

# AROUND THE REGION

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## CYPRUS

Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* were at Larnaca sewage treatment plant from the start of the year until 23 Jan. A high count of 400 **Northern Shovelers** *Spatula clypeata* Neopolis (Gülseren) wetland 3 Mar. Three **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* Kioneli (Gönyeli) dam 6 Mar and one Tziaos (Serdarlı) reservoir 3 Apr. High counts of 125 **Common Pochards** *Aythya ferina* Kapouti (Kalkanlı) dam 18 Jan and 140 Kioneli (Gönyeli) dam 22 Feb. 56 **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* and six broods Famagusta (Mağusa) wetland 14 May. Three **Tufted Ducks** *A. fuligula* Athalassa dam 9 Jan decreasing to two 13 Jan-18 Feb, one Kapouti (Kalkanlı) dam 18 Jan and a female Oroklini marsh 4 Feb. The female **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* first recorded early Dec 2017 Akrotiri gravel pits seen there 2-3 Jan and probably the same bird seen heading west off

Paphos headland 6 Jan where a female also 4 Mar. A male and female **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* Kanli (Kanlıköy) reservoir 3 Apr and one Mia Millia (Haspolat) STP 30 Apr (Plate 1). The first record of **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* Paphos 12 Apr. Single **Yelkouan Shearwaters** *Puffinus yelkouan* Paphos 28 Mar and cape Greco 1 Apr. The **Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* (one of two first seen 16 Nov 2017) remained offshore Koukليا, Paphos throughout Jan until 7 Feb. 68 **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* Larnaca STP during Feb and up to three at other wetlands until late Apr. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Ercan airport 23 Apr and two near Apostolos Andreas (Zafer Bornu) Karpasia (Karpaz), 19 May and a **Western White Stork** *C. c. ciconia* Phasouri reedbeds 21 Apr. **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* numbers included seven Akrotiri salt lake 2 Feb, five Oroklini marsh 31 Mar, 16



Plate 1. White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* 30 April 2018 Mia Millia (Haspolat) sewage treatment plant, Cyprus. © Olkan Ergüler

Akrotiri SL 21 Apr and 35 Paphos headland 24 Apr. A single Akrotiri 31 May–12 Jun (two 8 Jun). Single **Eurasian Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* Kioneli (Gönyeli) dam 12 Mar, Akhna dam 1 and 2 Apr, Lady's Mile 13 Apr and Zakaki marsh 12 May. Four **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* Trioivit (Arapköy) dam 19 May. 330 **Western Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus [ibis] ibis* and 141 occupied nests Famagusta wetland 7 Apr. A single **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Evretou dam 5–10 May, Agia Varvara 11 May and Akrotiri SL 15 May assumed to be the same bird. Sub-adult **Northern Gannets** *Morus bassanus* cape Greco 16 Mar and Paphos 28 Mar.

Six reports of single **Western Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* 23 Mar–18 Apr from Anarita, Phasouri, Agia Varvara, Asprokremmos, Karpasia and Nata. An adult and an immature **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Agios Theodoros 18–24 Feb and again 3 and 31 Mar while singles cape Greco 19 Apr and Akrotiri SL 26 Apr. Single **Booted Eagles** *Hieraaetus pennata* Theletra 23 Mar, Evretou dam 10 Apr and Argaka dam 21 May. A **Corncrake** *Crex crex* heard Phasouri reedbed 10 Apr. A **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* Agia Varvara 4–17 Apr and several **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* (max two birds) late Mar–Apr Agia Varvara, Akhna dam, Episkopi (Paphos), Paralimni lake, Phasouri reedbed and Zakaki marsh. Three flocks of **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* Akrotiri SL, 17 and 72 on 11 Apr (Plate 2) and 25 12 Apr. Single **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* Akrotiri SL 27 Jan, Agios Loukas marsh 19–30 Mar,

Asprokremmos dam 24 Mar and flying west over Petra tou Romiou 11 Apr.

Despite drought conditions, a number of interesting wader records. 15 **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Akrotiri GP and 12 Larnaca airport pools (south) 22 Mar, 12 Spiros pool 2 Apr, 20 Akrotiri GP 29 Apr and two Akrotiri SL 21 May. A **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* Rizokarpaso (Dipkarpaz) 31 Mar. Two **Greater Sand Plovers** *Anarhynchus leschenaultii* Silverbeach 3 Mar, ten Rizokarpaso (Dipkarpaz) 4 Mar, one Spiros pool 8 Jun and one Paphos headland 11 Jun. Single **Caspian Plovers** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* Akrotiri SL 7, 21 and 26 Mar, and 18–19 Apr, Mandria 14–15 Mar (Plate 3) and Paralimni lake 6–8 Apr. The regular wintering **Eurasian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* remained Paphos headland until 7 Apr, while singles Lady's Mile 26 Mar, Akrotiri SL 8–26 Apr, Mandria 20 and 23 Apr, and four flying W Lady's Mile 20 Apr. Three **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata* Glapsides wetland 12 Feb. A **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Timi beach 29 Apr. Up to four **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were present during Jan Akrotiri SL, Larnaca SL and Paralimni lake while 12 Akrotiri SL 27 Apr and ten 1–3 May. 110 **Ruffs** *Calidris pugnax* Mia Millia (Haspolat) STP 1 May. **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Calidris falcinellus* reported only in May this spring, 11 Akrotiri SL, 3 May, six 7 May and one 11 May. A **Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* Prastio Avdimou 19 Jan. Several **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* records: two Paralimni lake 4 Apr, singles Polis 1 Apr, Agia Varvara 4–6 Apr,



