

AROUND THE REGION

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Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 38(1) should be sent by 15 December 2015 to atr@osme.org.

CYPRUS

The largest flock of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* (21 birds) ever recorded in Cyprus was at Asprokremmos dam, 9 Jan. The fourteenth record of **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* was at Mia Milia water treatment plant 7 Feb. The first record of **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor* (an adult bird) was at Kouklia reservoir, Famagusta, 12–16 May, together with a group of c60 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus*. Four **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were at Akrotiri salt lake 22 Mar (normally only singles seen). First record of **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata*, Zakaki marsh, Akrotiri, late October 2014 present until 11 Feb (but pursued by intrusive photographers who possibly contributed to its demise). A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina*, Polis, Akamas, 14 May (only spring

record of this rather rare migrant) while a single '**Tundra**' **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus calidus* was at Akrotiri gravel pits 23 Feb–31 Mar (Plates 1 & 2).

One **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Zakaki marsh 15–28 Mar and 8–11 Apr (Plate 3). **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* is usually rare in spring but three at Akrotiri GP 13 Mar while 32 Goudi 16 Mar, 27 Lady's Mile 21 Mar and four Lady's Mile 1 Apr. One **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* Spiros beach 28 Mar (fewer than 20 records in last ten years). A male **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* Mandria 9–18 Apr (34th record). One **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* Akrotiri salt lake 11 Apr, up to four Larnaca desalination fields 11–16 Apr, two Lady's Mile 13 Apr, one Mandria 14–18 Apr (Plate 4); species not recorded every year.



Plate 1. 'Tundra' Peregrine *Falco peregrinus calidus* (juvenile) 5 March 2015 Akrotiri GP, Cyprus. © Rajia Howard



Plate 2. 'Tundra' Peregrine *Falco peregrinus calidus* (juvenile) 22 March 2015 Akrotiri GP, Cyprus. © John East



Plate 3. Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* 10 April 2015, Zakaki marsh, Cyprus. © Rajja Howard



Plate 4. Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* 15 April 2015, Mandria beach, Cyprus. © Matt Smith



Plate 5. Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* 8 April 2015, Lady's Mile, Cyprus. © Rajja Howard



Plate 6. Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* 6 December 2014, Larnaca, Cyprus. © Stavros Christodoulides

A **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Lady's Mile 16 May. Record number of **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* (32) Akrotiri salt lake 26 Apr with two remaining at nearby Lady's Mile to 4 May; all previous records have been singles or pairs (25th record). 18 **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* Lady's Mile 2 Apr, a record number of this scarce migrant. A **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* Lady's Mile 31 Mar–10 Apr (Plate 5) with different bird there 28 Apr; this species is a less than annual spring migrant. c200 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* over Zakaki marsh 20 Apr, a noteworthy number while a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was at Akrotiri salt lake 28 Apr (38th record since 1993). The seventh record of **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* still present Larnaca until 4 Jan (Plate 6). Fourth record of **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Curium bay, Akrotiri peninsula, 21 May while one **Arctic Skua** *S. parasiticus* off cape Greco 29 Mar and one Mandria 9 Apr (fewer than 50 records since 1957).

There was an extraordinary influx in January, during very cold conditions in Turkey, of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* though many reported shot (at least 17). Highest number flock of c35 Livera, cape Kormakitis, 11–24 Jan with 30+ at Agios

Sozomenos/Geri buffer zone mid Jan; last report was five 6 Mar Akrotiri GP. Fewer than ten previous reports 1993–2014. Single **Laughing Doves** *Stigmatopelia senegalensis* Germasogeia Potamos 8 Feb and Mandria 29 Mar, while three Kouklia mosque 4 Apr and two Kouklia, Diarizos river, 10 May. Five **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarpis melba* Kensington cliffs 2 Feb was the earliest spring record for 25 years while three **Little Swifts** *Apus affinis* were at Zakaki marsh 12 Jan (Plate 7) and one Akhna Dam 15 Apr (15th & 16th records). A **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Phasouri reed-beds 23 Jan and one **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Lady's Mile 28 Mar–2 Apr, both rare visitors. 2015 was an exceptional year for **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus*, a species which is less than annual: 16 Akrotiri environment centre 13 Mar, c20 Meneou beach 14 Mar, nine Vrysoulles 15 Mar, nine Rico's beach, Geroskipou, 15 Mar and smaller numbers at various locations to 14 Apr.

