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southern Europe to Mongolia and northern China and winters 500–1,000 km south around the Mediterranean through Arabia and the Middle East to southern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Winter visitor.* Saudi Arabia is around the southern limit for the normal wintering range of this water-loving pipit; thus, it tends to be a widespread winter visitor that is found mainly in the northern half of the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Low vegetation near water (especially wastewater lagoons and dairy farm slurry ponds), coastal marshes and other marshy ground, or well-irrigated sports fields. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, as well as spiders, centipedes, millipedes and small snails. It also takes algae, seeds and berries. It forages on the ground, taking invertebrates as it probes and inspects the water's edge and adjacent vegetation. It sometimes jumps up to take a flying insect. It wades into shallow water and may walk over floating vegetation when feeding. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is not gregarious by nature, but because wetland sites are limited, 50 or more may be found at a single wetland with several rising into the air with every few paces of an observer. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It can be quite tame and wags its tail more than most pipits.

As its name suggests, this pipit is never far from surface water, whether it is a wetland, some boggy ground or simply a well-irrigated sports field.



Winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



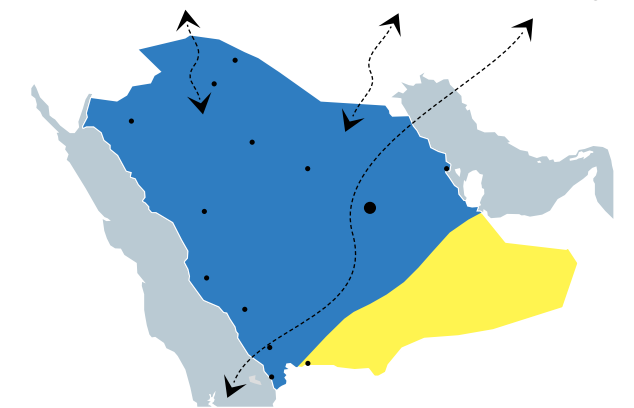
COMMON NAME: **TAWNY PIPIT**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus campestris*
 ARABIC NAME: جشنة صحماء (تميرة الصحراء)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17 cm / 17–32 g



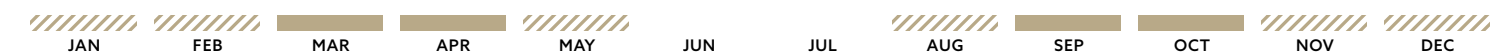
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northern Africa and Western Europe to Mongolia and winters 3,000 km south in the Sahel region of Africa, through Arabia to India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant, common winter visitor, possible breeding migrant.* This desert-loving pipit is a regular passage migrant (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct) through Saudi Arabia, particularly in spring when it can be found almost every day in groups of up to about a dozen in the right habitat. Small groups may also be found in all areas over winter (Nov–Feb) in variable numbers from year to year at any given location. Birds can often be observed singing and forming pairs in spring, which suggests it could occasionally breed in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Arid, sandy regions with vegetation (especially coastal scrub), or stubble fields in agricultural areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and their larvae, such as grasshoppers, lacewings, butterflies and other invertebrates. It will even scavenge dead locusts. It also takes small lizards and some seeds. Food is found as it walks or runs along in sandy habitat, inspecting clumps of vegetation and pecking at plants, or by jumping in the air for flying or high prey items. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in loose groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. **NOTE:** Unlike the similar Long-billed Pipit, this bird does not perch.

Unlike other pipits, this slender bird tends to avoid wet habitats; instead it is usually found running along sandy deserts on its long spindly legs.

It will even scavenge dead locusts. It also takes small lizards and some seeds. Food is found as it walks or runs along in sandy habitat, inspecting clumps of vegetation and pecking at plants, or by jumping in the air for flying or high prey items. Activity: Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: Usually found in loose groups. BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Not recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia, but it is possible. NOTE: Unlike the similar Long-billed Pipit, this bird does not perch.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 0?
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Qaryat al-'Ulya



COMMON NAME: **AFRICAN PIPIT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus cinnamomeus*

ARABIC NAME: جشنة أفريقية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17 cm / 18–31 g



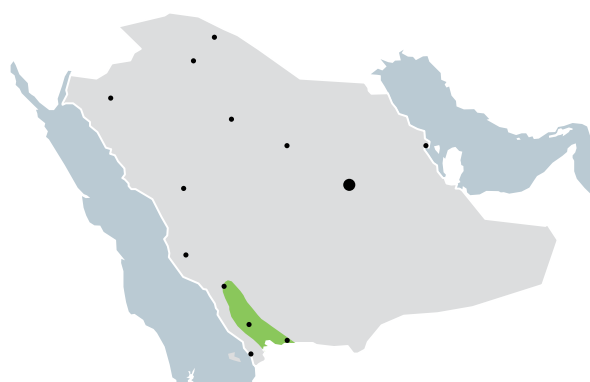
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in the savannah of sub-Saharan Africa, with a small pocket in southwestern Arabia. Fifteen subspecies are recognized, including *A. c. eximius*, which is endemic to Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* This long legged, cinnamon-colored pipit is found in the far southwest highlands, south from al-Bahah.

HABITAT: Above 2,000 m in open cultivation (including sorghum and grasslands), or wide wadis with grassy banks. It occasionally occurs in areas with junipers, acacias and wild olives.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Small invertebrates, especially grasshoppers and beetles, as well as seeds and other plant matter. It forages mainly by walking or running along the ground, occasionally jumping or flying after insects. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs or small loose groups.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and tend the young. The female incubates. *Nest:* A cup made of dry grass and leaves, lined with fine grass, placed in a hollow in the ground or on a bank and well hidden at the base of a low shrub or tussock. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 12 days. *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

This species occurs throughout much of Africa with a small and distinct population in the highlands of far southwestern Saudi Arabia and Yemen.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **LONG-BILLED PIPIT**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anthus similis*

ARABIC NAME: جشنة خطماء (تميرة طويلة المنقار)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–20 cm / 28–35 g

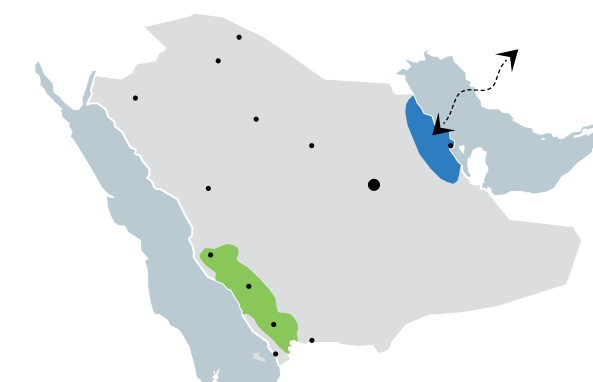


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in patches across sub-Saharan Africa, the Levant, Arabia, India and Myanmar; migratory populations breed in southern Iran to Nepal and winter 500 km south in northern India. At least three of the nineteen recognized subspecies occur in Arabia, including *A. s. arabicus*, which is endemic to Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* This large, long-billed pipit occurs in the southwest highlands, south from Tayif. Small numbers wander to the Eastern Province in winter, probably from Iran. **HABITAT:** Altitudinal migrant: breeds above 1,500 m on mountainsides and rocky highland terraced fields with grassy areas, bushes and trees. It prefers lower altitudes in winter. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, as well as seeds. It forages mainly by walking or running along the ground or by picking prey from vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitarily or in pairs.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A deep cup made of grass and stems, lined with fine grass, hair and plant fibers, placed in a hollow in the ground on a hillside or bank and partially sheltered by a low rock, shrub or tussock. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–15 days. *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

During the breeding season, males sing while fluttering upwards into the sky. They continue singing for one or two minutes and then glide back down to a prominent perch.

FORAGING BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, as well as seeds. It forages mainly by walking or running along the ground or by picking prey from vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitarily or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A deep cup made of grass and stems, lined with fine grass, hair and plant fibers, placed in a hollow in the ground on a hillside or bank and partially sheltered by a low rock, shrub or tussock. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–15 days. *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 20,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL**

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Black-headed Wagtail, Yellow-headed Wagtail

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Motacilla flava*

ARABIC NAME: ذعرة صفراء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17 cm / 11–26 g



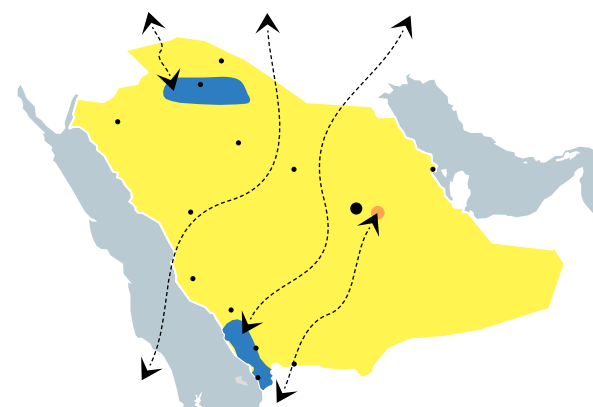
GRAY-HEADED MORPH



BLACK-HEADED MORPH



YELLOW-HEADED MORPH



Breeding migrant, passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from northwestern Africa and Western Europe east to Mongolia and north to the Arctic Circle and winters 6,000 km south in Africa, India and parts of Arabia. Eleven subspecies are recognized (most have occurred in Arabia), including various gray-headed, black-headed, white-headed and yellow-headed varieties, which are sometimes regarded as distinct species.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: Extremely rare breeding migrant, common passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor. This undeniably charming wagtail occurs widely on migration (Mar–Apr, Sep–Nov). Some spend the winter (Nov–Feb), particularly in the southwest and around Sakaka. A black-headed subspecies (*M. f. feldegg*) breeds erratically near al-Kharj.

HABITAT: Breeds in open areas adjacent to water, including irrigated grassland, marshes and wastewater lagoons. On migration it occurs in irrigated areas and croplands, especially recently cut fodder crops. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, seeds and plant material. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary or in small groups over winter, some establish temporary feeding territories. It can form flocks of over 100 on migration, with 1,000 on an irrigation field in the center of the Kingdom in April. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female selects the nest site, builds the nest and performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of plant stems, grass and rootlets, lined with hair or wool, placed on the ground in a hollow and usually hidden in vegetation. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–13 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest at 10–13 days, hide nearby and then fly after 16 days. *Broods:* Often double-brooded.

This charismatic wagtail comes in gray-headed, black-headed, yellow-headed and white-headed forms, all of which can be found in Saudi Arabia.

COMMON NAME: **GREY WAGTAIL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Motacilla cinerea*

ARABIC NAME: ذعرة رميلاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

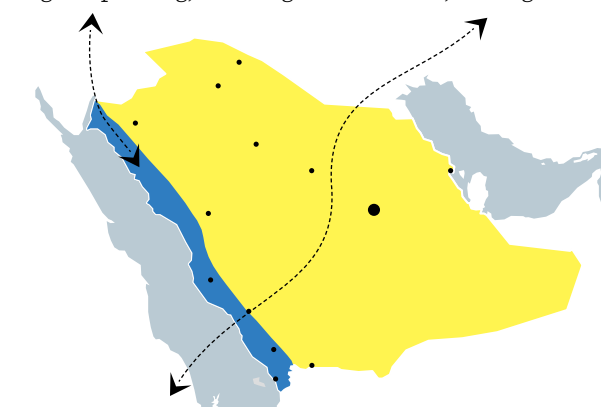
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–20 cm / 14–22 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Western Europe to Iran; migratory populations breed in eastern and northern Europe and much of northern Asia and winter up to 4,000 km south around the Mediterranean, eastern Africa and southern Asia, including the Arabian Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** Common passage migrant, local winter visitor. This long-tailed, slim and graceful wagtail is primarily a passage migrant through the Kingdom (Mar–Apr, Aug–Oct), with more passing in autumn. Some spend the winter (Nov–Feb), mainly in the west, south from Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Moving water with sand banks and rocks, especially highland streams. It also occurs in ornamental fountains and drainage and irrigation ditches. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Riverine insects, including damselflies, mayflies, butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, bugs and their larvae. It also takes small snails and crustaceans. It finds food by walking or running and pecking, climbing over boulders, wading in shallow water to take aquatic prey or sallying over water to flycatch airborne insects.

Foraging on flying insects near water, this nimble wagtail brings a welcome flash of yellow to a highland stream.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitary, but very often two forage together in their winter quarters. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The longest tailed of the wagtails in Arabia, the tail is nervously wagged almost continually. It has a bounding flight or may flit and dart along a stream ahead of the observer.



Passage migrant, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **CITRINE WAGTAIL**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Motacilla citreola*

ARABIC NAME: ذعرة ليمونية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

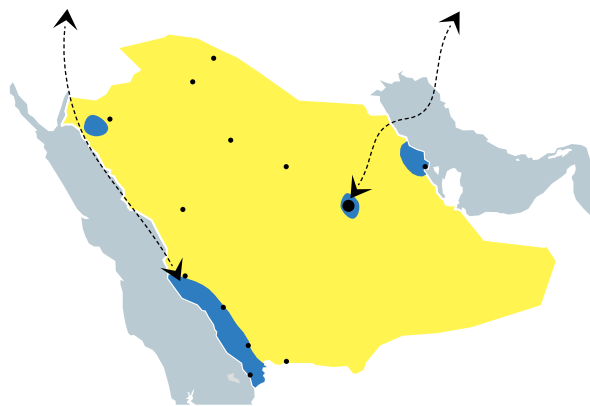
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–20 cm / 18–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Eastern Europe to China and north to the Arctic Circle and winters up to 5,000 km south and southeast in Iran, eastern Arabia and northern India to southern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon winter visitor.* This fidgety, bright yellow-headed wagtail can be found in small numbers over winter, though numbers have increased significantly throughout Arabia in the last few decades perhaps due to a population increase in the western part of its breeding range. **HABITAT:** Freshwater sites, especially marshes, treated wastewater lagoons, streams, lakes and ornamental ponds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates found in and near water, including beetles, flies, dragonflies and their larvae, snails and crustaceans. It feeds by pecking from vegetation, bare ground or the surface of water as it walks or darts forward. It also wades in shallow water or walks on floating vegetation in search of prey and will fly up to grab airborne insects. It seems to favor feeding at wet roadside puddles. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually occurs singly or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** This pretty bird is nervous and flighty and rarely stays still for very long. It has a strikingly yellow head, dark gray neck shawl and two white wing bars.

