

# First record of Rüppell's Warbler *Curruca ruppeli* for Uzbekistan and Central Asia

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**Summary:** A male Rüppell's Warbler *Curruca ruppeli* seen and photographed in southern Uzbekistan in April 2017 is the easternmost record of the species by around 1000 km and the first for Central Asia.

On 9 April 2017 a male Rüppell's Warbler was seen in the central part of Kyzylkum Desert around 70 km to the west of Gazli town (N40°35.637' E62°40.505') in southern central Uzbekistan. The bird was observed from 10:10 to 10:14 am feeding in White Saxaul *Haloxylon persicum* bushes and flew from one bush to another, never singing or calling, staying low and often inside cover, but fairly close to us. The bird resembled a male Ménériés's Warbler *Curruca mystacea*, but the presence of a black throat and the prominent white edges to the tertials and greater coverts clearly identified it as a male Rüppell's Warbler. In this same area we also found migrating Lesser Whitethroats *Curruca curruca*. The habitat in this area consists of plant communities common for sand dunes, including bushes of Saxaul *Haloxylon* spp., Sand acacias *Ammodéndron* spp. and *Calligonum* spp.. An analysis of literature has shown that this record is the first of this species for Uzbekistan and for Central Asia. Early avifaunal surveys in the countries of Central Asia covering the former USSR (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) do not mention this species (Dementyev *et al* 1954, Meklenburtsev 1995). The same is true of later reviews of the avifauna of the Bukhara region (Turaev *et al* 2015) and of Central Asia generally (Ayé *et al* 2012, Rustamov 2013, Koblik & Arkhipov 2014, Ryabintsev *et al* 2019), none of which made reference to this species.

Rüppell's Warbler has a loop migration, heading south across the Mediterranean in the autumn and returning northwards further east in the spring (Aymí & Gargallo 2019). According to the distribution map of Rüppell's Warbler (BirdLife International 2019), the



**Plate 1.** Male Rüppell's Warbler feeding in saxaul bush, 9 April 2017, Kyzylkum desert, Uzbekistan. © Robert Tizard



**Plate 2.** Male Rüppell's Warbler feeding in saxaul bush, 9 April 2017, Kyzylkum desert, Uzbekistan. © Valentin Soldatov

closest country to Uzbekistan where this species regularly occurs is Syria. A specimen of this species collected on 2 April 1941 by Walter Koelz at Do-Run, Lorestan in western Iran (Roselaar & Aliabadian 2009), now held at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, was previously the easternmost record of this species. This Uzbekistan record, around 1000 km to the east of Lorestan, therefore becomes the easternmost documented sighting of the species and the first for Central Asia.

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