The only record this year of **Turkestan Shrike** *Lanius (isabellinus) phoenicuroides* was at Meneou pools area 12 Apr. Single **Bimaculated Larks** *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, a rare spring migrant, at cape Greco 25 Mar, Akrotiri salt lake 29 Mar, Avdimou 28 Mar, Mandria 27–28 Mar, Curium fish farm field



Plate 7. Little Swift *Apus affinis* 12 January 2015, Zakaki marsh, Cyprus. © Raija Howard

Plate 8. Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* 27 April 2015, Anavargos hills, Cyprus. © Matt Smith

Plate 9. Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* 8 November 2014, Avagas gorge, Cyprus. © Matt Smith

Plate 10. Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 13 April 2015, Paphos lighthouse, Cyprus. © Colin Richardson

30 Mar–9 Apr, Paphos lighthouse 31 Mar, Lady's Mile 8 Apr, Akrotiri GP 15 Apr and Mandria 15 Apr. The first record **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* Karpas peninsula 6 Apr while one **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* Anavargos hills 27 Apr (Plate 8) was 30th record. One **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* Avagas gorge 6 Feb (Plate 9) while a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was at Akrotiri village 28 Apr and another Prodromi 11 May. One **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* Bishop's

pool 23 Jan was only 12th record in last ten years. The 19th record of **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* (a male) was at Paphos lighthouse 16 Apr. One male **Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus* cape Greco 30 Mar–4 Apr, two females there 1 Apr and a male Mandria 4–5 Mar. An influx of **Hooded Wheatears** *Oenanthe monacha* (formerly very rare migrant): one female cape Greco 12–14 Apr, a male Paphos lighthouse 13 Apr (Plate 10), six females Latsi beach, Polis, 28 Apr, one

Pegeia 1 May and one Paphos lighthouse 2 May.

The fifteenth record of **Pale Rockfinch** *Carpospiza brachydactyla* was at Livera 18 Mar while the 16th record of **Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia* was at cape Greco 5–16 Mar. Three **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus richardi* Paphos lighthouse 10 Mar and two 14 Apr while one near Phasouri reed-beds 12 Mar. A **Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch** *Rhodopechys sanguineus* in the Mandria beach area from 14 Jan, with two there 18–25 Jan; one Paphos lighthouse 12 Mar (second and third records). Single **Trumpeter Finches** *Bucanetes githagineus* cape Greco 15 Mar and 30 Mar–1 Apr. Largest influx on record of **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: up to 20 Paphos region and as far east as Akrotiri until early April, max 33 Armou 10 Jan. One **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella* Akrounta creek 27 Jan, c25 Troodos summer camp 1 Feb and two Troodos visitor centre 6 Feb. Single **Eastern Cinereous Buntings** *Emberiza cineracea* Anarita park 16 Mar, cape Greco 20 Mar, Mavrokolymbos dam 23 Mar and cape Kormakitis 6 Apr. Fourth record of **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*, near Nicosia 15 Apr.

EGYPT

An **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* singing 29 Jan in the harbour of the Aswan inter-dam reservoir.

ISRAEL

A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* remained at Kfar Barukh, Jizreel valley throughout Jan while a **Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* of the *fabalis* group was at Agamon Hula 2–17 Mar (fourth record). A **Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos*, Idan, north Arava, 30–31 Jan, of unknown origin; one previous record from 1958. Three **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* off Ashdod, Mediterranean coast, 17 Feb, and what was probably the same group but four birds, off Ashkelon 21 Feb (eighth record). A **Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* off Jaffa 8 Jan while a **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* there 6 Jan was the 7th record. One **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* Eilat 3–17 May was fifth record. A **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* off Eilat's North beach from 5 Feb for a few days. A **Lesser**

Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*, second record, remained at Eilat throughout Jan.

