

# Chairman's Foreword

In 1968, The Ornithological Society of Turkey (OST) was launched, and in 1978 its geographical remit expanded and became the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, with the addition of The Caucasus and Central Asia in 2001. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of its formation OSME is producing this special *Sandgrouse Supplement* to showcase the history and diversity of this fascinating region. There are articles from all corners of the region and I hope that those who are not familiar with the countries and birds highlighted in this *Supplement* will be encouraged to visit. Birds and biodiversity around the world are facing unprecedented challenges and the OSME region is not immune to the pressures on the natural world. By producing this *Sandgrouse Supplement*, as well as the recent *Pocket Checklist*, we aim to encourage and inspire both new and existing supporters of OSME to do even more to appreciate the wonderful birds that occur across the region. Birds don't understand boundaries and often travel across many countries whilst undertaking their incredible annual migratory journeys. To protect them and ensure that future generations can enjoy them for the next 50 years of OSME and beyond, is a task for all of us. It is an exciting time to be Chairman of OSME with significant new projects recently completed or currently being finalised. An Arabic version of the field guide, *The Birds of the Middle East*, was published in March 2017, and a smartphone App version will be freely available to download by the time you receive this *Supplement*. Both of these hugely important projects have been timed to be completed as part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations. In recent years we have repeatedly spent record amounts of OSME funds on supporting conservation projects through our small grants programme and during our 50th year we will break that record yet again.

On behalf of OSME Council I'd like to thank all those who have contributed articles that have made this special *Supplement* possible. The country profiles within this *Supplement* were only possible due to the efforts of the compilers who provided insights to their particular countries of interest. As always, Peter Cowan and his editorial team have done an outstanding job reviewing and editing this *Supplement* in addition to the two standard issues of *Sandgrouse*. The printing and postage costs of this *Supplement* would not have been possible without a generous legacy left by longstanding OSME member, Mr Peter Carlton.

I'd also like to personally thank all those that have been involved in the running of OSME over the last 50 years. All Council members are volunteers and give up their time generously, and for those involved in establishing OSME half a century ago, and all those involved since, the 50th Anniversary of OSME is a testament to all your collective efforts.

*Dr Rob Sheldon, Chairman*