Why wagtails wag their tails is a mystery: it may be a social signal (though what signal it sends is unknown) or a way to flush insects – or maybe it is something else entirely.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **WHITE WAGTAIL**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Masked Wagtail

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Motacilla alba*

ARABIC NAME: ذعرة بيضاء

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

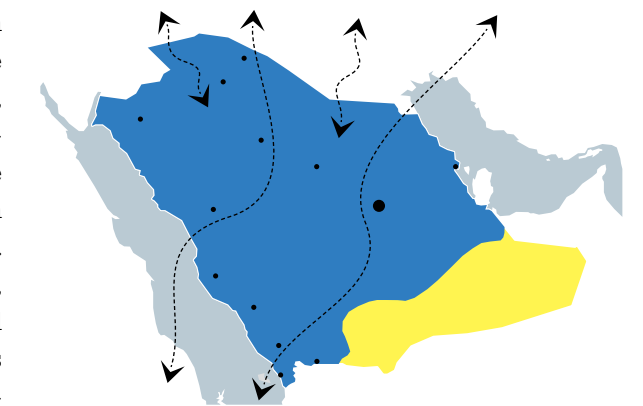
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–18 cm / 18–25 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa and Western Europe to Iran; migratory populations breed across all of Eurasia and winter up to 5,000 km south in northern Africa and through Arabia to Southeast Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Abundant passage migrant, abundant winter visitor.* This charismatic wagtail is abundant and widespread as a passage migrant and especially as a winter visitor (Oct–Apr). In fact it is the commonest wintering bird in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Wetlands and any habitat with greenery, such as town parks, gardens, sports fields and farmland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Terrestrial and aquatic insects and their larvae, as well as spiders, snails, worms and crustaceans. It sometimes comes to bird tables to take crumbs and scraps. It takes prey by pecking from vegetation, the ground, or water surface as it walks, or by running to grab items, or jumping to take airborne prey. It also flycatches, wades and hovers. *Activity:* Diurnal. It migrates both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:**

This plucky little wagtail is the most common winter visitor throughout Saudi Arabia and is really fun to watch as it bounds after insects while fervently wagging its tail.

Usually recorded foraging alone, though large gatherings can occur. There are many records of hundreds together, including over 1,000 feeding on a pivot-irrigated field of recently cut alfalfa stubble in February and 3,000 at a dairy farm in January, both observations near Riyadh. Groups gather before dusk in open areas, such as lawns and roundabouts and depart just after sunset to roost communally. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** The wagging tail and bounding flight typical of the group is well developed in this species and as it walks its head moves back and forward noticeably.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Sabkhat al-Fasl



COMMON NAME: **BRAMBLING**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fringilla montifringilla*

ARABIC NAME: شرشور جبلي (حسون جبلي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 14–16 cm / 17–30 g



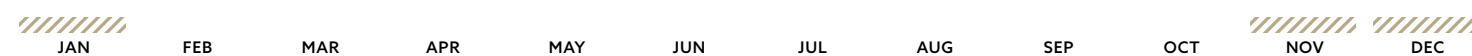
GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Scandinavia and most of Russia and winters 3,000 km south in Europe through the Middle East to Nepal and in eastern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare winter visitor.* This rare finch usually winters to the north of Saudi Arabia, generally south as far as Turkey and northern Iran; therefore, it is a very rare winter visitor (or perhaps even a vagrant) to the Kingdom, possibly arriving more often during particularly cold northern winters. Most records are from the northeast of the Kingdom along the Arabian Gulf. **HABITAT:** Farmland, wastewater lagoons, reedbed fringes and gardens on the outskirts of towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, small nuts and fruits, as well as a few insects and other invertebrates and larvae. It may be entirely vegetarian in winter in Saudi Arabia. It is primarily a ground feeder. Birds are thought to occur in Saudi Arabia during hard winters in the north but those that arrive probably have difficulty in finding enough suitable food; thus there have been no records of birds staying in winter for very long. Birds might be tempted to visit bird tables by the provision of a variety of seeds. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a gregarious species when not breeding but the largest group seen in Saudi Arabia is only six. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Khafji



This very rare finch only arrives in Saudi Arabia if it overshoots its normal wintering grounds around Turkey and Syria during particularly cold northern winters.

COMMON NAME: **COMMON ROSEFINCH**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Carpodacus erythrinus*

ARABIC NAME: حسون ورد شائع

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 19–33 g



FEMALE

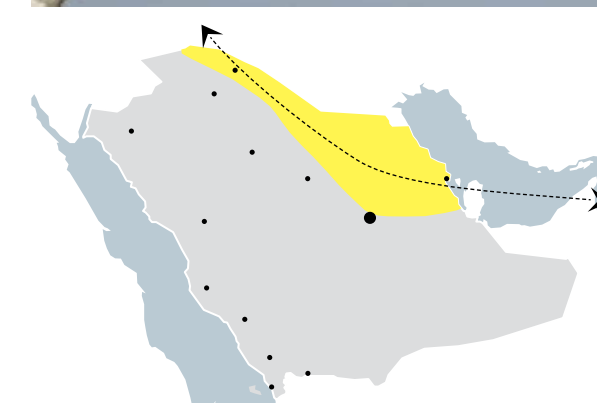


MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds across most of northern Eurasia and winters up to 7,000 km southeast and south mainly from India to southern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce passage migrant.* In the 1980s this scarlet-headed bird's breeding range extended westwards in Europe. As a result, birds from some of the more western breeding populations began to pass through Saudi Arabia en route to their winter quarters in India. It remains a scarce passage migrant (May, Aug–Oct) through eastern Saudi Arabia, west to Riyadh. Most passage migrants through Saudi Arabia are juveniles undertaking their first return migration to the breeding grounds, suggesting that these birds soon learn to avoid migrating over the Arabian Peninsula. **HABITAT:** Bushes and trees, such as in parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly seeds, berries, fruits, buds, leaves and shoots, as well as some invertebrates. It forages in trees and bushes, searching boughs thoroughly from top to bottom for suitable leaves and buds, sometimes hanging upside down while doing so. It also forages on the ground in grass and herbs searching for seeds and invertebrates. It progresses by hops on the ground and flies to the cover of bushes when disturbed. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitarily, or sometimes in groups of five or six. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is rather dumpy in appearance and sometimes inactive with groups sitting motionless in a bush.

Over the last 40 years, this bird's breeding range has expanded into Western Europe; it migrates southeast to winter in southern Saudi Arabia.

remains a scarce passage migrant (May, Aug–Oct) through eastern Saudi Arabia, west to Riyadh. Most passage migrants through Saudi Arabia are juveniles undertaking their first return migration to the breeding grounds, suggesting that these birds soon learn to avoid migrating over the Arabian Peninsula. **HABITAT:** Bushes and trees, such as in parks and gardens. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mostly seeds, berries, fruits, buds, leaves and shoots, as well as some invertebrates. It forages in trees and bushes, searching boughs thoroughly from top to bottom for suitable leaves and buds, sometimes hanging upside down while doing so. It also forages on the ground in grass and herbs searching for seeds and invertebrates. It progresses by hops on the ground and flies to the cover of bushes when disturbed. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded solitarily, or sometimes in groups of five or six. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is rather dumpy in appearance and sometimes inactive with groups sitting motionless in a bush.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Thumamah irrigated areas



COMMON NAME: **SINAI ROSEFINCH**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Carpodacus synoicus*

ARABIC NAME: حسون ورد سينائي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15–16 cm / 17–24 g



FEMALE



MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northern Saudi Arabia north to Jordan and Palestine and west to the Sinai Peninsula. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* This fabulous, rouge pink finch breeds in the extreme northwest and in areas to the south of the Great Nafud Desert. **HABITAT:** Breeds below 2,000 m on dry rocky sandstone or occasionally granite, such as rock outcrops, steep broken gorges, gullies and crags. It also occurs in desert plains outside the breeding season. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes seeds, buds, shoots and leaves taken from the ground or occasionally in bushes. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded singly or in pairs while breeding, or in presumably family groups of around 12–15 after the breeding season. It forms larger flocks of 20–30 birds in winter. Flocks of non-breeding birds occur throughout the year. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or in loose groups. *Parental roles:* The role of adults in nest building is unknown. The female incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of coarse dry stalks, stems and twigs, lined with plant fibers, hair and fur, placed more than 5 m above ground in a shallow hole or cleft in a rock face, or very occasionally on the ground. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14–16 days. *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.

Saudi Arabia contains more than half of the world's population of this exceptionally pretty bird.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk

COMMON NAME: **TRUMPETER FINCH**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Bucanetes githagineus*

ARABIC NAME: حسون كزبري (زهير وردى)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 16–25 g



FEMALE ON THE NEST



MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs throughout the African desert belt, through Arabia to Uzbekistan and Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This lovely finch, delicately tinged with pink through the plumage, breeds throughout much of Saudi Arabia, particularly on the limestone Tuwaiq Escarpment. It is absent from the highlands of the west and southwest, coastal Tihamah and the Rub' al-Khali. **HABITAT:** Below 1,500 m in dry, mainly rocky areas with scattered scrub, grasses and herbs. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, shoots and buds of grasses and herbs, as well as some insects and their larvae. It forages by creeping or running along the ground or digging in sand. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small groups during the breeding season, or in groups of up to 100 or more in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes with several nests in close proximity. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of twigs, grass, plant stems and rootlets, lined with hair, wool and grass and placed in a crevice or cavity in a rock face, wall, terrace, or old building, or on the ground under a rock or shrub. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

The call of this cute finch can sound like a child playing a plastic trumpet. Desert-adapted, it obtains all of the nutrients and water it needs from the seeds it consumes.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tuwaiq Escarpment



COMMON NAME: **DESERT FINCH**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

ARABIC NAME: حسون صحراوي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

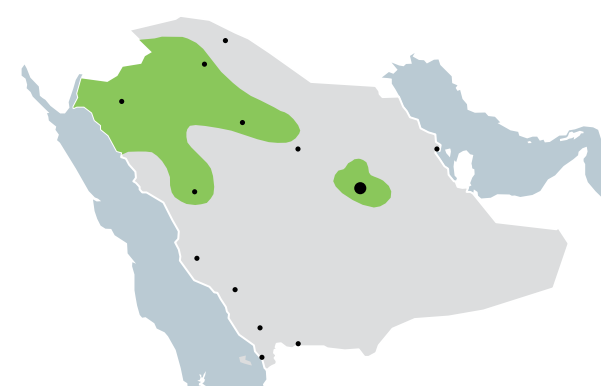
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 17–28 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Arabia and Turkey to China; migratory populations breed in southern Kazakhstan and winter 1,500 km south in Afghanistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This comely finch was known only as a scarce visitor to the northwest of Saudi Arabia until 1975. Since then the range has expanded dramatically due to increased agriculture. Several areas have been colonized, including Riyadh, Hayil, al-Jawf and Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Cultivated areas with trees and bushes, especially orchards, as well as gardens and plantations. It also occurs in the weedy edges of pivot-irrigated fields and dry scrub adjacent to farms. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds, buds, shoots and some insects taken from the ground or under vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found in pairs or small groups



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 65,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Hayil



Despite its name, this lovely pink-winged finch actually prefers cultivated areas. Its range has expanded dramatically over the last 40 years with the spread of agriculture.

while breeding, or in groups of up to 100 over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs with long-term pair bonds. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A loose, deep cup made of twigs and grass, lined with fine grass, hair, wool and sometimes cotton, string, feathers or paper, placed 1–5 m above ground in an open and conspicuous location in a bush or tree, especially acacia and tamarisk. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–15 days. *Nestling period:* 13–14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN GROSBEAK**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhynchostruthus percivali*

ARABIC NAME: أشدق عربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 30–33 g

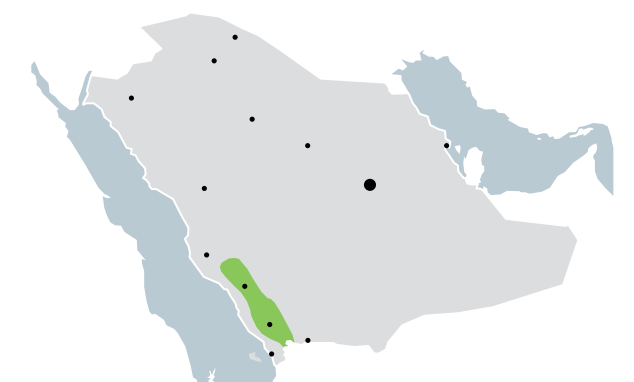


FEMALE (LEFT) AND MALE

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia, western Yemen and the Dhofar region of western Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this tubby, yellow-winged finch is restricted to the southwest highlands, south from Makkah. **HABITAT:** Usually above 1,000 m on dry hillsides and high plateaus with mixed vegetation of succulents, bushes and trees, often near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds, buds and fruit taken in trees, bushes and

Only 3,000 pairs of this finch exist in the world and all are confined to Yemen, Oman and southwestern Saudi Arabia.

on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal, it becomes most active before dusk. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually forages alone, in pairs or in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest and feed fledged young. The role of adults in incubation and feeding nestlings is unknown. *Nest:* A coarsely woven, shallow cup made of grass and insect cocoons or pupae cases, lined with grass and fibers and placed 4–8 m above ground in a tree (two records from Oman only). *Clutch:* Unknown. *Incubation:* Unknown (12–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13–16 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably single-brooded. **NOTE:** This is the most difficult to see of the all the Arabian endemics. It is often located first by its odd contact call or its rambling, discordant song.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Bani Sa'd



COMMON NAME: **ARABIAN SERIN**

OTHER COMMON NAME: Olive-rumped Serin

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Crithagra rothschildi*

ARABIC NAME: نعار عربي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

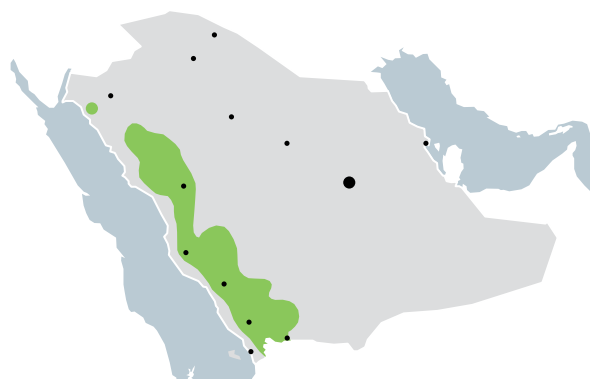
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / 14 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this olive-rumped serin is restricted to the Hijaz and 'Asir mountains, south from around Khaybar. **HABITAT:** Mainly between 1,500–2,500 m (sometimes higher) in open areas with fairly dense trees and bushes, especially junipers and acacias. It also occurs on cultivated hill terraces with trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, along with buds of shrubs and occasionally some insects and larvae taken on the ground or amongst vegetation. It is an active and acrobatic bird, often hanging upside-down to feed. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In pairs or small groups, usually less than 5–6 birds with flocks of 18–20 birds exceptional. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. The female probably performs most or all of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A compact cup made of thorny twigs, grass, bark strips, rootlets and cobwebs, lined with plant down, grass, hair and occasionally string, placed 2–4 m above ground in the outer branches or against the trunk of a juniper or acacia tree. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (13–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (15–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded. **NOTE:** Its habit of routinely slowly flicking its tail is quite a distinctive trait.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 260,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Saiysad National Park (Tayif)