A record 45 000 **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* counted by IBRCE at Eilat 2–3 May. Three **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* migrated over Eilat and south Arava 14–27 Apr, with a further 15 seen May. A second-year **Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* picked up injured near Rahat, north Negev, 5 Apr and taken into care (fourth record). One juvenile **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* near Lakhish, south Judean plains, 30 Jan and a separate juvenile migrating over Kisra, western Galilee, 31 Mar. Also an immature near Nakhla, south coastal plains, 30 May (9th–11th records). **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Yotvata 12 Mar, IBRCE 27 Mar, another Yotvata, 31 Mar–4 Apr with another three there 10 Apr. One **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* first seen 31 Dec 2014 Timorim remained until 8 Jan, while another at Mishmar Haemek, Jizreel valley, on same date. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* Eilat 21–22 Apr and one **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaeetus audouinii* off Jaffa 8 Jan. Single **Lesser Crested Terns** *Thalasseus bengalensis* off Jaffa 6 Jan and at Rosh Hanikra, north Mediterranean coast, 13 Jan (latter wore ring and probably originated northwest Africa). One **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* Atlit, Carmel coast, 25–29 May while a **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa* was off Eilat's North beach throughout Feb.

An **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Yotvata 28 Feb. One female **Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Ashkelon, south coastal plains, 26 Mar–14 Apr was the first record away from Eilat and south Arava; another Eilat 18 May. One **Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris* Ashdod 10 Jan. Four **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* at several sites along the north Mediterranean coast 28–31 Mar while another Km20 salt pans, Eilat, 5 Apr, and five Se'ifim plains 6–10 Apr. **Oriental Skylarks** *Alauda gulgula* during March Eilat, Yotvata and Kfar Ruppin until at least 20 Mar. Male **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* Se'ifim plains, Eilat mountains 5–13 Apr. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* JBO 12 Feb. **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* in Eilat (11 Mar–10 Apr), Samar (11 Mar–4 Apr) and Yotvata (11 Mar); one Km20

salt pans, Eilat, 20 Apr. Subsequently first breeding records for Israel: two pairs north of Eilat successfully producing one and two fledglings respectively. A possible **Stejneger's Stonechat** *Saxicola [torquatus] stejnegeri* ringed IBRCE 30 Mar (potentially first record). A **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Kahal, east Galilee, 16 Apr. One female **Kurdistan Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* on mt Gilboa until at least 20 Mar while a male Tel Krayot near Arad, north Negev, 6 Mar. One **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* Jerusalem 8 Jan onwards.

KAZAKHSTAN

One **Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus* Сорбулак, Almaty oblast, 27 Dec 2014 while one **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* Almatinskaja oblast 13 Dec 2014. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Sorbulak lake, Almaty region, 29 Apr while a **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* Almatinskaja oblast 25 Jan. One **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* Sorbulak lake, Almaty region, 22 Mar while a **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* present 19 May east Caspian sea, 70 km northwest of Buzachi peninsula. A **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* and one **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Kanshengel village, Almaty region, 3 Jan. A **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Aktau 3 May. One **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Almatinskaja oblast 31 Jan and a **Lapland Longspur** *Calcarius lapponicus* Актай 43km on 13 Feb. One **Godlewski's Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii* VKO Katon-Karagay 17 Feb.

KUWAIT

Flock of 30 **Greater White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* Jahra pools reserve (JPR) 26 Jan, part of an influx into Arabia but only fourth record for Kuwait. Second record of **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* occurred JPR 11 Feb when three birds were seen. Third record **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*, Khiran 23 May and two birds JPR 25 May. One **Western White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* JPR 28 Jun and a **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* there 15 Jun, while the first record of **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* flew over the same location 1 Apr. The 14th record of **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus*

spinosus was at JPR 4 Mar while the eighth record of **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was at Zayed park 28 Feb. Sixth record **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* JPR 1 Apr while two **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* there 15 Jun (also sixth record).

On 10 Apr a **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* seen at Al Abra q (first record for over four years). Two **Pale Crag Martins** *Ptyonoprogne (fuligula) obsoleta* Jal Al Zour 14 Jan (ninth record) while first record of **Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus* Mutla'a ranch 15 Apr. Fourth record of **Grey-necked Bunting** *Emberiza buchanani* Al Abra q 24 Jan while one **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* Mutla'a ranch 24 Apr (last sighting 2005).

LEBANON

An adult male **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* shot near Damour, south of Beirut, 7 May; first record.