**Plate 2.** Demoiselle Cranes *Grus virgo* 11 March 2018, Akrotiri salt lake, Cyprus © Rajja Howard



**Plate 3.** Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* 15 March 2018, Mandria (Paphos), Cyprus. © Jane Stylianou

Phasouri reedbed 8 Apr, Episkopi (Paphos) 17 Apr and Polis reedbed 3 May. Three **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* Larnaca airport pools (north) 20–22 Apr, one remaining to 25 Apr and up to four at Akrotiri SL 25–27 Apr with two there 3 May. Two winter records of **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*, one at both Kioneli (Gönyeli) and Kanli (Kanlıköy) dams 13 Jan and a late record of 12 Famagusta ((Mağusa) wetland 3 May. A **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* moved east from Timi and Mandria (Paphos) on 23 Mar (Plate 4) to Akrotiri GP 24–26 Mar where possibly the same bird was present 5–8 Apr, with another Larnaca STP 2 Apr.

Two **Little Gulls** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* Lady's Mile 4 Jan and one 19–29 Jan; one Larnaca STP 23 Jan and 5 Mar and one Akrotiri GP 16 Mar. Single **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* reported in Jan, Feb and Apr at Trikomo (Ískele), cape Greco, Dekeleia, Larnaca and Paphos with up to three in March at Akrotiri, Timi and Mandria and a high



**Plate 4.** Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* 23 March 2018, Mandria (Paphos), Cyprus. © Dave Walker

count of 12 at Akrotiri 20 Mar. Single **Common Gulls** *Larus canus* Lady's Mile 22–29 Jan and 8–10 Feb. A **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Mandria 18 Mar. Two **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* mating at Akrotiri 22 Jun (first reported occurrence). Single **Black Terns** Oroklini marsh 20 Apr and Akrotiri SL 31 May. Single **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Spiros beach 3 Apr and Paphos headland 7 Apr.

Three **Western Stock Doves** *Columba oenas* Omodos 10 Apr, while a **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Mandria 11–17 Apr and another Petounta point 21 Apr (sixth & seventh records). A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* Silverbeach 27 Jan. Single **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* Mar–early May various locations and an unusual three at Akrotiri 19 Mar. A **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Phasouri reedbed 6 May. Single **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* Akhna dam 31 Mar–6 Apr, Triovit (Arapköy) dam 13 May, Argaka dam 15–25 May and Oroklini marsh 7 Jun. The first spring **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* Oroklini marsh 24 Mar (two) while up to six seen until 6 Apr Paphos headland, Akrotiri, Mandria, Paphos sewage plant, Mavrokolymbos dam, Meneou and Paramali and one Larnaca 2 May. **Eurasian Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* Lakatameia, Nicosia 18 Jan and Anarita 25 Jan may have overwintered. 20 **Eleonora's Falcons** *Falco eleonora* Palaikythro (Balikesir) pools 31 May.

A **Daurian Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* cape Greco 11–12 Apr while a **Turkestan Shrike** *L. phoenicuroides* was at Kiti, Larnaca, 19 Mar. A **Great Grey Shrike** *L. excubitor* Agios Theodoros, Larnaca on 10 Feb the first record of the nominate race and remained until 1 Mar. Two **Bimaculated Larks** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* Akrotiri GP 11–20 Mar, one remaining to 27 Mar, while two were at cape Greco 27 Mar with singles there 9 Apr, also Mandria 11 Apr and Akrotiri 14 Apr. 86 **Greater Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* cape Andreas 20 Mar. Seven **Lesser Short-toed Larks** *Alaudala rufescens* Akrotiri 5 Jan and one at Pegeia 4 Apr.