COMMON NAME: **YEMEN SERIN**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Crithagra menachensis*

ARABIC NAME: نعار يمني

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

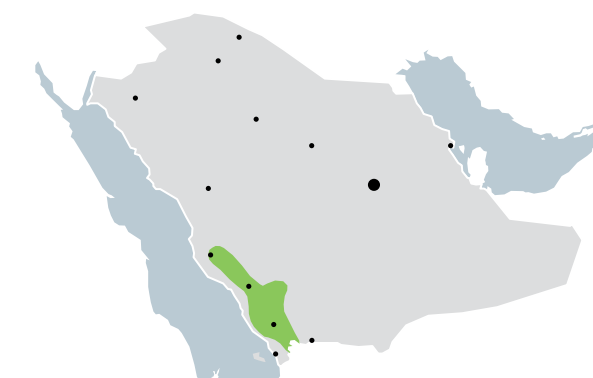
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / Unknown



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs mainly in Saudi Arabia and western Yemen with a small population in the Dhofar region of Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this small, gray-brown streaked finch is restricted to the southwest highlands, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Above 2,000 m on open stony hillsides, rock outcrops, cultivated fields and flat waste ground with scrub and in juniper forests in the 'Asir. Oddly, it occurs in villages and towns in Yemen

The Yemen Serin is so drab that it makes the Arabian Serin appear as colorful as a peacock; nonetheless, little brown birds are often the most fascinating birds of all.

but apparently not in Saudi Arabia. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly small seeds of grasses, millet, shrubs and other plants taken from rocks, on the ground or sometimes amongst vegetation. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** In pairs or small flocks of 10–30 birds, or sometimes over 50 birds. It often forages alongside Yemen Linnetts. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Poorly known. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An untidy cup made of twigs, roots and occasionally string, lined with fine grass, plant down, hair and feathers, placed 2–25 m above ground in a crevice in a cliff (or building, as recorded in Yemen); occasionally in the disused nest of a Pale Rock Martin. *Clutch:* 3 eggs (n=1). *Incubation:* Unknown (13–14 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (15–18 days in similar species). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 25,000

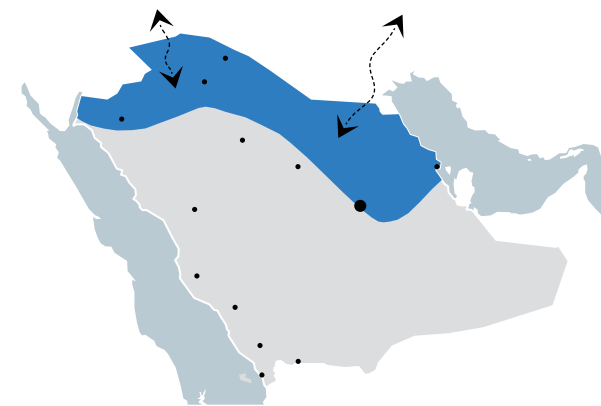
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tanumah



COMMON NAME: **COMMON LINNET**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Linaria cannabina*
 ARABIC NAME: حسون تفاحي
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–14 cm / 15–26 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Western Europe and northwestern Africa through the eastern Mediterranean to Kyrgyzstan; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia to Mongolia and winter 2,000 km south in northern Africa and the Sinai Peninsula to Pakistan. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Scarce winter visitor*. This crimson-breasted finch normally winters well to the north of Saudi Arabia, in the Sinai Peninsula, Turkey and Iran. However, birds occasionally spend the winter further south in northern Saudi Arabia, mainly in Tabuk Province but also in the Eastern Province. **HABITAT:** Weedy, pivot-irrigated field edges, coastal vegetation and low scrubby areas near wetlands. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, particularly thistle heads and other flowers in the daisy family (Asteraceae), along with seeds from a huge range of generally small, low, annual plants. It also takes a few insects and spiders. It forages mainly on the ground



Winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



This colorful finch usually winters to the north of Saudi Arabia, but occasionally groups of up to 15 can be found in Tabuk or the Eastern Province.

in winter, but also sits on plants to feed although it does not hang upside-down like many seedeaters. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is gregarious in winter with flocks of up to 15 roaming over suitable feeding areas. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It often sits on fences and wires but is nervous and may be difficult to approach. It flies off readily with a wavering flight initially and undulations over any distance.

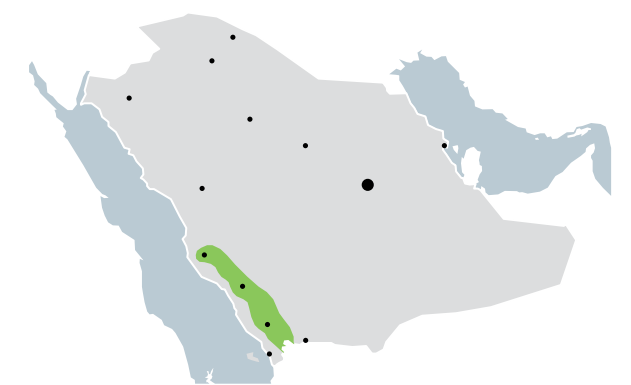
COMMON NAME: **YEMEN LINNET**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Linaria yemenensis*
 ARABIC NAME: حسون تفاحي يمني
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / 13–15 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: endemic to Arabia. It occurs only in southwestern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this melodious finch is restricted to the southwest highlands, south from Tayif. **HABITAT:** Mainly above 1,800 m in areas with trees and bushes, especially mature junipers, or close to cultivated or abandoned fields and terraces. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds of bushes and low plants, including grasses, herbs and shrubs. It forages almost always on the ground, though it perches in trees and bushes. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually

The male sings a rapid melodious twittering with fluty notes, buzzes and high-pitched trills. It is musical and variable and rich and lively and fantastic!

in pairs or small groups in the breeding season, or in flocks of up to 200 birds when not breeding. It often forms mixed flocks with Yemen Serin. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, sometimes with several nests in loose association. *Parental roles:* The female performs most or all of the nest building and incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A compact cup made of twigs, grass, rootlets, lichens and cobwebs, thickly lined with plant down, hair and grass, sometimes attached to, and partially screened by, hanging lichen and placed 2–3 m above ground (sometimes up to 5 m) mainly in the outer branches (sometimes next to the trunk) in a juniper tree. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* Unknown (12 days in similar species). *Nestling period:* Unknown (13 days in similar species). *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 100,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Rayda Reserve



COMMON NAME: **EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Carduelis carduelis*

ARABIC NAME: حسون مذهب أوروبي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–14 cm / 9.5–24 g

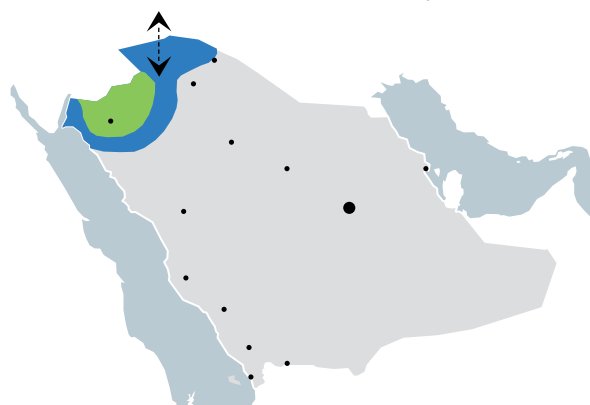


GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Europe and northern Africa to northern Saudi Arabia and Iran; migratory populations breed from Eastern Europe to central Russia and winter up to 4,000 km south from Kazakhstan south to northern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident, rare winter visitor.* This vibrantly-colored finch spends the winter (Nov–Mar) in northwestern Saudi Arabia, mainly in Tabuk Province. In addition, the introduction of large irrigated fruit orchards in recent decades has enabled year-round breeding populations to become established in the northwest. **HABITAT:** Orchards, gardens, waste ground and the weedy edges of pivot-irrigated fields. It nests in trees and bushes, especially fruit trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, buds, flowers and fruit, as well some insects taken directly from the plant or occasionally on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs while breeding or in small flocks of up to 30 birds over winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:**

Mating system: Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest (with the male in attendance and perhaps providing some material) and incubates. Both adults feed the young. *Nest:* A neat cup made of rootlets, grass, wool and plant down, lined with wool, plant down and hair, placed 2–15 m above ground in the outermost branches of a tree or bush. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–13 days.

Nestling period: 14–15 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded. **CONSERVATION:** This bird is listed as endangered regionally due to a suspected decline of 50–70% since 2000 caused largely by trapping for sale in markets.

The vividness of the red mask indicates the health of the bird – when a bird is sick some of the red pigment is redirected to fight the infection, turning the mask dull orange.



Breeding resident, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 2,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **EURASIAN SISKIN**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spinus spinus*

ARABIC NAME: حسون شوكي

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

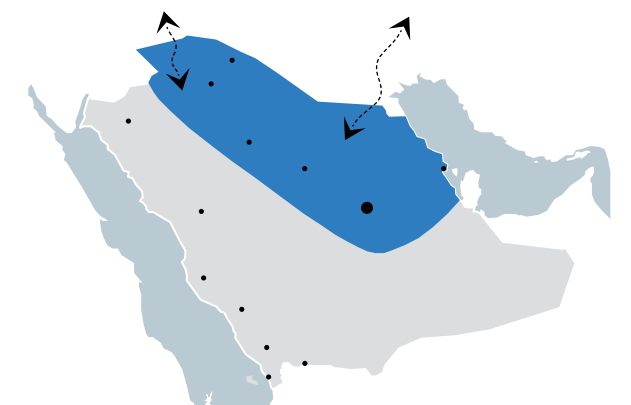
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 11–12 cm / 10–19 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Britain and eastern Europe; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia, western Russia and eastern Russia and winter 2,000 km south in southern Europe to Iraq and in eastern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare winter visitor.* This small, greenish-yellow finch normally winters far to the north of Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is a rare and sporadic winter visitor to the north and Arabian Gulf coastal fringe, possibly only arriving during particularly harsh northern winters. Most Saudi Arabian records are from November, perhaps indicating that wintering birds move on to other locations. **HABITAT:** Orchards and other areas with a range of trees and scrubs, such as farms and parks. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds, buds and shoots of trees, flowering plants and herbs. It also takes a few insects. It feeds in trees where it is very agile and acrobatic, but in winter it is commonly found on the ground seeking loose seeds or clinging onto thistles or daisies to get at the seeds.

Eurasian Siskins form non-family groups that remain together for years despite moving hundreds of kilometers. Scientific literature refers to these groups as “friends”.

In many parts of its range it comes to bird tables in winter and might be so tempted in Saudi Arabia. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It is a gregarious species when not breeding, but usually only seen in small groups of up to six, though flocks of 20 and 50 have been recorded near Riyadh and north of Hayil, respectively. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia.



Winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **BLACK-HEADED BUNTING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza melanocephala*

ARABIC NAME: درسة رأساً

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

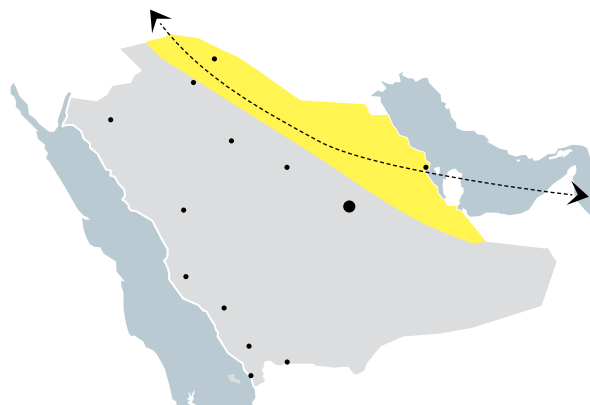
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–18 cm / 16–18 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from Italy to Pakistan and winters 1,500–6,000 km southeast in western India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant*. Small numbers of this beautiful black and yellow bunting pass through Saudi Arabia (Apr, Aug–Sep) in most years. Birds nesting in the western third of the breeding range pass through the Kingdom's northeast en route to the winter quarters in western India. **HABITAT:** Can occur anywhere on migration, especially areas with low ground vegetation, including scrub deserts, irrigated farms and gardens. It seems to avoid wetland habitat, such as reedbeds. It roosts in scrub and thickets. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Invertebrates, especially insects and their larvae, as well

This bunting is one of the few migrants from Europe that passes through Saudi Arabia in a south-easterly direction to India rather than southwest to Africa.

as many seeds, including grass, wheat and *Salvadora* berries, which can be readily found in Saudi Arabia. It forages on the ground, progressing by hops and also in bushes or low in trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It usually forms flocks outside of the breeding season often mixing with other species, but in Saudi Arabia it is usually only recorded in ones and twos or rarely in small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is a large bunting with relatively long legs and a tendency to sit prominently.



Passage migrant

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A

BEST PLACE TO SEE: King Salman Protected Area



COMMON NAME: **CORN BUNTING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza calandra*

ARABIC NAME: درسة قمحية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

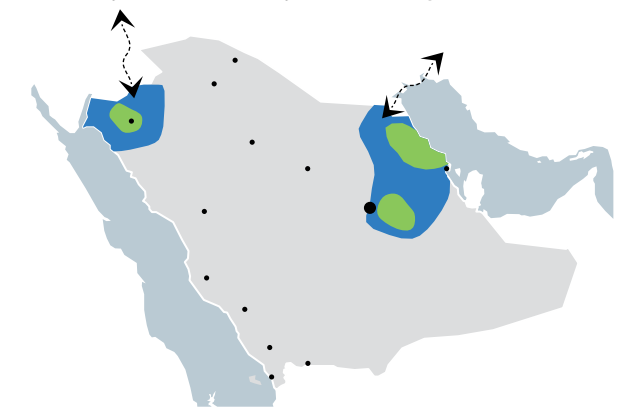
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–19 cm / 32–67 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa and Western Europe to western China, with scattered populations in Arabia; migratory populations breed in central Europe to the Ukraine and migrate 2,000 km south to northern Africa, Iraq and eastern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor*. Small numbers of this relatively large and heavily streaked bunting spend the winter (Nov–Mar) along the Arabian Gulf coastal fringe. In addition, the spread of agriculture has enabled resident populations to emerge in crop fields. Breeding was first recorded in 1993 in the Eastern Province and more recently in central areas and near Tabuk. **HABITAT:** Open irrigated fields, including wheat, maize and hay. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, as well as invertebrates (especially in the breeding season), including insects, spiders, slugs, snails and worms. It usually forages on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found solitarily, or in small groups of up to 15 or exceptionally 30 or more birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:*

This little brown bird leads the most remarkable life. One male will nest with up to 18 females in its territory... 18!