OMAN

Two **Eastern Greylag Geese** *Anser anser rubirostris* Khawr Dirif 9 Jan while **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* records came from various locations in the Salalah area 7 Jan–28 Apr, max 33 on 2 Feb Khawr Rouri, with six A'Shuweimiyah 1 Feb and three Shisr 14 Feb. 23 **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* off Raysut 11 Mar with 16 off the cliffs near Khawr Rouri 28 Apr, 14 off Ras Janjari 1 May and singles off Ras Al Hadd and Ras Al Khabbah 13 Jun. **Abdim's Storks** recorded Raysut sewage treatment plant until 13 Feb, max 600+ on 7 Jan. The **African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* in the Salalah area until 31 Dec 2014 was last seen at Khawr Rouri 22 May. 12 **Yellow Bitterns** *Ixobrychus sinensis* (new max) East Khawr 28 Apr. One **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Sohar 27 Mar and one Jarziz farm 29 Apr. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Billa, near Ras A'Suwadi, 27 Feb and another Al Khabourah 27 Mar. Fifth record **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* Wadi Aydam 10 Feb. A **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* was photo'd 8 Feb, Jebel Samhan (Plate 11). Two **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* Jarziz farm 29 Apr with four there 18 May and one 13 Jun when an immature bird was also at Ras Al



Plate 11. Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* 8 February 2015, Jebel Samhan, Oman. © Hanne & Jens Eriksen



Plate 12. Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* 7 January 2015, Salalah, Oman. © Hanne & Jens Eriksen

Khabbah. First record **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora*, Jarziz farm 12 Jun. A Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Al Balid farm 9 and 21 Jan.

There was a small influx of **White-breasted Waterhens** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* with singles at Muntasar and Al Baleed farm 5 Jan with another Salalah 9 Jan and Khawr Rouri 10 Jan as well as a record from the north, Qurm park 12 Feb. The long-staying **Purple Swampphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* at Al Ansab wetland seen regularly until 16 Apr. A **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* Khawr Rouri 22 May. One **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* in the Salalah area 31

Dec 2014–9 Jan. The **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* first recorded 5 Dec 2014 Raysut STP remained to 28 Apr. **Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus* is rarely recorded in the south so eight on 7 Jan at Raysut STP is unusual. **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* recorded at Jarziz farm (22 on 7 Jan, Plate 12), Sahanawt farm (62 on 31 Jan) and Shisr (ten on 14 Feb). 450 **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva*, the highest concentration for two years, East Khawr 25 Feb. Three **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* East Khawr 25 Feb. The **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* first seen Khawr Rouri 18 Nov

2014 remained there until 16 Mar. **One Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* (an uncommon visitor) Sahanawt farm 31 Jan. 28 **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* Dawkah farm 4 Jan (highest number for some years) while a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was at Khawr Taqah 1 Feb. The first record of **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* (two birds) was at Taqah 6 Jan and still present 1 May. 1500 **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus* Quriyat 1 Jan. The **Black Tern** first recorded East Khawr 5 Oct 2014 and subsequently Raysut STP until 31 Dec was seen there 9 Jan and at Al Baleed park, Salalah, 1 Feb. One recorded Khawr Dirif 10 Feb. A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* off the Wave, Muscat, 24 Jun (fifth record) while the seventh record of **Long-tailed Skua** *S. longicaudus* seen on boat trip Muscat–Quriyat 29 May.

Single **Rufous Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia (orientalis) meena* Qatbit (3 Jan), Sahanawt farm (6 Jan), Shisr (6 Jan) and Raysut STP (7 Jan). Male Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopaceus* Al Balid farm 5 and 9 Jan with other singles at Al Ansab wetland 3 Feb, Taqah 6 Feb, Shisr 10 and 23 Feb. The seventh record of Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was at Al Balid farm 9 Jan. One **Short-eared Owl** *A. flammeus* Hayma sewer 3 Jan and another Sohar 27 Feb. Eight **Western Barn Owls** *Tyto (alba) alba* (new max) Sohar 20 Feb and single Khawr Dirif 12 Mar. The first **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* (a male) of the season at the Wave 24 Apr, seven Al Ghaftayn 26 Apr and eight Dawqah farm 27 Apr. **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* at Sohar 20 Feb (three) and 15 Apr (two), Salalah (one) and Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos (one) both 27 Apr. An **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Sahanawt farm 9 Apr and one at nearby Jarziz farm 18 Apr while a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Ayn Hamran 26 Feb and one Sahanawt farm 17 Apr. 125 **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* Al Ghaftayn 26 Apr. A **Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata* Khawr Rouri 1 Jun (ninth record). An early **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* Qatbit 5 Jan.

