

# Evidence of Eurasian Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediconemus* breeding in Lebanon

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Eurasian Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediconemus* is a summer breeder in Turkey (Kirwan *et al* 1998, Boyla 2016), a resident breeder in Cyprus (BirdLife International 2015), summer breeding visitor and passage migrant in Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008), scarce summer breeder in Jordan (Andrews *et al* 1999) and passage migrant, common resident and common winter visitor in Israel (Shirihai *et al* 1999). In Lebanon, Cramp & Simmons (1983) considered the species extinct, but a review of all bird papers and reports available 1878–2007 indicated that there are 10 records of 27 individuals by 7 observers in that period (see Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). These records suggest they refer to migrants at both seasons except for Mark Almecija's (pers comm) of 2 December 2001 which suggest a wintering flock of 12 individuals at Hermel, northeast Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). Van Dyck (1895 in Kumerloeve 1962), Kumerloeve (1962), Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi (1999) and Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* (2008), in the absence of breeding evidence, considered *B. oediconemus* a probable scarce migrant breeder at least in southern Lebanon.

Four Eurasian Stone Curlews and a Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* were shot (Plates 1, 2) at Ras Baalbek, in the north of the Beqaa valley, northern Lebanon, on 10 July



**Plate 1.** Four Eurasian Stone Curlews *Burhinus oediconemus* and a Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* shot and photo'd 10 July 2016 Ras Baalbek, Lebanon. © Hussein Jammal



**Plate 2.** One of the shot juvenile Eurasian Stone Curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus* (see Plate 1) showing incomplete growth of primaries, Ras Baalbek, Lebanon, 10 July 2016. © Hussein Jammal



**Plate 3.** Habitat of the site where the Eurasian Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* family of four (Plates 4 & 5) was found in the Ras Baalbek area, northeast Lebanon, photo'd 26 July 2016. © Ghassan Ramadan Jaradi

2016. These birds were photographed and confiscated that day by Hussein Jammal, a local bird defender, and the photos sent to GRJ straight away. Apparently the 4 stone curlews formed a family of 2 adults and 2 juveniles. The latter seem to lack the black-white-black



**Plate 4.** One of two adult Eurasian Stone Curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* in a family group with two juveniles (Plate 5) at 34° 19' 06.6" N, 36° 23' 29.9" E in the Ras Baalbek area, northeast Lebanon, 26 July 2016. © Ghassan Ramadan Jaradi



**Plate 5.** One of two juvenile Eurasian Stone Curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* in a family group with two adults (Plate 4) at 34° 19' 06.6" N, 36° 23' 29.9" E in the Ras Baalbek area, northeast Lebanon, 26 July 2016. Down feathers still on the undertail coverts. © Ghassan Ramadan Jaradi

line of the lesser and median coverts (Plate 1). In Plate 2 it is possible to see the incomplete growth of primaries that reduces the possibility of them being early migrants or having arrived from Syria. The area where the birds were shot, some 12 km from the border with Syria, is difficult of access for security reasons. However, we visited the Ras Baalbek area on 26 July 2016 and looked for stone curlews between Fakiha (34° 15' 17" N, 36° 22' 21" E) and Hermel (34° 23' 17" N, 36° 24' 24" E) through Ras Baalbek (34° 16' 28" N, 36° 23' 4" E). The area is arid and stony (Plate 3). Three flocks of Cream-coloured Coursers were seen, with six, 10 and 14 individuals respectively. Next to where we saw the flock of 10 we saw an apparent family of four Eurasian Stone Curlews consisting of two adults (Plate 4) and 2 juveniles with down feathers still on the undertail coverts (Plate 5) at 34° 19' 06.6" N, 36° 23' 29.9" E, sheltering in the shade of medium-sized stones.

In conversation on 26 July 2016, Hussein Jammal told GR-J "... let me take you to the place where my neighbour shot four [stone curlews] early this month" and "let me show you the location from where we hear the Hleiwa [stone curlew in Ras Baalbek dialect] calling and singing at night". We asked Hussein Jammal if he had heard them during the last few days, he replied that the bird is mainly heard during May and sometimes till mid June. Hussein Jammal's neighbour at c1 km from the site where we found the family of stone curlews on 26 July, told us a proverb "Lamma byehdar shahar Ayyar, El Hleiwa ala marto beghar" [At the arrival of May, the stone curlew becomes jealous of his wife]. We think this proverb derives from observation of courtship display in May or from hearing the males frequently calling at night during this month. Eurasian Stone Curlew may well be a fairly common summer breeder in northeast Lebanon.

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