Usually polygynous with one territorial male nesting with up to 18 females, or occasionally monogamous. *Parental roles:* The female builds the nest, incubates and tends the young. The male defends the territory and helps occasionally. *Nest:* A loose cup made of plant stems and grass, lined with fine grass, rootlets and hair, usually placed on or near the ground and concealed amongst thick vegetation. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 9–12 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident, winter visitor

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 1,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Tabuk



COMMON NAME: **CINEREOUS BUNTING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza cineracea*

ARABIC NAME: درسة ذقناء غربية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

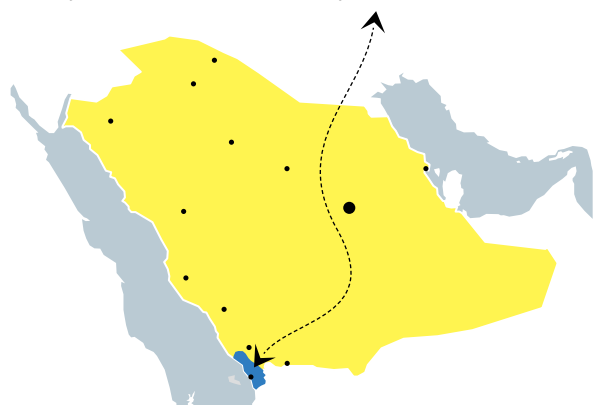
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 17–18 cm / 21–30 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in a very narrow strip from the Greek islands to western Iran and winters 2,000 km south on either side of the southern Red Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This bunting is a rare winter visitor to the southwest highlands (Nov–Feb) and migrates across the Kingdom (Mar–May, Aug–Sep). There are scattered records from the Eastern province, near Riyadh and Tayif of birds travelling to or from their northern breeding grounds. **HABITAT:** Over winter it is found between 1,000–2,500 m in open, scrub-covered, rocky areas, or mosaics of meadows, hillsides, limited agriculture and some trees. On migration it can occur in any open area. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Poorly known, includes mainly seeds in winter and invertebrates when breeding. It forages on the ground and perches in trees. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It may be found in winter in small groups of up to 7–8 and in smaller groups on migration. It often associates with other buntings, finches or sparrows when feeding and migrating. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** It is a fairly large and long-bodied bunting with a relatively long bill, but apart from its yellow head it is rather featureless. Even its song is a somewhat unremarkable short phrase of 4–6 notes.

The entire global population of this rare bunting spends the winter around the southern Red Sea.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jabal Fayfa



COMMON NAME: **ORTOLAN BUNTING**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza hortulana*

ARABIC NAME: درسة شعيرية

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened

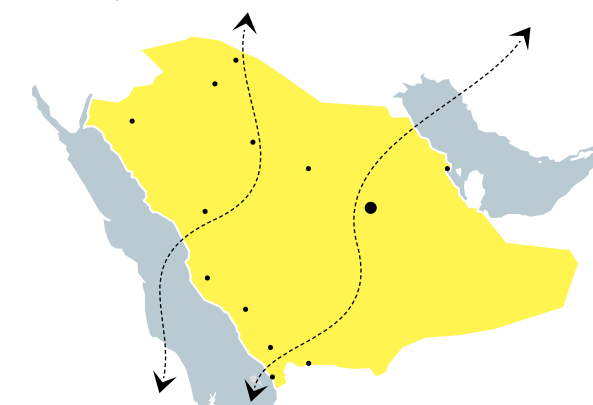
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16–17 cm / 17–28 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Western Europe and Scandinavia to Mongolia and winters 3,000–7,000 km south and southwest in the Sahel region of Africa and east to Somalia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common passage migrant.* This gregarious bunting is a common and widespread passage migrant throughout Saudi Arabia (Mar–Apr, Sep–Oct), with April being the busiest month. **HABITAT:** Prefers dry, open areas of grasses and weeds with scrub, such as on the edges of irrigated fields and overgrown gardens, but it can appear anywhere, including Rub' al-Khali scrub. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds outside the breeding season and invertebrates when breeding. It forages quietly usually on the ground, moving in a rather creeping hop, or sometimes in trees and bushes. It is often associated with other buntings. *Activity:* Diurnal. It can migrate both day and night. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually encountered in groups of 4–10, but 100 or more have occasionally been reported within a small area. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** When disturbed it makes a short “tsip” call and often flies to nearby bushes or comes to ground again a short distance away. It has an undulating flight. It changes plumage during the year. Birds in spring breeding plumage display an unmarked rufous belly, gray-olive head and defined yellow moustache and throat, whereas birds in autumn have a buff-colored belly and throat with strong black streaking.

Ortolan Buntings sing in distinct local dialects. That is, the song is highly consistent within any particular region, with sharp boundaries between neighboring regions.



Passage migrant
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah hinterland

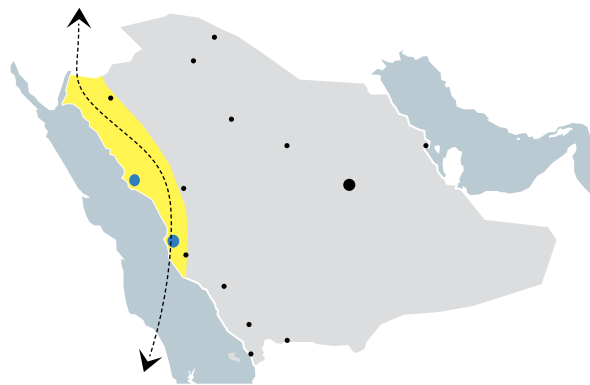


COMMON NAME: **CRETZSCHMAR'S BUNTING**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza caesia*
 ARABIC NAME: درسة زرقاء
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 16 cm / 19–24 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds around the eastern Mediterranean from Greece to northern Jordan and winters 2,000 km south in Sudan and Eritrea. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.* This bird is locally and seasonally common on Saudi Arabia's northern Red Sea coastal plain on migration (Mar–Apr, Aug–Sep). It is unclear whether records from November to February are of individual birds staying over winter or stragglers passing through. Given that the breeding range and wintering quarters lie generally to the east of Saudi Arabia, it is not surprising that almost all records of this good-looking bunting occur along the northwestern edge of the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Scrub vegetation, gardens and date groves. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Seeds of grasses and other low ground plants. It feeds on the ground among herbs and grasses, which can be in deep shade, for example in a date grove, or in open damp ground near a wastewater lagoon. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually seen in small groups of 5–6 in Saudi Arabia, though flocks of hundreds have been reported in other regions. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Does not breed in Saudi Arabia. **NOTE:** Unlike most buntings, this species is quite approachable and when disturbed it flies into nearby trees rather than far off as most buntings tend to do.

This rare bunting has a narrow range. It breeds only around the eastern Mediterranean and winters in Sudan and Eritrea; thus, it is recorded mainly in the northwest.



Passage migrant, winter visitor
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: N/A
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Yanbu'



COMMON NAME: **STRIOLATED BUNTING**
 OTHER COMMON NAME: House Bunting
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza striolata*
 ARABIC NAME: درسة رفيعة تخطيط
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 12–13 cm / 12–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in eastern Africa (Chad to Kenya and Somalia) through Arabia to northwestern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* This attractive bunting, the smallest in Saudi Arabia, is found mainly in the western half of the Kingdom, particularly on the drier eastern escarpments and where the Tihamah meets the foothills, but it is absent from the well-vegetated western escarpment. **HABITAT:** Below 2,500 m on dry rocky hillsides or wadis away from human settlements and near water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds of grasses and herbs, as well as occasionally flowers, berries and insects. It forages mainly on the ground or takes seeds from seed heads. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually in pairs during the breeding season, or in small groups when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory while the female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A neat cup made of twigs, roots and grass stems, lined with plant fibers, hair and wool, placed in a crevice in a cliff (perhaps also in buildings, walls, ruins and even occupied houses, as recorded in Morocco). *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nesting period:* 14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This bird is also known as the House Bunting because it often nests in houses in northern Africa; curiously in Arabia it tends to avoid houses and nests on cliffs instead.

season, or in small groups when not breeding. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory while the female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A neat cup made of twigs, roots and grass stems, lined with plant fibers, hair and wool, placed in a crevice in a cliff (perhaps also in buildings, walls, ruins and even occupied houses, as recorded in Morocco). *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nesting period:* 14 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 80,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: al-Bahah



COMMON NAME: **CINNAMON-BREADED BUNTING**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Emberiza tahapisi*

ARABIC NAME: درسة قرفية صدر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 13–15 cm / 12–21 g

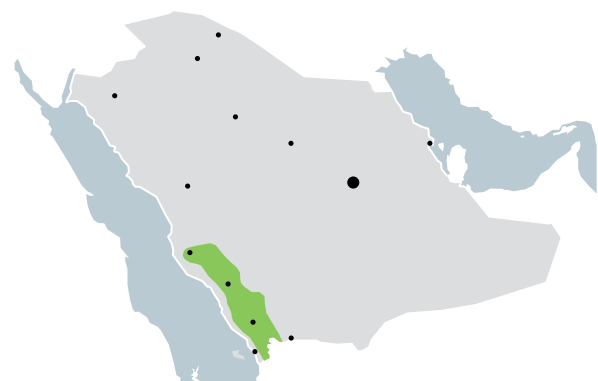


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Arabia. Four subspecies are recognized, including *F. t. arabica*, which is endemic to Arabia occurring only in southwestern Saudi Arabia, western Yemen and western Oman (Dhofar). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very common breeding resident*. In Saudi Arabia, this striking bunting occurs in the foothills and mountains south from Tayif, particularly on the western escarpment. **HABITAT:** Altitudinal migrant: it breeds above 500 m on rocky hillsides with open, bare ground with scattered trees, bushes and grassy tussocks. At higher altitudes it occurs in cultivated fields and rough scrub adjacent to rocky areas and occasionally in junipers. Over winter, its range may descend in elevation to also occur in the dry acacia scrub in the Tihamah. **FORAGING**

BEHAVIOR: *Diet:* Mainly grass seeds, as well as leaves, nectar and insects taken mainly on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded alone or in pairs or small family groups.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory while the female builds the nest (with the male in attendance) and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A shallow cup made of twigs and grass stems, lined with fine grass, plant fibers and sometimes hair, placed on the ground and partially sheltered by a rock or at the base of a low bush or tussock. *Clutch:* 2–3 eggs. *Incubation:* 12–14 days. *Nestling period:* 13–16 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

Playback experiments reveal that buntings can distinguish between neighbors and strangers after hearing a single song; they act less aggressively toward neighbors.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 350,000

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi thee Ghazal (Hijaz)



ABYSSINIAN WHITE-EYE

Introduced Exotic Species

Introduced exotic species are birds that naturally occur outside of Saudi Arabia but have been deliberately or accidentally introduced into the Kingdom. Such exotic species can be a significant conservation concern if they negatively impact native flora and fauna. For instance, some exotic species may outcompete native birds for food or nest sites, or may introduce novel diseases that local birds cannot tolerate.

Fortunately, very few exotic bird species have established permanent breeding populations in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, most of Saudi Arabia's exotic species have 500 or fewer breeding pairs and indeed six contain less than 50 annual breeding pairs in the Kingdom, which may not be sufficient to maintain a sustainable breeding population in the long term. Almost all of Saudi Arabia's exotic species are confined to heavily modified habitat, particularly in the Eastern Province. Most exotic species are simply not able to penetrate intact ecosystems (because native species generally fill most available ecological niches) and usually lack the specific adaptations required to overcome the aridity and food scarcity of desert ecosystems.

The status of two species not included in this section needs clarification: the Mallard occurs naturally in the kingdom as a non-breeding species but has been augmented with feral breeding populations, while the White-eared Bulbul may have been native to eastern Saudi Arabia in small numbers though certainly at least some populations have been introduced. Because these species (probably) have naturally occurring populations in Saudi Arabia they are included in the native species accounts.

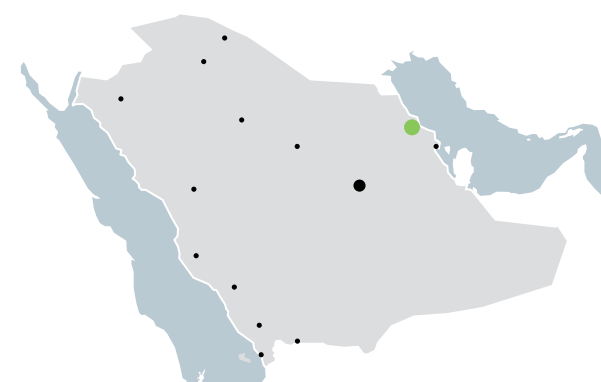
ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET. THIS BEAUTIFUL BIRD IS ONE OF ONLY 11 INTRODUCED EXOTIC SPECIES IN SAUDI ARABIA. IT NATURALLY OCCURS IN AFRICA AND INDIA BUT WAS INTRODUCED TO THE KINGDOM IN THE 1950S.