One **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* and two **Masked Shrikes** *Lanius nubicus* Al Ghaftayn 4 Apr while the third record of **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* at Qatbit 3–5 Jan. The eighth record of **Black Drongo**

Dicrurus macrocercus Ayn Hamran 6 Jan while 25 **Grey Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Muday 6 Jan, rising to 34 on 13 Mar. Two **Calandra Larks** *Melanocorypha calandra* Sohar 6–20 Feb increasing to four on 21 Feb (first record) while 200 Bimaculated Larks *M. bimaculata* there 20 Feb. Two **Bar-tailed Larks** *Ammomanes cinctura* Shisr 20 Feb. The fourth record of **Pale Martin** *Riparia (riparia) diluta* at Raysut STP 7 Jan while a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* there 16 Apr. One **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* Qatbit 3–5 Jan and one Ayn Tobruk 5 Jan. A **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *P. humei* Qatbit 4 Jan, increasing to three 9 Jan. One **Hume's Whitethroat** *Sylvia althaea* Al Mughsayl 4 Jan (fourth record). A **Brahminy Starling** *Sturnia pagodorum* Tawi Atayr 8 Jan while over 400 **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Pastor roseus* Jarziz farm 7 Feb and five **Common Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris* Sahanawt farm 6 Jan. Two **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* were seen on Sayq plateau 2 Jan while 11 **Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas galactotes* Al Ansab wetland 20 Apr and 15 on 27 Apr. Third record **Kurdistan Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* Khawr Rouri 10 Jan while an **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe (hispanica) melanoleuca* Dawqah farm 11 Mar. Over 100 **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata* at Dawqah farm 27 Apr. A **Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla* Ayn Tobruk 5 Jan but not clear if this was the same as that reported at this location Nov 2014. 200 **Pale Rockfinches** *Carpodospiza brachydactyla* Sohar 20 Mar and 300 on 10 Apr. Over 300 **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* Khawr Taqah 12 Mar including *lutea* (1), *feldegg* (5), *beema* (10). Four **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus (novaeseelandiae) richardi* Jarziz farm 25 Feb while an Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Al Baleed farm 9 Jan.

QATAR

First time breeding proven for **Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (several pairs), **Saunders's Tern** *Sternula (albifrons) saundersi* (six or more pairs) and **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata* (one or more pairs). A female 'honey buzzard', over-wintering at Doha golf course 17 Nov 2014–9 Mar 2015, finally identified as a **European Honey Buzzard** × **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* × *P. ptilorhynchus* hybrid. A kite on the north coast 22 Apr

appeared to be an intergrade **Black Kite** × **Black-eared Kite** *Milvus (migrans) migrans* × *M. (m.) lineatus*. 20 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* Irkaya farm 3 Apr while a **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo* there 26 Jun.

Five **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* IF 29 May and a **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* Sailiya (west) sewage works 22 Apr. One **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* IF 4 May, two **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* there 5 Apr and 12 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* 26 Jun. Pale phase **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Al Wakrah beach 28 Apr. Four **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* IF 19 June while a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* was there 5 Jun. Two **Eurasian Scops Owls** *Otus scops* 21 Mar and four **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* 26 Jun IF. A **European Nightjar** *C. europaeus* Doha 20 Oct–15 Dec 2014. Two **White-throated Kingfishers** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Sailiya (west) sewage works Nov 2014–Mar 2015. Eight **Eurasian Crag Martins** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Abu Nahkla 28 Mar and three IF 4 Apr. Three **White-throated Robins** *Irania gutturalis* IF 8 April while a male **Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus* ssp *variegatus* there 20 Feb. A **White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* at IF 30 May–2 Jun. One **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* 21 Mar and 22 **Pale Rockfinches** *Carospiza brachydactyla* 5 Apr, both IF. Six **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* Sealine beach resort 24–28 Oct 2014.