Two **Bonelli's Warblers** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Karpasia (Karpaz) 2 Apr. Single **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* Agia Varvara and Drouseia 25 Apr. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* Agia Napa STP 26 Apr,

one ringed Agios Minas, Paphos 5 May, one Akrotiri 12–14 May, one ringed Polis 12 May and one Mavrokolymbos dam 14 May. Single **Savi's Warblers** *Locustella luscinioides* Akhna dam 14 Mar and 3–4 Apr, Neo Horio, Paphos, 25 and 28 Mar, Polis 30 Mar, cape Greco 22 Mar and Paralimni lake 3 Apr. Up to three **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* on the Karpasia peninsula 15–18 Apr with singles Akrotiri 26 Apr and 17 May. The fourth record of **Ménétriés's Warbler** *S. mystacea* cape Greco 3 Apr.

A **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* Arodes 31 Jan was the only record. Two **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Pastor roseus* Karpasia 11 May and 18 Livera (Sadrazamköy) 18 May. A late **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* Troodos 14 Apr. A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* ringed Palaikythro (Balikesir) pools 8 Apr. A **Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* Elea golf course, Paphos, 17 May, first since 2013. **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* were at Baths of Aphrodite 29 Mar and 3 Apr, cape Greco 5, 7 and 21 Apr, Kiti dam 14 Apr, Bishop's Pool 28 Apr and Mandria 8 May. A female **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *F. parva* Paphos headland 29 Apr. A **Western Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus maurus* Mandria 1–3 Mar while single 'Caspian Stonechats' *S. maurus hemprichii* were at Paphos headland 19–23 Mar and 9 Apr, Akrotiri 19 Mar and 2 Apr and cape Greco 3 Apr (Plate 5). An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Akrotiri 14–21 Jan was the earliest ever record. A female **Hooded Wheatear** *O. monacha* Paphos headland



**Plate 5.** 'Caspian' Stonechat *Saxicola maurus hemprichii* 3 April 2018, cape Greco, Cyprus. © Rajja Howard



**Plate 6.** 'Eastern' or 'Siberian' White Wagtail *Motacilla alba ocularis*, 12 April 2018, Phasouri reedbed, Cyprus.

15 May. **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* recorded several dates 19 Feb–14 May, mainly singles, although two males Larnaca STP 2 Apr. An eastern race **White Wagtail** *M. alba ocularis* ('East Siberian Wagtail') Phasouri 28 Mar–15 Apr (Plate 6), first record. A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* Paphos 23 Mar, one Paphos headland 5 Apr with two there 10 Apr. The third record of **Blyth's Pipit** *A. godlewskii* Mandria 13–28 Mar. A **Tawny Pipit** *A. campestris* Mavrokolymbos dam 5 Jun, a late record. Higher than usual wintering numbers recorded of **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla*, **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and **Eurasian Siskins** *Spinus spinus* with several three figure flocks in Troodos during Mar. A **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* cape Greco 29 Mar and one Rizokarpaso (Dipkarpaz) rubbish dump 8 Apr. Two **Yellowhammers** *Emberiza citrinella* Troodos 25 Feb. A female **Western Cinereous Bunting** *E. cineracea* cape Greco 3 May.

**IRAN** (January records Hormozgan province, April records Khuzestan and Fars provinces)

Seven **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* Sararu 25 Jan. Two **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* Hakami 21 Jan. Up to six **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* around Ali Zoghayeh and Haft Tapeh areas 13 Apr. Six **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Jahad park 19 Jan, one Badgiran

restaurant 19 Jan, one Bahmani 20 Jan, two along the road to Minab 20 Jan, three Hakami 21 Jan, one Minab 22 Jan, two along road to Jask 24 Jan. A **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*, 50 **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* and two 2cy **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *A. heliaca* Aftab Natanaz 5 Apr. A juv **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Khalathi creek 24 Jan. 30 **Great Stone-curlews** *Esacus recurvirostris* Tiab creek 21 Jan, two Azini creek 22 Jan, 14 Khalathi creek 24 Jan. 100 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* Chakha creek 20 Jan. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Tiab creek 21 Jan and 20 **Great Knots** *Calidris tenuirostris* Golshar shore 18 Jan. 58 **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* Azini creek 22 Jan, 160 Khalathi creek 24 Jan. Two **Common Gulls** *Larus canus* Tiab 21 Jan.

A **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* Genu 26 Jan and four **Spotted Owlets** *Athene brama* Hakami 21 Jan. An **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Helveh 12 Apr (Plate 7). A **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Persepolis and five Nagshe Rustam 9 Apr. Two **Sind Woodpeckers** *Dendrocopos assimilis* Asheghan 23 Jan (Plate 8). A **Daurian Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Helveh 12 Apr and a **Turkestan Shrike** *L. phoenicuroides* Maranjab desert 5 Apr, one Izadkhash caravanserai 7 Apr, two Pasergad 7 Apr and two Bishapur 10 Apr. Three **Mesopotamian Crows** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* Helveh 12 Apr, four while travelling and two Ali Zoghayeh 13 Apr. 15 **Sand**