COMMON NAME: GREY FRANCOLIN
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Francolinus pondicerianus*
ARABIC NAME: دراج أرم
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 30–35 cm / 200–340 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from southern Iran through India to northern Sri Lanka and introduced to many places worldwide, including Arabia. A large population exists in Oman and UAE, but it is unclear if it is native or introduced during the 19th century. A different subspecies was introduced in recent decades and has spread into Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident.* This chestnut-colored bird first entered the Kingdom in 1991 and was recorded from Dhahran to Jubail. However, it failed to establish a self-sustaining population and is now almost extinct in the Kingdom. One bird was recorded near Berri in March 2019, which is the first confirmed record for 15 years. **HABITAT:** Near sea level in areas with trees, bushes and shrubs, including plantations, large parks, cultivated areas, or dry open woodland. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds of weeds and cereals, as well as insects and lizards taken from the ground. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Pairs or small groups. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, possibly with long-term pair bonds. *Parental roles:* The female incubates. Both adults tend the young. Family groups remain together for several months. *Nest:* A deep scrape on the ground, lined with twigs, grass, roots and leaves, usually in cover though occasionally in the open at the base of a tree. *Clutch:* 6–7 eggs. *Incubation:* 18–22 days. *Chicks:* Young leave the nest shortly after hatching and hide nearby, but age at first flight is unknown (similar species fly weakly at 10–20 days and are fully grown around 35 days). *Broods:* Possibly double-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Berri



COMMON NAME: ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Psittacula eupatria*
ARABIC NAME: درة إسكندرية (ربغاء نبيلة)
GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened
GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 50–62 cm / 198–258 g



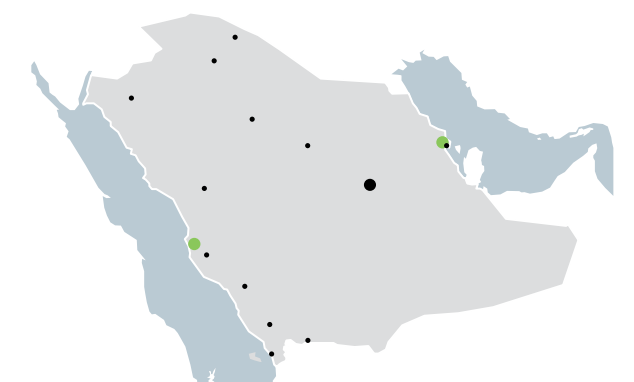
GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from eastern Afghanistan to Vietnam. This popular cage bird has been introduced to many regions, including the Arabian Peninsula, where small feral breeding populations have become established, mainly in Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia, with smaller numbers breeding in all the other states. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this large, colorful and loud parrot is found in modified habitats around Jiddah and Dhahran with the first records in

Native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, this popular cage bird first established small feral breeding populations in Saudi Arabia in 1983 in Dammam.

the Kingdom from 1983. **HABITAT:** Lowland areas with good vegetation cover and trees, such as suburban parks and gardens, golf courses and agricultural areas. It possibly also occurs in mangroves (as recorded in UAE). **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly fruits, seeds, nectar, petals and young leaves. **Activity:** Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in small flocks of 4–5 birds and occasionally up to 10–20 birds.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or with several others in close proximity. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined tree cavity, or occasionally a crevice in a building. Pairs may sometimes enlarge an existing tree hole. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 19–21 days. *Nestling period:* 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitarily or with several others in close proximity. *Parental roles:* Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined tree cavity, or occasionally a crevice in a building. Pairs may sometimes enlarge an existing tree hole. *Clutch:* 2–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 19–21 days. *Nestling period:* 7 weeks. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 40
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah



COMMON NAME: **ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Psittacula krameri*

ARABIC NAME: درة مطوقة (بغضاء هندية مطوقة)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 37–43 cm / 95–143 g

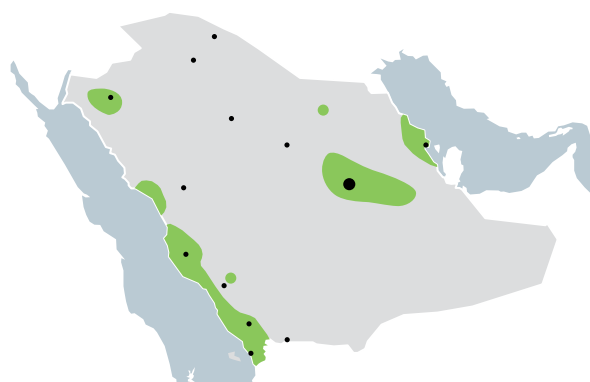


GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally in Africa (from Senegal to Eritrea) and Asia (from Afghanistan to Myanmar). It is a popular cage bird that has been introduced to many regions leading to feral populations almost worldwide, including Arabia. It occurs widely throughout the Arabian Peninsula, especially in coastal regions of the Arabian Gulf.

SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS: *Uncommon breeding resident.* This beautiful, fast and raucous parakeet was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in Dhahran in 1958. It now occurs in cities and towns along the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea and in Tabuk and around Riyadh. **HABITAT:** Below 2,000 m in urban areas, especially parks and gardens with mature trees, cultivated farmland, date groves or lightly wooded areas. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Fruits, seeds, flower petals and nectar.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it regularly occurs in flocks of up to 20 and occasionally flocks or roosts containing several hundred birds are reported. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* The female incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An unlined hole or crevice, located up to 12 m above ground in a tree, rock, building or structure, including lampposts and telecommunication towers. *Clutch:* 3–4 eggs. *Incubation:* 20–24 days. *Nestling period:* 40–50 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

Native to Africa and the Indian subcontinent, this colorful, raucous and dynamic parakeet was first recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia in 1958 in Dhahran.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **HOUSE CROW**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Corvus splendens*

ARABIC NAME: غراب دوري

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

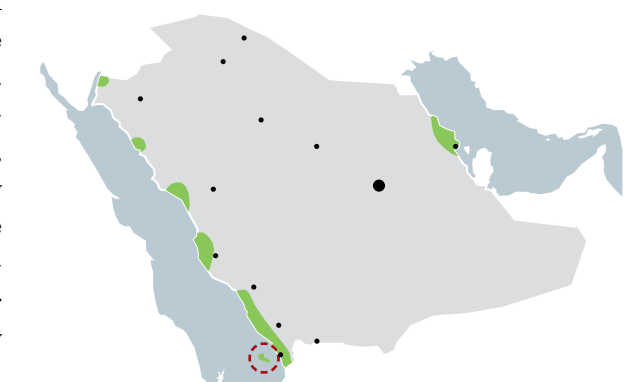
REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 40–43 cm / 245–371 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: native from Pakistan to Myanmar. It has spread around much of the Indian Ocean rim (by self-colonization, hitchhiking on ships and deliberate introductions), including Arabia, eastern and southern Africa and parts of southern Asia. It occurs in all states in the Arabian Peninsula, mainly in coastal areas and is increasing. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Uncommon breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this sleek, long-legged, black and gray crow is found mainly in coastal towns and cities on the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf having first been recorded in 1980 near Dhahran. **HABITAT:** Parks, gardens and tree-lined roadsides with large, mature trees, especially palm trees. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Human food scraps, invertebrates, small vertebrates, carrion, crops, virtually anything. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** It often scavenges socially and can form large communal roosts. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs nesting solitary or loosely clustered with several others. *Parental roles:* Both adults build and defend the nest and tend the young. The female performs most of the incubation. *Nest:* A bulky cup made of sticks, sometimes with wire, electrical cable or debris, lined with grass, hair and occasionally string, cloth or bark, usually placed more than 5 m above ground in a tall tree (especially palm) or occasionally on a building or other artificial structure. *Clutch:* 3–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 16–17 days. *Nestling period:* 27–28 days. *Broods:* Usually single-brooded.

Native to the Indian Subcontinent, this small crow has spread around the Indian Ocean. It was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1980 near Dhahran.



Breeding resident
ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10,000
BEST PLACE TO SEE: Jiddah

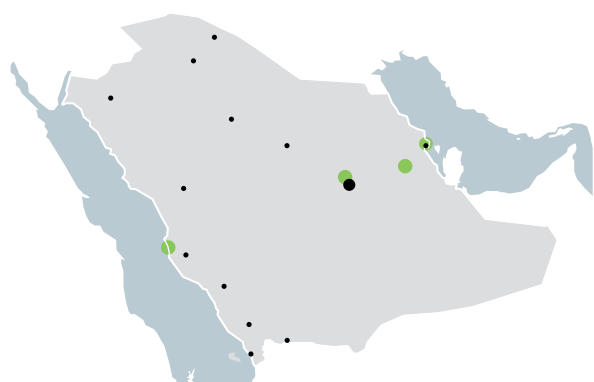


COMMON NAME: **RED-VENTED BULBUL**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pycnonotus cafer*
 ARABIC NAME: بلبل أحمر العجز (بلبل أكسع)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 19–20 cm / 28–40 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Pakistan to northern Thailand. It has been introduced to various parts of the world, especially Polynesia and Arabia. It now breeds in all states on the Arabian Peninsula except Yemen. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this feisty bulbul was first reported from Riyadh in 1993 and has since spread to other areas, including Jiddah and the Eastern Province. Given its track record of successfully colonizing urban areas, it is expected to become common and widespread in the Eastern Province in the future. It sometimes hybridizes with the White-eared Bulbul. **HABITAT:** Urban and suburban areas, especially parks, gardens, roadside trees and bushes. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Opportunistic, including fruit, nectar, buds, invertebrates and occasionally small vertebrates, such as small geckos. It takes most prey in trees. It also takes human food scraps. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually found alone or in pairs. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A cup made of fine twigs, grass, dead leaves, palm fibers and rootlets, bound with cobwebs, lined with fine grass, rootlets and hair and placed 2–4 m above ground (sometimes up to 8 m) in a tree or bush, or occasionally on a building. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 14 days. *Nestling period:* 12–16 days. *Broods:* Double- or triple-brooded.

Listed as one of the world's three most invasive bird species, this bulbul was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1993 near Riyadh. Numbers are steadily increasing.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 500
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran

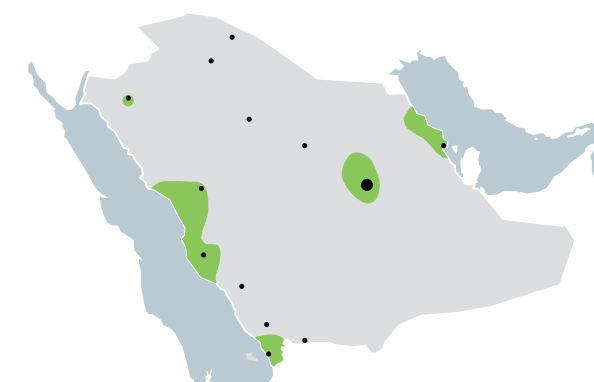


COMMON NAME: **COMMON MYNA**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acridotheres tristis*
 ARABIC NAME: ماينا شائعة
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 25 cm / 82–143 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Iran and Kazakhstan to Vietnam. It has been widely introduced to various parts of the world, including Africa, the Pacific, Australia and Arabia. It was first recorded in the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait in the late 1970s. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Common breeding resident.* It appeared at Riyadh, Tayif, Medina and Jiddah in 1984. It now occurs widely along Gulf coast cities and has colonized some islands to become the most abundant non-native bird in the Kingdom. **HABITAT:** Parks, gardens and roadsides in coastal areas. It also occurs inland at farms near large cities. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, including worms, snails, crustaceans, spiders and centipedes, as well as small vertebrates, such as frogs, geckos, and eggs and nestlings of birds. It also eats fruits and seeds of wild and cultivated plants and human food scraps. Most food is taken on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Solitary, pairs or small groups. Flocks of up to 30 can gather over winter. Roosts may contain hundreds of birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous territorial breeding pairs, possibly maintaining a life-long pair bond. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate, tend the young and aggressively defend the territory. *Nest:* An untidy mass of twigs, green leaves, grass and debris, with a central cup made of coarse grass and feathers, placed mainly in a cavity in a building (especially beside an air conditioning unit), lamp-post, traffic light, tree or occasionally a rock face. Sites are often reused. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–18 days. *Nestling period:* 22–27 days. *Broods:* Multi-brooded.

Listed as one of the world's three most invasive bird species, the myna was first recorded in Saudi Arabian cities in 1984 and has since established large feral populations.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 35,000
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Dhahran



COMMON NAME: **BANK MYNA**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acridotheres ginginianus*
 ARABIC NAME: ماينا صفاوية
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 22 cm / 64–76 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Pakistan to Bangladesh. It was brought to Arabia as a popular cage bird, but escapees have established feral breeding populations, particularly in UAE, with much smaller populations in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and possibly Bahrain and Qatar. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, small populations have been recorded near Dhahran and Riyadh, but it is unclear if viable numbers are still present at either location. **HABITAT:** Open country with trees, including parks and gardens, plant nurseries, croplands, sprinkler fields, irrigation ditches, animal pens and especially agricultural areas with traditional wells. It is often near humans and rarely far from water. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Insects and other invertebrates, fruits, seeds, human food scraps and occasional small vertebrates. It forages mainly on the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Occurs in small flocks of 5–10 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies. Egg laying is synchronized within each colony. *Parental roles:* The female performs most nest building. Both adults incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A chamber, lined with a pad of grass, leaves, feathers and rubbish, at the end of a horizontal or slightly upward-sloping tunnel typically less than 1 m long, excavated by the birds in an earth bank, well, ditch or trench. The same site is often used for several years. *Clutch:* 4–5 eggs. *Incubation:* 13–14 days. *Nestling period:* 20–21 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 15
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



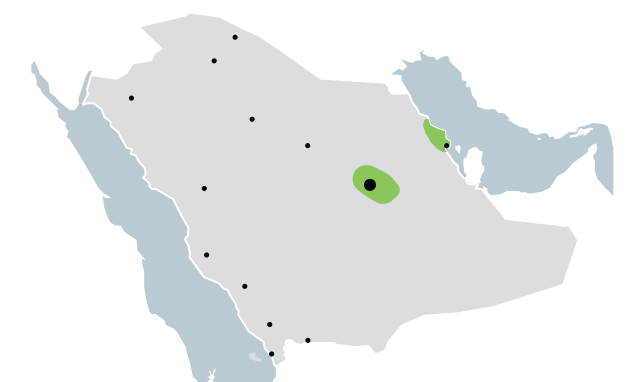
COMMON NAME: **STREAKED WEAVER**
 SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ploceus manyar*
 ARABIC NAME: تبشر مخطط (نسام مخطط)
 GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern
 GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable
 REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed
 REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed
 SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 16–22 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Pakistan to Vietnam and Bali and introduced to various parts of the world, including Arabia. On the Arabian Peninsula, it has occurred in all states except Yemen, with the largest breeding population in UAE (less than 100 pairs). **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Very rare breeding resident.*

This exotic bird often forms small feral breeding populations based on escapees from the pet trade. It was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1989 at Qatif and Riyadh.

This exotic species was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1989 at Qatif, Dhahran and near Riyadh. It has been breeding regularly at Riyadh River for several years. **HABITAT:** Farmland and cultivated fields near wetlands, such as lagoons, marshes and wastewater streams. Almost all sites include reedbeds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, while the young are fed invertebrates. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it is usually found in groups of up to 15 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small loose colonies. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory, builds the main nest structure and then sings to attract a female. The female helps complete the nest and performs most of the incubation. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* An elongated, retort-shaped dome made of strips of green reed leaves with mud plastered to the sides of the downward-facing entrance, woven around upright reed stems in a reedbed. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–17 days. *Nestling period:* 17–18 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.