SAUDI ARABIA

Twenty plus **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* South Jizan wastewater treatment wetlands (WTW) 7 Feb–4 Mar and 50+ **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* there 7 Feb. A **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* at Sabkhat Al Fasl (SAF) 7 Jun. One **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* South Jizan WTW 6 Feb with twelve **Sabya WTW** 7 Feb. A female **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* Deffi park, Jubail, 24 Jan. Two female **Crested Honey Buzzards** *P. ptilorhynchus* remained together at Dhahran Hills until 19 Jan with one remaining to 22 Apr with another female at Jeddah 10 Feb. A **'Tihama' Shikra** *Accipiter (badius/brevipes) spheonurus* Wadi Thee Ghazal, near Taif, 2 May. 73 **Grey-headed Swampheens** *Porphyrio (porphyrio) poliocephalus* SAF 29 May

(new max). One adult **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* SAF 22 May, first record. Two **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus* gulf of Salwa 21 Apr. Flock of at least 30 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* in a field just south of Tabuk 20 Feb while a satellite-tagged bird wintered near the Jordan border. One **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* King AbdulAziz University of Science & Technology (KAUST) 21 Mar. A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* 120 km east of Madinah 10 Apr and one KAUST golf course 17 Apr. At least four **Little Terns** *Sternula albifrons* KAUST beach 8–15 May, an unusual occurrence on the west coast. An adult **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* SAF 29 May (second documented record Eastern province). One **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* south of Jizan 7 Feb–4 Mar while a **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* at KAUST golf course 24 Apr was well north of its normal range. Three **White-throated Kingfishers** *Halcyon smyrnensis* SAF 2 Jan–13 Feb (Plate 13), one on small pond Dhahran Hills golf course 13–18 Feb and one Madinah area 11 Apr. A **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Dhahran Hills golf course pond 13–18 Feb. One **Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* Wadi Thee Ghazal 30 April, a northerly record for this species. An adult **Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach* Dhahran golf course 14 Feb–4 Apr (Plate 14), first record.

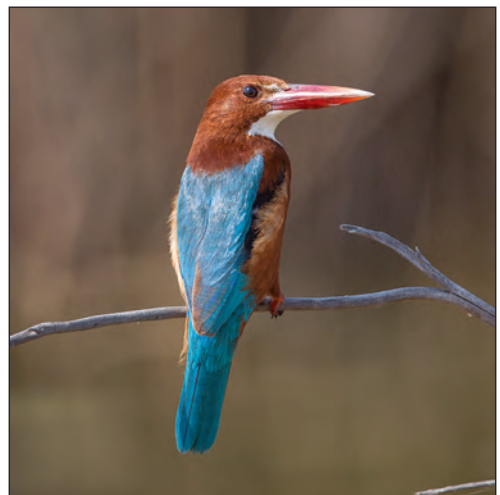


Plate 13. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* 23 January 2015, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington



Plate 14. Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* 4 April 2015, Dhahran Hills golf course, Dhahran, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

Four Eurasian **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* SAF 5 Dec 2014 with two more Ash Shargiyah Development Company farm, Fadhili 27 Mar. A probable breeding pair of **Thick-billed Larks** *Ramphocoris clotbey* Riyadh area 1 May. First breeding **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* for Arabia were found at Al Hayer, near Riyadh, in February with a total of 13 nests. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus (collybita) tristis* trapped and ringed SAF 23 Jan. One **Common Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* trapped and ringed SAF 27 Mar (Plate 15) while a **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Haql 23 Feb. An adult male **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* trapped and ringed SAF 23 Jan (Plate 16) and remained until 20 Feb with another present at the same site 31 Jan. Male **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* near Tabuk 11 April, a rare vagrant to western Saudi Arabia. An immature **White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* KAUST 16 May. Both **Kurdistan Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrma* and **Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe chrysopygia* were at Wadi Rabigh 23 Jan. Two **Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeaks** *Rhynchostruthus percivali* near Taif 11 Jan and a single **Eurasian Siskin** *Spinus spinus* was on a farm just south of Tabuk 22 Feb.

TURKEY

Two new species were added to the country list during the period: **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* and **Sykes's Warbler** *Hippolais rama*, see below for details.