**Plate 7.** Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* 12 April 2018 Helveh, Khuzestan, Iran. © Magnus Ullman



**Plate 8.** Sind Woodpecker *Dendrocopos assimilis*, male, 23 January 2018, Asheghan, Hormozgan, Iran. © Magnus Ullman



**Plate 9.** Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* 24 January 2018, Khalathi creek, Hormozgan, Iran. © Magnus Ullman

**Larks** *Alaudala raytal* Golshar shore 19 Jan, ten Kolagh Kashi 20 Jan, rather common Tiab 21 Jan, common Azini creek harbour 22 Jan. Ten **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Bishapur 10

Apr, common, also nest building, Helveh 12 Apr and ten Choga Zanbil 12 Apr. A **Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus* Jahad park 19 Jan, five Gaz river 23 Jan, one Sararu 25 Jan.

A **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *P. humei* Bahmani 20 Jan—probably the same bird seen 25 Nov.

Two **Iraq Babblers** *Turdoides altirostris* Sarakhyeh 11 Apr, two Shavoor river 13 Apr and four Ali Zoghayeh 13 Apr. Five **Afghan Babblers** *T. (caudata) huttoni* Koshtargah 19 Jan, two Hasan Langi Pain 20 Jan, three Hakami 21 Jan, two Del Goraz 22 Jan, rather common Gaz river 23 Jan, four Kuh Mobarak 23 Jan, seven Bishapur 10 Apr. An **Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris* Asheghan 23 Jan, five Arzhan and Parishan protected area 10 Apr, and two Parak same date. Three **Oriental White-eyes** *Zosterops palpebrosus* Khalathi creek 24 Jan (Plate 9). Three **Eurasian Nuthatches** *Sitta europaea* Arzhan and Parishan protected area 10 Apr, six Parak 10 Apr (very southerly records). Three adult and one juv **Mistle Thrushes** *Turdus v. viscivorus* Matades Parak 10 Apr (very southerly records). A pair of **Finsch's Wheatears** *Oenanthe finschii* (singing male) Persepolis 9 Apr (quite far south). **Dead Sea Sparrows** *Passer moabiticus* common (also many nests) Helveh 12 Apr and six Haft Tapeh 13 Apr (including several nests, also active nest building). 100 **Desert Finches** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* Pasergad 7 Apr. Three **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala* Bishapur 10 Apr, 100–200 near Helveh 12 Apr and one Shavoor river 13 Apr.

## IRAQ

Four **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* near Halabja 1 Feb. A **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* near Halabja 27 Dec 2017. Seven **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* Qara Dagh area 5 Apr and nine Piraagroon waste disposal site 1 Jun. Three **Cinereous Vultures** *Aegypius monachus* feeding on a dead cow near Khoshk mountain 19 Jan and two **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* there on the same date. Five **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *A. heliaca* near Qara Dagh 8 Jan, six near Arbat and seven Darbandikhan 15 Jan.

A male **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Mosul dam 19 Jun (vagrant to Iraq). A **Middle-Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocytes medius* Sharbazher area 19 Apr and a **European Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* there 30 Mar (both uncommon in Iraq). A **Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* near Darbandikhan 12 Jan and one near Halabja 27 Jan. Four **Masked Shrikes**



**Plate 10.** Rook *Corvus frugilegus* 21 May 2018, near Sirwan, Iraq. © Korsh Ararat

*Lanius nubicus* Sharbazher area 19 Apr. A pair of **Rooks** *Corvus frugilegus* in farmland with riparian woodland near Sirwan 21 May (Plate 10) appeared to be nesting (which would be the first breeding record if confirmed).

## ISRAEL

One of the **Red-breasted Mergansers** *Mergus serrator* seen in December remained at Acre until end Feb. A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* Eilat 3 Jan–25 Mar (tenth record) also spent time at Aqaba bird observatory, Jordan (first record). A **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates monorhis* off Eilat 2 Jun. A **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* km20 salt pans, Eilat, 4 Mar–end Apr (third record). A **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* Agamon Hula, 6–16 May and an immature **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* Gesher, Jordan valley, 18 May (12th record). Several migrating **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Mar–Apr, last record 29 Jun, Eilat. The long-staying immature **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* over Eilat mountains 13 Feb, 12–13 Mar, 7 Apr and an adult **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* there 5 Feb. Two **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* Hula valley during Mar. Three **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* North Beach, Eilat 10 May (sixth record). The fourth record of **Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus* Afikim, Jordan valley, 12 Jan–16 Feb. Several **Caspian Plovers** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* Yotvata, Eilat

and north Negev Mar–Apr and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Neot Smadar, 28 Apr. A male **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* Atlit 30–31 May. Three **White-eyed Gulls** *Ichthyophaga leucophthalmus* off Haifa 26 May (extremely rare Mediterranean) and an **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* off North Beach, Eilat, 15–30 Jun.