Breeding resident
 ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 15
 BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Hanifah



COMMON NAME: **BAYA WEAVER**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ploceus philippinus*

ARABIC NAME: تبشر بايا (نساج كستنائي)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 15 cm / 18–28 g



MALE



NEST BUILDING

GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Pakistan to Sumatra and introduced to Arabia. On the Arabian Peninsula, it occurs in Saudi Arabia and UAE and has been recorded in Bahrain, Oman and Qatar; all initial records are likely to be escaped cage birds. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Often kept as exotic pets, extremely rare breeding resident. There are infrequent sightings of this exotic bird in Saudi Arabia. Around 4–5 pairs have bred near Riyadh, but it does not appear to have formed a self-sustaining population.* **HABITAT:** Reedbeds. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly seeds, as well as some invertebrates. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it is usually found in groups of up to 15 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Polygynous in colonies: males nest with 3–5 females in small colonies. *Parental roles:* The male defends the territory, builds the main nest structure and then sings to attract a female. The female helps complete the nest and incubates. Both adults tend the young. *Nest:* A retort-shaped elongated dome with a long vertical entrance tube at the base, made of tightly woven strips of leaves, reinforced with mud, lined mainly with plant fiber and suspended from a branch or reed stem 2–30 m above ground or water in a tree or reed-bed. *Clutch:* 3 eggs. *Incubation:* 14–15 days. *Nestling period:* 16 days. *Broods:* Single-brooded.

Often kept as exotic pets, escaped birds were first recorded breeding in Saudi Arabia in 1989 near Riyadh. A very small feral breeding population may still exist in the capital.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 10

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Wadi Hanifah

COMMON NAME: **RED AVADAVAT**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Amandava amandava*

ARABIC NAME: مونيا حمراء (شمعي المنقار الأحمر)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

SIZE AND WEIGHT: 9.5 cm / 7.2–9.5 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs naturally from Pakistan to Indonesia. A popular cage bird, it has been introduced to various parts of the world, including Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Rare breeding resident.* In Saudi Arabia, this tiny red bird was first recorded as a feral breeding resident in 1975 in Riyadh and small feral populations have since become established near the capital city, particularly around the Riyadh River. **HABITAT:** Near fresh or brackish water in reedbeds, tall grasses, crops, or other thick vegetation. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly the seeds of ripening grass and occasionally insects, including termites. It clings to the grass stem to take seeds, or pecks them directly from the ground. *Activity:* Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Gregarious, it feeds in small mobile groups all year round and roosts communally in reedbeds. It may form mixed flocks with sparrows in winter. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in small colonies. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A dome made of grass and reeds with a side entrance, lined with plant down and other fine materials, placed less than 1 m above ground or water in cattail or reeds. *Clutch:* 4–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 11–13 days. *Nestling period:* 17–21 days. *Broods:* Probably double-brooded.

This attractive, cherry red cage bird was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1975 in Riyadh where a small feral breeding population still exists.



Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 300

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



COMMON NAME: **SCALY-BREADED MUNIA**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lonchura punctulata*

ARABIC NAME: مونييا محرشفة صدر

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern

GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not assessed

REGIONAL POPULATION TREND: Not assessed

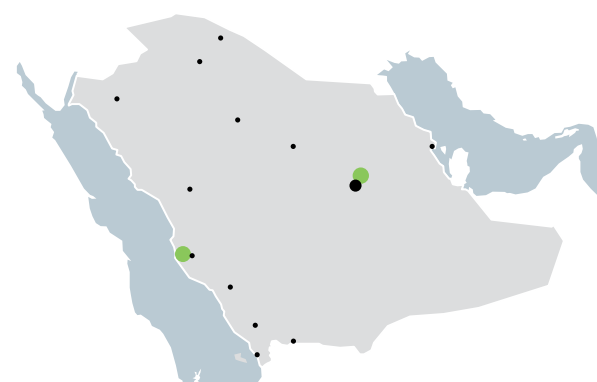
SIZE AND WEIGHT: 10–13 cm / 12–16 g



GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs from northern Pakistan east to southern China and south to Indonesia and the Philippines. This popular cage-bird has been introduced to many places worldwide where it often forms feral breeding populations. **SAUDI ARABIAN STATUS:** *Extremely rare breeding resident.* This chocolate-brown waxbill was first recorded in Saudi Arabia as an escapee in Dhahran in 1982. It has since been recorded in Riyadh, Jiddah and Tayif. However, it is unclear if escapees in Saudi Arabia have formed sustainable feral breeding populations or if these local populations are maintained by augmentation from regular additional escapees. The populations at Jiddah and Riyadh seem most likely to be established. **HABITAT:** Ornamental parks, gardens and landscaped areas in cities and towns. **FORAGING BEHAVIOR:** *Diet:* Mainly grass seeds and green leaves, as well as a few berries and perhaps the occasional insect. It picks seeds from the ground or directly from growing plants.

Activity: Diurnal. **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:** Usually recorded in flocks of less than 10 birds. **BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** *Mating system:* Socially monogamous breeding pairs nesting in colonies. Nests are usually 1–2 m apart. *Parental roles:* Both adults build the nest, incubate and tend the young. *Nest:* A roundish ball made from grass and flowering grass heads, built with a low side entrance, lined with fine grass and, placed in a well-concealed location amongst grass or more usually 4–10 m above ground in a bush or tree. *Clutch:* 3–6 eggs. *Incubation:* 14 days. *Nestling period:* 18–19 days. *Broods:* Double-brooded.

This exotic bird is often kept in aviaries. However, escapees sometimes form small feral breeding populations. It was first recorded in Saudi Arabia in 1982 at Dhahran.



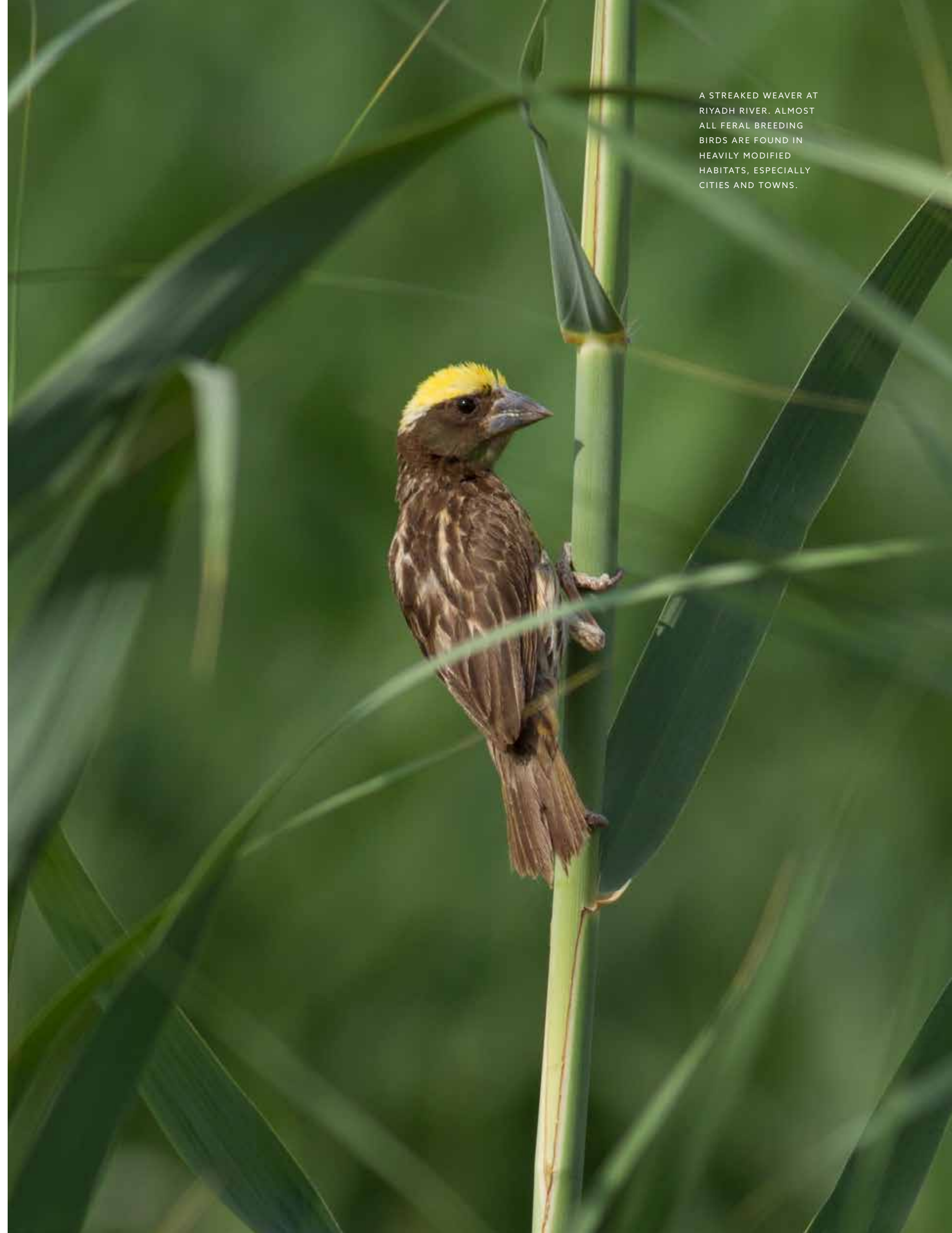
Breeding resident

ANNUAL BREEDING PAIRS: 5

BEST PLACE TO SEE: Riyadh River



A STREAKED WEAVER AT RIYADH RIVER. ALMOST ALL FERAL BREEDING BIRDS ARE FOUND IN HEAVILY MODIFIED HABITATS, ESPECIALLY CITIES AND TOWNS.



SECTION 3

Vagrant Species



A vagrant is a bird that is found well outside of its normal range. For the purposes of this book, a bird is defined as a vagrant to Saudi Arabia if it has less than ten well-attested records within the Kingdom. Each record might consist of a single bird or a group of birds, regardless of how long these birds stayed in the one location. Using this definition, 87 vagrant species have been recorded with reasonable confidence in Saudi Arabia. This section contains an annotated list of these vagrants. Because of their extreme rarity, many vagrant species have not been well photographed within the Kingdom. Thus only a few photographs are included here. Nonetheless, all photographs used in this section were taken in Saudi Arabia. This list does not include records of birds that have simply escaped from an aviary or private collection.

Most vagrants are migratory birds that have overshot their intended destination, become disorientated, or blown off course by unusual weather events. Occasionally some individuals have a navigational malfunction and migrate in the mirror image of the correct migration pattern and find themselves in a completely unexpected location (Diamond 1982; Thorup et al 2012). Accordingly, about 87% (n=76) of Saudi Arabian vagrants are migratory or partially migratory species. The remaining 13% (n=11) of Saudi Arabian vagrants are largely resident (i.e., non-migratory) species that may have wandered far from their home range, perhaps in search of new breeding opportunities or better foraging resources, or perhaps simply because they have become lost.

Given the vast distances and complex routes travelled by many migratory species, it is quite remarkable that only a very small fraction of each population ends up outside its normal range. This is particularly amazing given that the fledglings of most migratory species typically undertake their first migration to their wintering grounds without their parents' guidance. They somehow follow an innate, genetically pre-determined course for thousands of kilometers, finding their wintering grounds with astounding precision.

Vagrants are interesting because they bring an even broader range of birds to Saudi Arabia that bird-watchers would not expect to see in the Kingdom. For instance, Black-legged Kittiwakes nest in the arctic and spend their winters at sea in the North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans – and yet a Black-legged Kittiwake was once recorded resting on a boat near Al-Lith in the Red Sea. While the fate of individual vagrant birds is not well known (some presumably make it back to their normal range, others presumably do not), range expansions or new wintering or breeding populations can arise as a result of inadvertent colonization by a handful of vagrant birds (e.g., as documented in Eurasian Blackcaps; Berthold et al 1992).

Some of the vagrant species recorded in Saudi Arabia are of global conservation concern, including four near threatened species, four vulnerable species, two endangered species, and two critically endangered species.

By definition, vagrants are rare. Thus, knowledgeable birdwatchers and photographers need to be at the right place in the right time to accurately identify and report an unusual sighting. Given the relatively small number of avid birdwatchers within Saudi Arabia it is remarkable that so many vagrant species have been recorded in the Kingdom. Doubtless many more vagrant birds will be recorded in Saudi Arabia in the future. What's more, several of these apparently vagrant species may be elevated to "regular species" status with additional records.

1. **Fulvous Whistling-duck** | *Dendrocygna bicolor* | صافرة بنية (البط المصفر)
SIZE: 45–53 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in Central and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa and India to Myanmar. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Malakiyah Lake.

2. **Lesser Whistling-duck** | *Dendrocygna javanica* | صافرة صغيرة
SIZE: 38–42 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Pakistan east to the Chinese seaboard and Southeast Asia to Indonesia; populations in Pakistan and eastern China contract south for winter. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Malakiyah Lake.

3. **White-headed Duck** | *Oxyura leucocephala* | بطة رخماء (بط أبيض الرأس)
SIZE: 43–48 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Endangered. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in patches from the Iberian Peninsula to Afghanistan; migratory populations breed from eastern Turkey to western Mongolia and winter in Anatolia, the Caspian region, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan. It probably winters along the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia in some years. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Jawf; Yanbu'.

4. **Tundra Swan** | *Cygnus columbianus* | تم بويكي
SIZE: 120–150 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in the northern Holarctic and winters in northern temperate regions. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Jawf; Sabkhat al-Fasl; Tabuk.

5. **Smew** | *Mergellus albellus* | مقششة بيضاء (بلقشة بيضاء)
SIZE: 35–44 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in northern Eurasia and winters in patches across Europe and southern Asia south to Iraq and east to China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Riyadh.

6. **Red-breasted Merganser** | *Mergus serrator* | مقششة حمراء صدر
SIZE: 52–58 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds across the northern Holarctic and winters mainly along coasts north of the tropics. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Ras Tanajib.

7. **Egyptian Goose** | *Alopochen aegyptiaca* | إوزة مصرية
SIZE: 63–73 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in sub-Saharan Africa east to the Red Sea coast of Somalia and Sudan. This bird has been introduced as an ornamental species to many places globally including the UAE where it now breeds. The Arabian population is expanding and may colonize Saudi Arabia in the near future. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jiddah; Jubail; Yanbu'.