The year started relatively mild but short periods of very cold weather brought a good array of species. Four spp of grey geese

seen in the same view at Kızılırmak delta including a (**Taiga**) **Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* 12–14 Feb and two **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* 12–21 Feb. Other birds escaping the northern cold were six **Greater Scaups** *Aythya marila* İğneada 10 Jan, one Lake Büyükçekmece 3 Jan and two Ondokuzmayıs harbour, Samsun, 24 Jan. A single **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* Fethiye bay 9 May was a good sighting for the south, with others at Riva 2 Jan and Kızılırmak delta 15 Jan. One **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* Yeşilirmak delta 16 Jan together with a staggering 165 **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* at the same location. More westerly sightings included two İğneada 10 Jan and one lake Küçükçekmece, İstanbul, 16 Jan. One **Goosander** *Mergus merganser* İğneada 10–11 Jan. Four **Horned Grebes** *Podiceps auritus*, all singles, were recorded: one each at Kızılırmak and Yeşilirmak delta 15 Feb and 15 Mar and two others in surprising locations, one in continental lake Mogan, Ankara, and one at lake Amik, Hatay, 2 Jan and 28 Feb respectively. **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* is now seen more regularly than in the past; one lake Kulu 9 Mar increasing to two 17 Mar.

The first record of **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* (a second year bird) was detected in a suburb of İstanbul by chance through a photograph 2 May. **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* now regularly breed in southeast Turkey, although still in very low numbers; one pair Bozova, Şanlıurfa, 1 May where breeding in the last three years. A second **Red Kite** *Milvus migrans* Hatay in Subaşı 16 Jan, with another seen during a systematic count of migrant raptors on the Bosphorus 12 Mar. One **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Samandağ, Hatay, 12 Jan was a rare wintering record. Increasing birding activity on the Mediterranean sea coasts revealed up to 6 **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* 11–18 Jan Boğazkent, Antalya and one Gediz delta 13 Jan. Three **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were present Antalya 29 Mar–5 Apr. Two migrant flocks of **Demoiselle Cranes** *Grus virgo* were detected: 25 Kastamonu coast 21 Mar and 120 Göksu delta 22 Mar. A single second year bird accompanied **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* Kızılırmak delta 17–21 May. One **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus*

leucurus on the Syrian border near Akçakale, Şanlıurfa, 8 Jan–3 Feb while a single **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, probably an over-wintering bird, Göksu delta 14 Jan. A wintering **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Yeşilırmak delta 16 Jan. A roost of 18 **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* near Vize, Kırklareli, 26 Jan and 2 Feb, while another roost of 11 Yedikır dam lake, Amasya, 15 Feb.

The late March passage along the Mediterranean coast brought an adult **Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris* in adult plumage at Boğazkent, Antalya, 24 Mar–2 Apr. One **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* Tuzla lake, Adana, 7 Feb was a very early arrival, as were ten **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* Defne, Hatay, 28 Jan. Three **Blyth's Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* were ringed Kızılırmak delta 8, 12 and 23 May. A **Booted Warbler** *Iduna caligata* Erdemli, Mersin, 5 Mar and another Birecik 18 May. The first record of **Sykes's Warbler** *I. rama* was recorded at Yüksekova Hakkari 18 May (the Euphrates valley seems to be good for spring passage). A single **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* Boğaçay, Antalya, 9 Apr (probably a commoner species than the extremely low number of sightings indicates). A single **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia (nana) nana* Boğazkent, Antalya, 29 Mar–2 Apr. Several overshoot **Cyprus Wheatears** *Oenanthe cypriaca* present along the Mediterranean coast opposite Cyprus 13 Mar–6 Apr, and at Manavgat, much further away from Cyprus, 2 and 3 Apr. A good number of **Desert Wheatears** *Oenanthe deserti* recorded along Antalya coast Boğazkent–Manavgat, a total of 13 in 6 observations 29 Mar–4 Apr. One **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewski* Milleyha, Hatay, 25 Jan was the third sighting of this species at this site. The only interesting winter passerine was a single **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalus* Kızılırmak delta 19 Feb.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

A pair of **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* Al Ain 4 Jun suggested breeding; this species has overwintered, with suspected breeding, in the UAE in previous years. A boat trip off Kalba on the east coast 2 Jun produced a **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*. An **Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus (ibis) coromandus*, presumably the long-term returning bird since August