A **Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis meena* Yotvata 17 Apr and the first record of **Pacific Swift** *Apus [p.] pacificus* over IBRC Eilat 2 Mar. A **Turkestan Shrike** Ovda valley 21–22 Mar and possibly the same bird Yotvata 24–29 Mar. An **Arabian Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda (dunni) eremodites* Uvda valley 10 Feb and five Shezaf reserve, north Arava, 27 Jun. The eighth record of **Green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus* ringed Jerusalem bird observatory Jun and a **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* IBRC 8–11 May. Single **Ménétriés's Warblers** *Sylvia mystacea* Km20 salt pans 23 Mar and 5 Apr and another ringed IBRC 29 Mar.

In addition to the resident **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* Hai Bar nature reserve, Yotvata, another five birds seen during March Eilat and south Arava while a breeding pair noted IBRC May. **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* recorded Yotvata 31 Mar and another six in Eilat and south Arava, first week of April. The female

**Red-rumped Wheatear** *O. moesta* Uvda valley, first recorded 21 Oct 2017, remained until end Feb as did the male at km94, central Arava, first seen 4 Nov 2017, (fifth–sixth records). The three **Basalt Wheatears** *O. lugens warriae* recorded Oct–Dec 2017 (Uvda valley, Be'er Ora and Amram's Pillars north of Eilat) remained until end Feb. The second record of **'Iranian Wheatear'** *Oenanthe (lugens) persica* Mount Amasa, north Negev, 10 Mar–2 Apr. The **Kurdistan Wheatear** *O. [x.] xanthoprymna* first seen 26 Nov, Ketura, southern Arava, remained there until end Feb. An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* remained IBRC Jan–Feb. A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Agamon Hula 30 Jan–12 Mar and another Ofira park, Eilat, 11 Apr.

## JORDAN

A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* spent some months in the Aqaba–Eilat area 20 Feb–4 May including Aqaba bird observatory (ABO) (first record). Further records of **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* in the Jordan valley including Safi (southern Jordan valley) and Madaba with a pair there 1 May with three newly fledged juveniles (Plate 11); now regular and breeding at a few sites. A 2cy **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* 11 Mar and an adult female 5 May both ABO (fourth & fifth records).



**Plate 11.** Black-winged Kites *Elanus caeruleus*, adult carrying food, closely followed by juvenile, 9 May 2018, near Madaba, Jordan. © Fares Khoury





**Plate 12.** Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta* adult male, 15 February 2018, near Tafilah, Sharrah highlands, Jordan. © Fares Khoury

**Nubian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nubicus*: 33 different individuals heard at three locations in southern Jordan valley (southeast Dead sea) and one location in Wadi Araba (survey by Jordan BirdWatch April–May 2018 of one of the rarest breeding species in Jordan). 10+ pairs of **Red-rumped Wheatears** *Oenanthe moesta* Feb 2018 (Plate 12) in two separate areas in the Sharrah highlands of southwest Jordan; one of the rarest breeding species in Jordan, its habitats now being threatened by new wind farm developments.

## OMAN

458 **Western White Storks** *Ciconia c. ciconia* counted Raysut 22 Feb and an **African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis [a.] aethiopicus* there 17 Jan. An **Intermediate Egret** *Ardea (i.) intermedia* East Khawr 11 Jan. Single **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* the Wave, Muscat, 17 Jan and Liwa mangroves, 7 Apr. The two **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* reported late 2017 in the Salalah–Taqah area remained there until at least 24 Feb. The wintering **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* in the Wadi Darbat area had reduced in number from 15 to five by 23 Feb. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* Raysut 13–17 Jan and a *fulvescens* **Greater Spotted Eagle** *C. clanga* there 17 Jan. Four **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* at the Wave, Muscat, 18 Jan. A **White-breasted Waterhen**

*Amaurornis phoenicurus* Khawr Rawri 22 Feb may have been the same bird seen Al Mughsayl 14–25 Nov. One **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Khawr Rawri 17–22 Feb. A **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* Hilf STP, Masirah island, 19–26 Mar. Two **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* Raysut STP 22 Feb were presumably the same wintering birds reported there Nov–Dec 2017. Five **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyptes minimus* Raysut lagoons 14 Jan. Three **Small Pratincoles** *Glareola lactea* East Khawr 14 Jan were presumably some of the same wintering birds reported Nov–Dec 2017.

Five **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* Raysut STP 22 Feb and an **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* West Khawr 14 Jan. A **Collared Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus chloris* Liwa mangroves 7 Apr. Four **Common Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris* Raysut lagoons 14 Jan. A male **Streaked Weaver** *Ploceus manyar* Sohar 1 Apr—a new site for this species, possibly from either the UAE populations or from the Muscat area. A male and female **Pin-tailed Wydah** *Vidua macroura* Al Riyam park mid May first record of this escaped species.

