

First Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* record and first breeding observations of Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*, for Iraq

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Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*

On 17 June 2016, a survey was conducted near Darbandikhan lake in Kurdistan region, northeast Iraq. On Mortka mountain, dominated by deciduous oak forest, three agitated birds were seen on the branches of an oak *Quercus* sp (35° 04' 41" N, 45° 48' 30" E, c1153 m asl). Two of the birds flew away and one stayed. The latter bird was making alarm calls then it sang for a while. It had a graduated tail and it was at first thought to be a Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis*, but it was relatively bigger and had a different song. Through binoculars, it had a distinct dark eye-stripe, white supercilium, flat crown and streaked breast (Plate 1). Clearly a Scrub Warbler, first record for Iraq (Salim *et al* 2012). In view of the sedentary nature of this species, the date and the behaviour of the birds it is likely they were breeding (Porter & Aspinall 2010).

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

On 24 April 2012, a pair of Desert Finches was seen drinking water near a stream, collecting food then visiting their nest inside the hedge of a farm near Homer Qawm village, northwest of Sulaimani city. On 9 May 2015 in Hawari Shar park, north of Sulaimani city, a Desert Finch was observed feeding its young on a tree branch, c1 m height from



Plate 1. Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* 17 June 2016, Mortka mountain, Kurdistan, Iraq. © Korsh Ararat



Plate 2. A Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* carrying food at Khanzad tourist site, northeast of Erbil city, Iraq, 15 May 2016. © Mariwan Rahim



Plate 3. Pair of Desert Finches *Rhodospiza obsoleta* with their juvenile at Khanzad tourist site, northeast of Erbil city, Iraq, 15 May 2016. © Mariwan Rahim



Plate 4. Pair of Desert Finches *Rhodospiza obsoleta* with their juvenile at Kasnazan tree plantation, northeast of Erbil city, Iraq, 16 May 2016. © Mariwan Rahim

the ground. A Desert Finch was observed carrying food (Plate 2) 15 May 2016 at 36.1901° N, 044.0916° E (c706 m asl) northeast of Erbil city at the Khanzad tourist site. A pair of Desert Finches with their juvenile (Plate 3) was observed that day at a second location in the Khanzad tourist site (36.1859° N, 044.0917° E, c708 m asl). They were interacting with their juvenile and perching on a metal fence. They were watched for less than an hour though many photos were taken. The next day, a pair of Desert Finches with their juvenile was observed at Kasnazan tree plantation, northeast of Erbil city (36.1318° N, 044.1123° E, c807 m asl). They were perching on a pine tree and flying to the ground to eat (Plate 4). According to Salim *et al* (2012), Desert Finch in Iraq is a fairly widespread winter visitor that may breed. These are the first breeding records for Iraq.

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