8. **Cotton Pygmy-goose** | *Nettapus coromandelianus* | إوزة ضئيلة قطنية (حذف قطني)
SIZE: 30–38 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northern Pakistan east to southeastern Asia and eastern Australia; migratory populations breed in southern China and winter within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Riyadh.

9. **Marbled Teal** | *Marmaronetta angustirostris* | حدفة رخامية (حذف مخطط)
SIZE: 39–48 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Vulnerable. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in patches from northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, Jordan, Iraq and Iran and east to Pakistan; migratory populations winter in the Nile Valley east to Iran, Pakistan and India. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Riyadh.



THE EGYPTIAN GOOSE WAS INTRODUCED INTO ORNAMENTAL PONDS IN THE UAE. INDIVIDUAL BIRDS HAVE BEEN RECORDED IN SAUDI ARABIA.

10. **Red-necked Grebe** | *Podiceps grisegena* | غطاس أحمر الرقبة
SIZE: 40–50 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in middle and higher latitudes throughout the Holarctic region and winters mainly in temperate northern coastal districts. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Khobar; Half Moon Bay; Jubail.

11. **Oriental Turtle-dove** | *Streptopelia orientalis* | قمري أصهب (قمري شرقي)
SIZE: 33–35 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in India, east to China and southern Japan; migratory populations breed in Kazakhstan east through southern Siberia to northern Japan and winter within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dhahran; Riyadh; Zuluf oil field, Arabian Gulf (east of al-Khafji).

12. **White-rumped Swift** | *Apus caffer* | سمامة عجزاء (سمامة بيضاء العجز)
SIZE: 14 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in sub-Saharan Africa; migratory populations breed in isolated colonies in northwestern Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and southern Africa and winter within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Kiyad.

13. **White-breasted Waterhen** | *Amaurornis phoenicurus* | دجاجة ماء صدراء
SIZE: 28–33 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Pakistan east to southern China and Japan and south to Indonesia and the Philippines; migratory populations breed in China and winter within the resident range, while some (presumably Indian) populations winter in southeastern Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Sabkhat al-Fasl.

14. **Red-knobbed Coot** | *Fulica cristata* | غراء محمرة منقار
SIZE: 35–42 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in eastern and southern Africa from Eritrea to South Africa with some birds wandering to Arabia. It has bred in Oman. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Sabkhat al-Fasl.

15. **Little Bustard** | *Tetrax tetrax* | حبارى صغيرة
SIZE: 40–45 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Near Threatened. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in patches from Portugal and Morocco east to Iran; migratory populations breed in Spain, and Ukraine east to western China and winter in Turkey east to Pakistan and south to Jordan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dawmat al-Jandal; Umm Lajj.

16. **Great Bustard** | *Otis tarda* | حبارى كبيرة
SIZE: 90–105 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Vulnerable. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Morocco and in patches from Portugal and Germany east Iran; migratory populations breed in patches from Ukraine east to northeastern China and winter from Greece to eastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Qaryat al-Ulya.

17. **Persian Shearwater** | *Puffinus persicus* | جلم فارسي
SIZE: 27–33 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Dispersive: breeds on Socotra (Yemen) and Kuria Muria islands (southern Oman) and Comoros Islands off eastern Africa, and forages mainly off the Arabian Sea and western Indian Ocean, occasionally wandering into the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf. As more than 98% of the breeding population is confined to islands off Arabia, this species is near endemic to the region, yet it remains a vagrant to Saudi Arabian waters. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jazan.

18. **Jouanin's Petrel** | *Bulweria fallax* | نوع جوانيني
SIZE: 30–32 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Near Threatened. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Dispersive: breeds on Socotra (Yemen) and possibly other islands off southern Arabia, and forages in the western Indian Ocean, occasionally entering the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. As more than 98% of the breeding population is confined to islands off Arabia, this species is near endemic to the region, yet it remains a vagrant to Saudi Arabian waters. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Farasan Islands.

19. **African Sacred Ibis** | *Threskiornis aethiopicus* | أنوق مقدس أفريقي (أبو منجل الأثيوبي)
SIZE: 65–89 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, occasionally wandering over the Red Sea into Saudi Arabia. A relict population is present in southern Iraq and western Iran. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Khobar; Dhahran; Jiddah; Riyadh.

20. **Yellow Bittern** | *Ixobrychus sinensis* | واق أصفر
SIZE: 30–40 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southeastern Asia; migratory populations breed in Salalah (Oman), Pakistan and northern India to Japan and winter in western India and Southeastern Asia to New Guinea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.

21. **Lesser Frigatebird** | *Fregata ariel* | فرقاط صغير
SIZE: 66–81 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Dispersive: breeds on tropical islands, especially in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and forages in surrounding waters. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Lith.

22. **Masked Booby** | *Sula dactylatra* | أطيش مبرقع
SIZE: 81–92 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Dispersive: breeds on tropical islands, including off southern Arabia and the southern Red Sea, and forages throughout tropical oceans, very occasionally wandering into the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Kutambil Island (near ash-Shuqayq).

23. **Senegal Thick-knee** | *Burhinus senegalensis* | كروان سنغالي
SIZE: 32–38 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in Africa throughout the Sahel region, Nile Valley and along the Egyptian coast of the northwestern Red Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Wadi Mishrif (near Malakiyah Lake).

24. **Kittlitz's Plover** | *Charadrius pecuarius* | زقازق كتلتي
SIZE: 12–14 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in patches over much of sub-Saharan Africa, Nile Valley and the African Red Sea coast. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** ash-Shuqayq.

25. **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** | *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* | جاكنة ذنوب (يقنة تدرجية الذيل)
SIZE: 39–58 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Pakistan east through southeastern Asia and the Philippines; migratory populations breed in the Himalayas and China and winter in Oman, India, Peninsula Malaysia and Indonesia. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Riyadh.

26. **Red Knot** | *Calidris canutus* | طيطوي حمراء (الدريجة الحمراء)
SIZE: 23–25 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Near Threatened. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in the high arctic of eastern Eurasia, North America and Greenland and winters along coastlines in temperate, tropical and southern oceans. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dammam; Hadda; Qatif.



A WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN AT SABKHAT AL-FASL. THIS SPECIES REGULARLY WINTERS IN OMAN AND UAE, BUT IS SELDOM RECORDED IN SAUDI ARABIA.

27. **Long-toed Stint** | *Calidris subminuta* | طيطوي صبعاء
SIZE: 13–16 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds patchily from central Asia east to the Bering Strait and winters in eastern India to southern Australia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Dhahran; Riyadh.

28. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** | *Calidris subruficollis* | طيطوي آدمة صدر (طيطوي برتقالية الصدر)
SIZE: 18–20 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Near Threatened. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the high arctic of eastern Siberia and North America and winters mainly in South America. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Dhahran.

29. **Pectoral Sandpiper** | *Calidris melanotos* | طيطوي نبطاء
SIZE: 19–23 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in the high arctic of Siberia and North America and winters in South America and Australasia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Qatif.

30. **Solitary Snipe** | *Gallinago solitaria* | شنقب منفرد
SIZE: 29–31 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northern China and Mongolia and southeastern Russia; migratory populations winter in patches from Kazakhstan and northern India, to southern China and Japan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Riyadh.

31. **Pintail Snipe** | *Gallinago stenura* | شنقب إبري ذنب
SIZE: 25–27 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in north central Russia east to eastern Siberia and south to Mongolia and winters in peninsular India and southeastern Asia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Dhahran; Sabkhat al-Fasl; Shedgum.

32. **Red Phalarope** | *Phalaropus fulicarius* | فلرب أرمذ
SIZE: 20–22 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in high arctic of eastern Siberia and North America to Greenland and Iceland and winters at sea off South America, western Africa and southern Africa. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Riyadh; Rub' al-Khali; Yanbu'.

33. **Little Gull** | *Hydrocoloeus minutus* | نورس صغير
SIZE: 25–30 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Scandinavia to eastern Siberia and winters in coastal areas around the Mediterranean basin and Western Europe. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: al-Khafji; Riyadh.

34. **Black-legged Kittiwake** | *Rissa tridactyla* | نورس أرمل (نورس كيتيويك)
SIZE: 38–40 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Dispersive: breeds in coastal northern Eurasia and North America, forages mainly in northern oceans. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: al-Lith.

35. **Grey-headed Gull** | *Larus cirrocephalus* | نورس أرمد رأس
SIZE: 38–45 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Dispersive: breeds on coasts and in river valleys of South America and Africa south from Ethiopia and winters mainly in eastern South America and sub-Saharan Africa. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Qatif.

36. **Mediterranean Gull** | *Larus melanocephalus* | نورس متوسطي
SIZE: 36–38 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in patches throughout central and southern

Europe east to the Caspian Sea and winters in coastal districts mainly in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Half Moon Bay; Riyadh.

37. **Yellow-legged Gull** | *Larus michahellis* | نورس مجيب (نورس أصفر ساق)
SIZE: 52–58 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: occurs mainly in coastal regions of northwestern Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean, and forages in surrounding waters. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Yanbu'.

38. **Sooty Tern** | *Onychoprion fuscatus* | خرشنة سخماء
SIZE: 36–45 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Dispersive: breeds on tropical and subtropical islands, including in the Gulf of Aden and off northern Oman and winters in tropical and subtropical oceans. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Jiddah.

39. **Roseate Tern** | *Sterna dougallii* | خرشنة وردة
SIZE: 33–43 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Resident and dispersive: breeds on islands and coasts throughout the Indian, western Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, including Oman and winters off South America, Africa, southeast Asia and northern Australia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Karan Island.

40. **Long-tailed Jaeger** | *Stercorarius longicaudus* | كركر ذنوب
SIZE: 48–53 cm (including tail streamers). GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Coastal areas above the Arctic Circle and winters in Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Karan Island.

41. **Northern Long-eared Owl** | *Asio otus* | بومة أذناء
SIZE: 35–38 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in USA, Europe south to northern Africa and Turkey and east to Japan; migratory populations breed in Canada and Scandinavia to Siberia, and winter in USA and Mexico, the eastern Mediterranean, and Caspian Sea east to southern China. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: az-Zilfi; Ras Tanajib; Sharmah.

42. **Rüppell's Vulture** | *Gyps rueppelli* | نسروبيلي
SIZE: 101 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Critically Endangered. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in the Sahel region of Africa and much of East Africa. Birds may very occasionally wander across the Red Sea and could conceivably breed in Saudi Arabia in extremely low numbers. This bird resembles Griffon Vultures, so may have been under recorded in the past. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Tanumah.

43. **Lesser Spotted Eagle** | *Clanga pomarina* | عقاب رقطاع صغير
SIZE: 56–67 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Eastern Europe, western Russia and the Caucasus and winters in tropical and southern Africa. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Haradh; Medina; Qaryat al-'Ulya; Sabkhat al-Fasl; Wadi Nisah; Yanbu'.

44. **Pallas's Fish-eagle** | *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* | عقاب السمك بالآسية
SIZE: 72–84 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Endangered. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur from Pakistan to Myanmar; migratory population breed from Kazakhstan to northern China, and winter within the resident range. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Malakiyah Lake.



A PINTAIL SNIPE FORAGING AT SABKHAT AL-FASL. THIS SPECIES NORMALLY WINTERS IN INDIA AND SOUTHEASTERN ASIA BUT HAS BEEN RECORDED IN SAUDI ARABIA ON FOUR OCCASIONS.



A NORTHERN LONG-EARED OWL AT AZ-ZILFI, TABUK PROVINCE, AROUND 2,000 KM SOUTH OF ITS NORMAL RANGE.



A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED RÜPPELL'S VULTURE SOARS IMPERIOUSLY ABOVE TANUMAH IN THE 'ASIR MOUNTAINS. THIS IS THE ONLY RECORD IN SAUDI ARABIA OF THIS COLOSSAL BIRD.

45. **White-tailed Sea-eagle** | *Haliaeetus albicilla* | عقاب عكواء (عقاب البحر أبيض الذيل)
SIZE: 69–92 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southern Greenland, northern Europe, and eastern Russia; migratory populations breed across northern Eurasia and winter patchily from southern Europe, east through Palestine, Iraq and Iran east to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Khobar; Qatif.

46. **Eleonora's Falcon** | *Falco eleonora* | صقر إليونوري
SIZE: 36–42 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds on islands off northwestern Africa and the Mediterranean basin to Cyprus and winters in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Madagascar. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jubail; Midyan; a satellite-tracked bird from Kenya entered Saudi Arabia north of Yanbu' and traveled east of Tabuk into Jordan and on to Cyprus.

47. **Bay-backed Shrike** | *Lanius vittatus* | دغناش كميث ظهر
SIZE: 17–19 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur eastern Iran and Afghanistan east through India to Bangladesh; migratory populations breed in Afghanistan and winter within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Tihama.

48. **Long-tailed Shrike** | *Lanius schach* | دغناش ذنوب
SIZE: 20–25 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Unknown. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in Pakistan east to Indonesia and New Guinea; migratory populations breed a few hundred kilometers north of the resident range and winter within the resident range. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dhahran.

49. **Carrion Crow** | *Corvus corone* | غراب جيفي
SIZE: 48–54 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur from the British Isles east to Japan and south to the Mediterranean, Nile Valley, Jordan and Iraq; migratory populations breed in northern Russia and winter within the Resident range and southeastern China. It is possible that a small breeding population occurs in the extreme northwest of Saudi Arabia where few bird surveys have been conducted. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Midian.

50. **Calandra Lark** | *Melanocorypha calandra* | علعل (قبرة شرقية)
SIZE: 18–20 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in southern Europe and northwestern Africa east through the Mediterranean region to southern Kazakhstan; migratory populations winter from northern Egypt through Jordan to Iran. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Dammam; Riyadh.

51. **Woodlark** | *Lullula arborea* | قبرة غابية
SIZE: 15 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa and Western Europe east to the Black Sea and Jordan; migratory populations breed in northern Europe east to the Urals and Iran and winter near the Mediterranean and Black Sea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** as-Sarrar; Jubail.

52. **Thick-billed Warbler** | *Arundinax aedon* | دخلة سمكة المنقار
SIZE: 18–19 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in southeastern Russia, Mongolia and north-eastern China and winters in southern and eastern India and Nepal east to Vietnam. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** as-Sarrar.

53. **Booted Warbler** | *Iduna caligata* | دخناء سوقاء
SIZE: 11–12.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in western Russia east to western Mongolia and south to the Caspian Sea and winters in eastern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Dhahran; Jubail; Riyadh; Tabuk; Thumamah; Yanbu'.

54. **Sykes's Warbler** | *Iduna rama* | دخناء سايكسية
SIZE: 11.5–13 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in southern Kazakhstan south to Iran, northern Oman and Pakistan and winters in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jabal Sawda'; Jubail.