## SAUDI ARABIA

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* Wadi Rabigh, 22 Feb, well north of its normal range. Two **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Deffi park 22 December 2017, an adult male at Intercontinental hotel, Taif 27 Dec 2017, two wintering birds Dhahran until mid Mar with five birds together 7 Apr and a juvenile at KAUST, north of Jeddah, throughout Jan, a first for the location, with two present late Apr. A wintering **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* at Haradh pivot irrigation fields 26 Jan. A **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* near Abha 27 Mar and a pair at the bottom of the Raydah escarpment 6 Apr. A juvenile **Bonelli's Eagle** *A. fasciata* Sabkhat Al Fasl 19 Jan with a juvenile **Hen Harrier** *Circus [c.] cyaneus* at the same site 14–19 Jan (a very scarce visitor to the Eastern province).

A **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* was south of Umluj, Tabuk province 21 Apr (second record). An adult **Grey-headed Swamphen** *Porphyrio [porphyrio] poliocephalus* Dhahran golf course pool in early Jan with breeding proved for the first time at Al Asfar lake, Hofuf, 5 May with



**Plate 13.** Little Owl *Athene (noctua) saharae* 26 May 2018, An Namas, Asir province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington



**Plate 14.** Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* 2 February 2018, Al Asfar lake, Hofuf, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

adult and juvenile seen. A **Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus [o.] oedicephalus* Dhahran 8 Mar was the first for the site for more than twenty years. 21 **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* Munaizilah STP, near Hofuf 14 Jan, with two birds at Sabkhat Al Fasl intermittently most of the winter and another two at A'Shargiyah Development Company farm, Fadhili, all winter. Three **Red-wattled Lapwings** *V. indicus* Munaizilah STP 14 Jan, a further bird at Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail 13 Apr and 27 at Shaybah water ponds 9 May.

Both these species appear to have colonized the Eastern province over the last few years and are no longer vagrants. At least two **Sociable Lapwings** *V. gregarius* Haradh pivot irrigation fields 26 Jan (the third consecutive year birds have been wintering here) and a single at KAUST 3 Feb. A wintering **White-tailed Lapwing** *V. leucurus* at Sabkhat Al Fasl until at least mid March and another adult at the same location 11 May. Two **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* KAUST 11 Jan. Four **Common Woodpigeons** *Columba palumbus* just north of Sakaka 18 Jan. A **Pied Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* Tanoumah 18 Jun and a male **Diederik Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* at the same location 25 May with another A'Namas 26 May–Jun. An extremely early **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* Sabkhat Al Fasl 19 Jan. A **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus [s.] scops* near Al Jouf 16 Jan, an unusual winter record. Two **Little Owls** *Athene noctua* resembling **Kleinschmidt's Little Owl** *Athene (noctua) saharae* A'Namas 26 May (Plate 13) with another on 15 Jun in southwestern Asir mountains, an area where the species has not been previously recorded. Six **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* at Al Asfar lake 27 Jan–9 Feb (Plate 14), the highest number for many years. A high winter count of up to 15 **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Dhahran hills 13 Jan (previous high winter count was three), and three different birds at KAUST in the first week of Mar (second record for the location). The **White-throated**

**Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* reported at KAUST in Nov–Dec remained until 25 Feb while one Dhahran early May. Two **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* Sabkhat Al Fasl 22 Dec with a female still present 9 Mar and another at KAUST all winter. A **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* was only the fourth record for KAUST, 21 Apr. At least two **Barbary Falcons** *Falco peregrinoides* were in the Asir mountains 18 Jun, a species that has declined significantly in the last twenty years.



**Plate 15.** Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* 9 March 2018, Jebal Hamrah, Judah, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

Up to 12 **Arabian Magpies** *Pica asirensis* near Tanoumah late May–late Jun with two further birds seen, plus two old nests, near A'Namas. Eight **Bimaculated Larks** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* in a pivot field near Jebel Hamrah, Judah, 9 Mar (Plate 15). Up to thirty '**Arabian Red-capped Larks**' *Calandrella [blanfordi] eremica* Talea valley 16 Jun including adults with young. Two very early **Savi's Warblers** *Locustella luscinioides* trapped and ringed Sabkhat Al Fasl 23 Feb. An adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *Pastor roseus* Al Asfar lake, Hufuf, 21 Apr with three adults A'Shargiyah Development Company farm, Fadhili, 27 Apr and another adult on Al Khbar corniche 19 Jun. A **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* Al Jouf 16 Jan. A pair of **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* Munaizilah STP, near Hofuf 14 Jan, another species that appears to have colonised the Eastern province over the last few years. A female **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* Jebal Hamrah, Judah, 16 Feb with a different female in the same general area but at a different location 2–9 Mar (Plate 16). A male **Kurdistan Wheatear** *O. [x.] xanthoprymna* KAUST 5 Mar (first for location). A **Yellow-throated Sparrow** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* Dhahran corniche 16 Apr. Four **African Pipits** *Anthus cinnamomeus eximius* Al Mefah park, Tanoumah 4 May and seen collecting food 26 May with two further birds A'Namas 27 May, the furthest