2009, Wamm farms (WF) 28 Mar with a second bird joining it 11 Apr. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* seen from Delma island ferry 7 Feb. Up to seven **Crested Honey-Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* together in Abu Dhabi at beginning of March. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Dubai pivot fields (PF) 21 Mar while several **Black-eared Kites** *Milvus (migrans) lineatus* there January into February. A **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* Jebel Hafeet 5 Mar while several Al Qudra 6 Apr (with one still there 18 Apr). Four **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* Sila 3 Apr, an unusual number. A **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo b. vulpinus* Ghantoot 7 Apr. Ras al Khor had 21 **Great Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* 3 Jan with a *fulvescens* morph there 30 Jan. A **Steppe Eagle** *A. nipalensis* Ras al Khor 7 Feb and one near Al Dhaid 15 Mar. Up to three individual **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *A. heliaca* Al Qudra until mid January. A dark phase **Booted Eagle** *A. pennata* Dubai PF 3 Jan. 140 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* WF 24 Apr with 110 still present 8 May while a **Sooty Falcon** *F. concolor* over Jebel Hafeet 7 May.

As many as three **Corncrakes** *Crex crex* Al Qudra on several dates early May to the 9th. One **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* Al Wathba lake 20 Mar. **Asian Koels** *Eudynamis scolopacea* Safa park 5 Feb and another two days later Mamzar park with a third Jebel Dhanna 20 Mar. Several **Eurasian Scops Owls** *Otus scops* in several locations 20–21 Mar while **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* recorded Sharjah 27 Feb, Bhalghelam island 20 Mar and over Abu Dhabi 18 Apr. Two **Little Swifts** *Apus affinis* Delma island 30–31 Jan while a single over Al Ain 13 Mar. A **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Dubai PF 3 Jan. Nine **Steppe Grey**



Plate 15. Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* 27 March 2015, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington



Plate 16. Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* 23 January 2015, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

Shrikes *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris* WF 11 Apr was a good count. A **Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus* Dubai 8 Apr. The second **Ashy Drongo** *D. leucophaeus* of the winter was seen in Mamzar park 4 Jan (although reported by a non-birder at least one week prior to this); the same, or possibly a different bird, was still present 13 Feb. A **Mesopotamian Crow** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* photographed at Khor al Beida 1 Mar; although not seen last winter this may be the original bird from 2012–13. Flocks of **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* remained at Sir Bani Yas (up to 61) and Lulu island (up to 130) throughout February, with smaller numbers Delma island. The latest ever **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* WF 9 May. Two **Wire-tailed Swallows** *Hirundo smithii* Warsan 7 Feb with one remaining until 27th. A **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* WF 28 Mar and another Sila 3 Apr. A **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquata* Jebel Hafeet 10–22 Jan. A **European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* Safa park 13 Feb while up to four **White-throated Robins** *Irania gutturalis* Mamzar park with singles at other locations during an influx of migrants after a severe dust-storm 3 Apr.

The **Pied Stonechat** *Saxicola caprata* in Abu Dhabi from 29 Nov 2014 remained until 22 Mar. Three male **Siberian Stonechats** *S.*

maurus ssp *variegata* were at Sila 6 Mar. **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* were scattered round the Gulf coast from 24 Feb including a *vittata* Lulu island 27 Feb. **Eastern Mourning Wheatears** *O. lugens* Jebel Hafeet (one) 22 Jan (first seen December 2014) and Delma island (two) 30/31 Jan and 6 Feb. Single female **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* Mamzar park (3 Apr) and Sila (4 Apr) after the 3 Apr dust-storm. One **Taiga Flycatcher** *F. albicilla* Mamzar park 21–31 Mar. A **Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus* present for a few days Mushreef palace gardens, Abu Dhabi, from 16 Jan. A juvenile **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla (flava)* ssp photo'd Dubai PF 14 May, with a male **Black-headed Wagtail** *M. (flava) feldegg* there early June; this taxon has bred intermittently here since 2008. Single **Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* WF 16 Jan and Dubai PF 30 Jan while birds first found December 2014 at Hamraniyah 2 Jan. A **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* Safa park 11 Feb together with two **Eurasian Siskins** *Carduelis spinus*. What appeared to be a wild **Eastern Goldfinch** *C. (carduelis) carneiceps* was at Green Mubazzarah 17–23 Feb. An **Eastern Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza (cineracea) seminowii* Mamzar park 17 Mar with others at various locations after the 3 Apr dust-storm. One male **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* Mamzar park 9 May.

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