55. **Blyth's Reed-warbler** | *Acrocephalus dumetorum* | دخناء إبلابثية
SIZE: 12–14 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds from Finland east to central Russia and south to Tajikistan and winters in India and Sri Lanka east to Myanmar. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jiddah; Thumamah; Yanbu'.

56. **River Warbler** | *Locustella fluviatilis* | دخلة نهريّة
SIZE: 14 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in central Europe east to central Russia and winters in Zimbabwe, Zambia and neighboring countries. This species has been recorded several times in Farasan Islands and along both Saudi Arabian coasts, so may soon be elevated to regular species status with additional sightings. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-'Aba Oasis (near Ju'aymah); Farasan Islands; Jubail; Ras Tanajib; Tayif; Yanbu'.

57. **Banded Martin** | *Neophedina cincta* | خطاف مشرط
SIZE: 17 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the African southern tropics; migratory populations breed in southern Africa and winter in the African northern tropics northeast to Eritrea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Riyadh.

58. **African Plain Martin** | *Riparia paludicola* | خطاف بني زور (خطاف السهول الأفريقي)
SIZE: 12 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Resident: occurs in Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa east to Eritrea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Dhahran; Khafrah Marsh (south of Jubail); Tabuk.

59. **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** | *Phylloscopus orientalis* | دخلة بونلية شرقية (نقشارة بونللي الشرقية)
SIZE: 11.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in northeastern Mediterranean from Croatia and patchily to Syria and western Iran and winters in eastern Sahel, notably Sudan including the Red Sea coast into Eritrea. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Khobar; Tabuk.

60. **Yellow-browed Warbler** | *Phylloscopus inornatus* | دخلة صفراء حاجب
SIZE: 10–11 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Siberia from the Arctic Circle to Mongolia and northern China and winters in eastern India to southern China and peninsular Malaysia. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Haql; Jubail; Tabuk; Yanbu'.

61. **Hume's Leaf-warbler** | *Phylloscopus humei* | دخلة إهيومية
SIZE: 10–11 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in southern Russia, Mongolia and China south to Kashmir and Nepal and winters in northern Pakistan to Laos. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Salwa.



LONG-TAILED SHRIKE HAS BEEN RECORDED ONLY ONCE IN SAUDI ARABIA. IT WAS PHOTOGRAPHED IN DHAHRAN ALLOWING THE RECORD TO BE CONFIRMED.



WOODLARKS NORMALLY SPEND THE WINTER AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN, BUT THIS ONE WAS PHOTOGRAPHED AT AS-SARRAR IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE.



THIS YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER WAS PHOTOGRAPHED IN TABUK, MORE THAN 5,000 KM WEST OF ITS NORMAL WINTER RANGE IN SOUTHEASTERN ASIA.

62. **Dusky Warbler** | *Phylloscopus fuscatus* | دخلة معتمة
SIZE: 11–12 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Siberia south of the Arctic Circle to central China and winters in northeastern India and southern China to Peninsula Malaysia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran; Jubail.

63. **Green Warbler** | *Phylloscopus nitidus* | دخلة خضراء
SIZE: 10–11 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Turkey east to the south Caspian Sea and western Afghanistan and winters in southwestern India and Sri Lanka. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: al-Khanafah Protected Area; Dhahran; Hofuf; Yanbu'.

64. **Arctic Warbler** | *Phylloscopus borealis* | دخلة قطبية شمالية
SIZE: 12–13 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Scandinavia east to Siberia and Alaska, from above the Arctic Circle south to Mongolia and Japan and winters in southeastern Asia including Indonesia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran.

65. **Cyprus Warbler** | *Sylvia melanothorax* | هازجة قبرصية
SIZE: 13.5 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Cyprus and winters along the western Red Sea coastline, Sinai and possibly northwestern Arabia. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Hith (near Riyadh); Medina; Yanbu'.

66. **Mistle Thrush** | *Turdus viscivorus* | سمينة دبقية
SIZE: 27–28 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in the British Isles and Western Europe, and in patches from Turkey east to Nepal; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia east to Mongolia and winter south to the Mediterranean, Iraq and Afghanistan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; al-Jawf; Dhahran.

67. **Ring Ouzel** | *Turdus torquatus* | سمينة مطوقة
SIZE: 23–24 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northwestern Scandinavia, the British Isles and highlands from the Pyrenees east to south of the Caspian Sea and winters in the Iberian Peninsula, northern Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and Iran. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Jubail; Dammam; Dhahran; Shedgum; Yanbu'.

68. **Dusky Thrush** | *Turdus eunomus* | سمينة معتمة
SIZE: 23–25 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Unknown. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in northern Russia and winters in southern China east to Japan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Jubail; Qatif.

69. **Collared Flycatcher** | *Ficedula albicollis* | صائد ذباب تايجي
SIZE: 13 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in eastern France to western Russia, south to the Mediterranean and Caspian Sea and winters in Zimbabwe, Zambia and neighboring countries. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Tabuk; Tayif; Yanbu.

70. **Pied Bushchat** | *Saxicola caprata* | برقش أبقع (القلبي الأبقع)
SIZE: 13–14 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in eastern Iran north to the Aral Sea and east to Indochina, the Philippines and New Guinea; northwestern populations contract into India. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: al-Khobar.

71. **Buff-rumped Wheatear** | *Oenanthe moesta* | أبلق أحمر عجز
SIZE: 14.5–16 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Resident: occurs in northwestern Africa east to Jordan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: central Najd; Hayil; Wadi as-Sirhan; Yanbu'.

72. **Variable Wheatear** | *Oenanthe picata* | أبلق متغير
SIZE: 15 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds from southeast Caspian Sea east to Kyrgyzstan, and south to southern Iran and western Pakistan and winters in eastern Pakistan and northwestern India. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran.

73. **Dead Sea Sparrow** | *Passer moabiticus* | عصفور البحر الميت
SIZE: 12 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Decreasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur around the Dead Sea and in patches east to the northern Arabian Gulf and western Afghanistan; migratory populations breed in Cyprus and southern Turkey and winter in southern Iraq and western Pakistan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Jubail; Khafrah Marsh; Sabkhat al-Fasl.

74. **Chestnut-shouldered Bush-sparrow** | *Gymnoris xanthocollis* | عصفور أصفر زور
SIZE: 12.5–14 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in India; migratory populations breed in eastern Turkey, Kuwait UAE and Oman east to India and winter within the resident range. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Abqaiq; Dhahran; Jubail; Ras Tanajib.

75. **Olive-backed Pipit** | *Anthus hodgsoni* | جيشنة زيتونية ظهر
SIZE: 15–17 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in Russia below the Arctic Circle south to the Himalayas and east to Japan and winters in India and southeastern Asia to the Philippines. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran; Jubail.

76. **Richard's Pipit** | *Anthus richardi* | جيشنة ريتشاردية
SIZE: 17–18 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Migratory: breeds in eastern Kazakhstan and Siberia south of the Arctic Circle to southern China and winters in India east to Vietnam. This species has been recorded on at least nine occasions, so it is very close to being elevated to regular species status. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran; Haradh; Jubail; Khafrah Marsh; Qaryat al-'Ulya; Qatif; Sabkhat al-Fasl.

77. **Common Chaffinch** | *Fringilla coelebs* | شرشور ظالم (حسون القش)
SIZE: 14–18 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa, Western Europe and Scandinavia east to the Caspian Sea; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia east to Mongolia and winter in Jordan, Iraq and Kazakhstan to northern India. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Dhahran; Hanidh; Jubail.

78. **Hawfinch** | *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* | أشدق كرزي (حسون الكرز)
SIZE: 16–18 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Increasing. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa, Western Europe, and northeastern China; migratory populations breed across southern Russia and winter around the Mediterranean and east in patches to southern Japan. SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS: Jubail.

79. **European Greenfinch** | *Chloris chloris* | حسون أخضر
SIZE: 14.5–16 cm. GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern. GLOBAL POPULATION TREND: Stable. GLOBAL RANGE: Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern



THE DEAD SEA SPARROW IS FOUND PATCHILY FROM JORDAN TO AFGHANISTAN. HOWEVER THIS ONE WAS RECORDED AT SABKHAT AL-FASL.

Africa and Europe east to Kazakhstan and south to Palestine and Iraq; migratory populations breed in Scandinavia to Kazakhstan and winter in northern Africa, Sinai, Turkmenistan, and possibly north-western Saudi Arabia. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Sharma; Tabuk.

80. **Red-fronted Serin** | *Serinus pusillus* | نعار أحمر الجبهة
SIZE: 10.5–13 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident in patches from Turkey east to Nepal and western China; some populations winter in Turkey and south to Palestine. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Jubail.

81. **Red-headed Bunting** | *Emberiza bruniceps* | درسة حمراء رأس
SIZE: 15–16.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Kazakhstan to western Mongolia and south to Afghanistan and winters in India. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Riyadh; Tabuk.

82. **Rock Bunting** | *Emberiza cia* | درسة صخرية
SIZE: 15–16.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Increasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Partially migratory: resident populations occur in northwestern Africa, and southern Europe east to Nepal; migratory populations breed in Afghanistan northeast to Mongolia and winter around the Mediterranean south to Sinai, and Pakistan to northern India. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Ras Tanura.

83. **Pine Bunting** | *Emberiza leucocephalos* | درسة صنوبرية
SIZE: 16–17.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Russia south of the Arctic Circle and south to Kazakhstan, Mongolia and northern China and winters in the eastern Mediterranean, and from northern Iran to northern India, and northeastern China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dhahran; Jubail.

84. **Reed Bunting** | *Emberiza schoeniclus* | درسة قصبية
SIZE: 14–16.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Eurasia below the Arctic Circle and winters around the Mediterranean, east through Iraq to northern India, and eastern China and Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Abqaiq; Dammam; Jubail; Sabkhat al-Fasl.

85. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** | *Emberiza aureola* | درسة صفراء صدر
SIZE: 14–15.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Critically Endangered. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Russia, Mongolia and northeastern China and winters in northern India and southeastern Asia. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** al-Hunayy (near Hofuf).

86. **Rustic Bunting** | *Emberiza rustica* | درسة صدأ (درسة الريف)
SIZE: 13–14 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Vulnerable. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Decreasing. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Scandinavia east to the Bering Strait and winters in eastern China to Japan. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dhahran.

87. **Little Bunting** | *Emberiza pusilla* | درسة صغيرة
SIZE: 12–13.5 cm. **GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern. **GLOBAL POPULATION TREND:** Stable. **GLOBAL RANGE:** Migratory: breeds in Scandinavia east to the Bering Strait and winters in Nepal to southeastern China. **SAUDI ARABIAN RECORDS:** Dammam; Gulf of Aqaba; Jiddah.



BLUE ROCK-THRUSH

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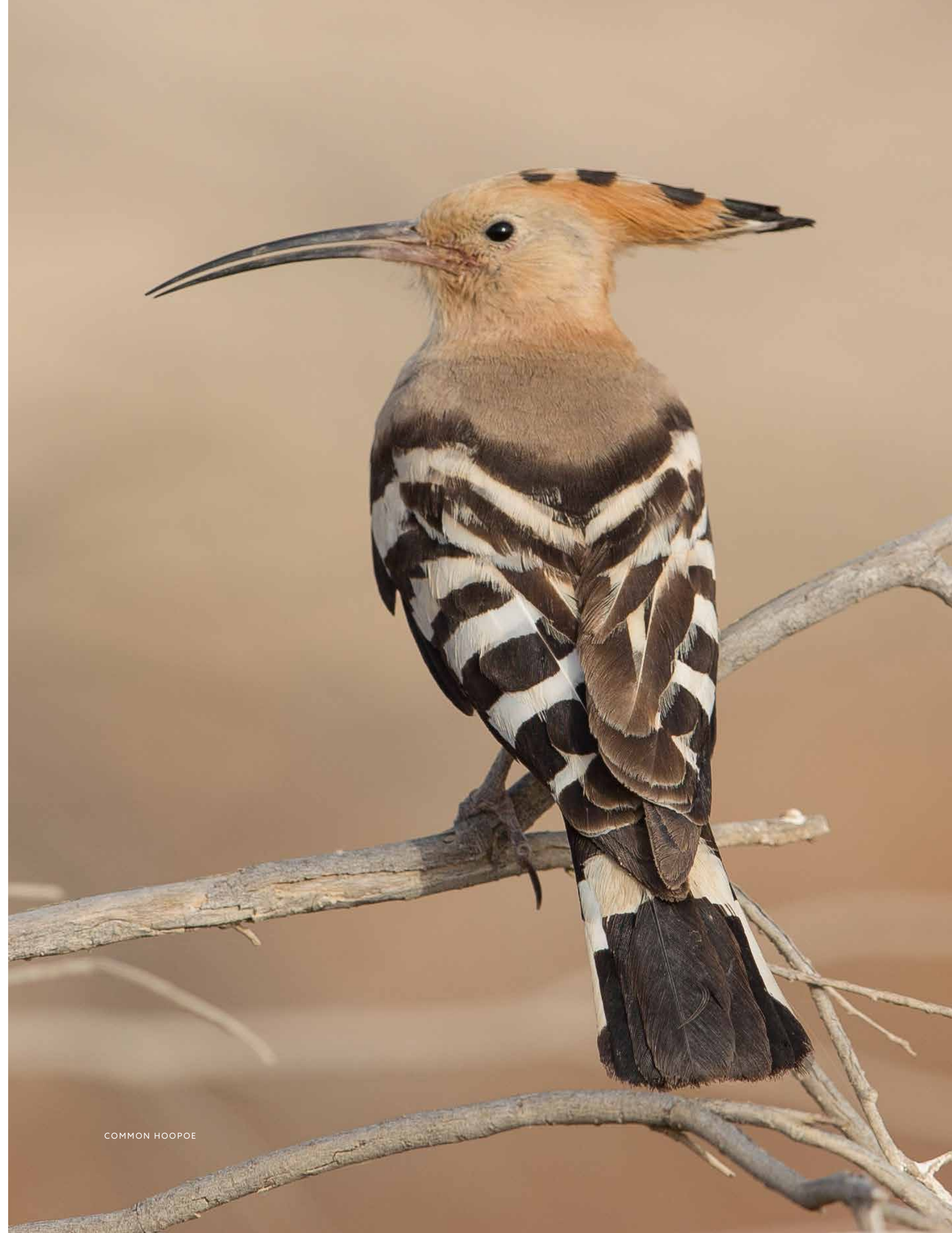
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COMMON HOOPOE

BLUETHROAT