**Plate 16.** Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 2 March 2018, Jebal Hamrah, Judah, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

north birds have been seen since 1984. A ‘**Caucasian Water Pipit**’ *Anthus (spinoletta) coutelli* KAUST, 13 Feb, a first for the location. An adult male **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* at a farm Qariyaat (200 km from Riyadh) 23 Mar (fourth record).

## TAJIKISTAN

A **Güldenstädt’s Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus* Qalai-i Khumb, a village near the Afghanistan border, 22 Apr and a **Plumbeous Water Redstart** *Phoenicurus fuliginosus* there 21 Apr.

## TURKEY

The first half of 2018 added three new species to the Turkish list: **Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus*, **Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* and **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis*.

Despite the mild winter, the Black sea coast hosted a number of interesting species. Three **Common Scoters** *Melanitta nigra* Karasu, Sakarya, 20 Jan and one Yakakent harbour, Samsun, 13 Jan. A single **Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* 25–27 Jan İğneada harbour, Kırklareli and two **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus minor* lake Kulu 5 Apr. A single **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* near Adana 6–14 Jan may indicate a future breeding site for the species. A wintering

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* Göksu delta 7 Jan. A **Baillon’s Crane** *Zapornia pusilla* Milleyha, Hatay 31 Mar–13 Apr (rarely recorded). The first record for Turkey and the second for the OSME region of **Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus* 11 Mar Samsun, Kızılırmak delta (Plates 17, 18). Four **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* 28 Apr Milleyha, Hatay, confirms the rare passage of the species in spring. First record of **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* for this site occurred 31 Mar, with another single 26 Jan, Küçükçekmece, İstanbul.



**Plate 17.** Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* 11 March 2018 Samsun, Kızılırmak delta, Turkey. © Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu



**Plate 18.** Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* 11 March 2018 Samsun, Kızılırmak delta, Turkey. © Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu

Three **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* Riva İstanbul, 15 Jan. The second addition to the national list was a single **Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* 11 Mar Milleyha, Hatay. The third addition was a **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* trapped and photographed at Aras ringing station, Iğdır, 24 May. Warm southern winds in early spring on the Mediterranean coast resulted in an **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* Serik, Antalya, 22 Mar and single **Cyprus Warblers** *S. melanothorax* Boğazkent Antalya, 11 Mar and Göksu delta 22 Mar as well as a **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* Manavgat 24 May and single **Desert Wheatears** *O. deserti* Serik, Antalya 24 Mar, Manavgat 25 Mar and Çıralı, Antalya, 26 Mar. Finally, a single **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* Aras ringing station, Iğdır, 2 Mar.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Four **Eastern Greylag Geese** *Anser a. rubrirostris* Saadiyat golf course, 13 Jan–early Mar. 27 **Wilson’s Storm Petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* during a pelagic trip out of Kalba 25 May plus a **Leach’s Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates leucorhoa* 60 km offshore (second record, Plate 19, previous being a specimen from 1969). A single **Jouanin’s Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* also seen on the same trip. The seventh record of **Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus [ibis] coromandus* Makaniyah farms 23 Apr. The **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* first seen Ras al Khor 22 Nov 2017 remained in the area until 12 May and another Al Wathba wetland reserve 8 Mar. **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* Dubai 13 Jan including a juvenile, one remaining to 8 Jun, and Abu Dhabi 26 Jan and 2 Mar (same bird). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* Abu Dhabi 26



**Plate 19.** Leach’s Storm Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhoa* 25 May 2018, 60 km offshore from Kalba, United Arab Emirates. © Oscar Campbell



**Plate 20.** Hen Harrier *Circus [c.] cyaneus* 20 April 2018, Sila’a, United Arab Emirates. © Oscar Campbell

May and five **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* over Abu Dhabi 2 Mar. The 15th record of **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* Jebel Hafeet 23 Apr and a **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* Dubai desert conservation reserve, 24 Jan. A **Hen Harrier** *Circus [c.] cyaneus* Sila’a 20 Apr (Plate 20) and three single **Long-legged Buzzards** *Buteo [r.] rufinus* various locations 12–14 Jan.

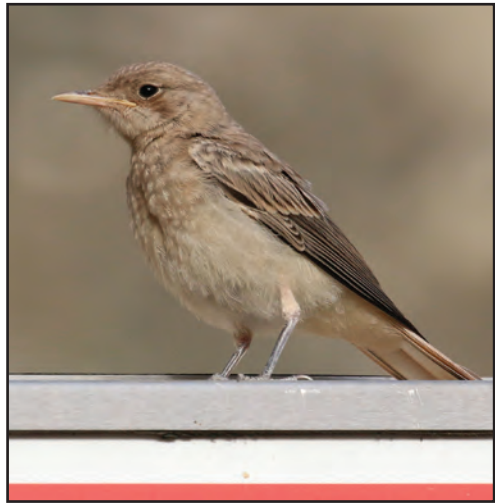
A **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* near Green Mubazzarah 10 Jan–3 Mar and a **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Ras al Khaimah 8–11 Mar. A **Baillon’s Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* Al Wathba lake 27 Jan–8 Mar. A **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* Saadiyat beach 27 Apr found dead next day (2nd record). Four **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* Qudra pivot fields 13 Jan and a **Caspian Plover** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* in breeding plumage Zorah 23 Feb. **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* confirmed breeding at a site near Dubai 26 May, with 20 birds (including at least four juveniles) there 8 Jun (Plate 21). A **Brown Skua** *Stercorarius antarcticus*/**South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* flew past Mirbah 22 Jan (second record, last in 2000). Six **Spotted Sandgrouse** *Syrhaptus senegallus* Al Qudra, 14–19 Jan and



**Plate 21.** Collared Pratincole *Gareola pratincola* mobbing 8 June 2018, near Dubai, United Arab Emirates. © Oscar Campbell

one Sila'a 16 Mar (7th–8th records). Seven **Eurasian Scops Owls** *Otus scops* at a single site in Al Ain 30–31 Mar was an unusually high number. Intensive survey work added a number of new records of **Spotted Eagle Owl** *Bubo (africanus) milesi* in the Hajar mountains, a population only discovered late 2017. Two **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Al Wathba 17 Feb, one Lulu island 2 Mar and up to ten throughout May at Ajban. The third record of **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco [v.] vespertinus* Al Qudra 22 Apr.

65 **Turkestan Shrikes** *Lanius phoenicuroides* Sila'a 20 Apr. The first spring record of **Bay-backed Shrike** *L. vittatus* Wamm farms 10 Mar and three further records during the month, another Al Ain 26 Apr and one Dubai 16 May. A **Mesopotamian Crow** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* Umm al Quwain 16 Mar (third record). A **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Jebel Dhanna 27 Jan, up to 50 Lulu island throughout Jan, increasing to 80 2 Mar, three Rahba, a new site for the species, 26–27 Feb and a very late bird Sila'a 16 Apr. An influx of **Pale Martins** *Riparia diluta* at Ajman STP early Jan and five **Streak-throated Swallows** *Petrochelidon fluvicola* there 13 Jan, one remaining to 29 Jan. A **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* Mushreef Palace



**Plate 22.** Juvenile Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 19 May 2018, near Masafi, United Arab Emirates. © Oscar Campbell

gardens 26–27 Apr was unusually late while the 20th record of **Green Warbler** *P. nitidus* at Dubai 21 Apr. The **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* first seen Al Qudra 20 Dec seen again 3 Jan while there were three Al Wathba lake 27 Jan. A **Sedge Warbler** *A. schoenobaenus* Mamzar 18 May. 20 **Upcher's Warblers** *Hippolais languida* Mamzar 24 Apr. The 15th record of **Icterine Warbler** *H. icterina* Dubai 21 Apr. A **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* heard singing Al Qudra lake 3–13 Jan. 25 **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* Sila'a 20 Apr. Two **Caspian Stonechats** *Saxicola maurus hemprichi* Sila'a 16 Mar and a **Pied Stonechat** *S. caprata* Al Ain 22 Mar. A male **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* with recently fledged juvenile near Masafi 19 May (Plate 22). A **Mourning Wheatear** *O. lugens* Jebel Hafeet 28 Jan. An **Eastern Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza (cineracea) semenowi* Dubai 17 Mar.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Armenia: Alan Dean; Cyprus: Jane Stylianou, Damla Beton, Robin Snape; Iran: Magnus Ullman; Iraq: Korsh Ararat; Israel: Yoav Perlman; Jordan: Fares Khoury, Feras Rahahleh; Oman: Jens Eriksen ([www.birdsoman.com](http://www.birdsoman.com)); Saudi Arabia: Jem Babbington ([www.birdsofsaudiarabia.com](http://www.birdsofsaudiarabia.com)), Philip Roberts; Tajikistan: Gavin Yeats; Turkey: Kerem Ali Boyla, Nizamettin Yavuz, Ali Atahan; United Arab Emirates: Oscar Campbell, Tommy Pedersen ([www.uaebirding.com/uae\\_news.html](http://www.uaebirding.com/uae_news.html)).

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