

Six interesting bird records including two new species, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, for Lebanon

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Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

This species is a rare migrant in Iraq and Syria and vagrant to Cyprus, Israel, Kuwait, Oman and UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Lebanon it is a scarce passage migrant with the last seen in 1997 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 2001). On 10 June 2015, whilst looking at native but captive bird species in pet shops of Ouzai near Beirut, GRJ saw a semi-captive pelican (Plate 1) kept and fed by people in a fishery. The fishery owner had found it in a morbid condition in the Damour river estuary, c20 km to the south of Beirut. The pelican had been injured by hunters late April 2015. It was a Dalmatian Pelican due to lead-grey feet (ruling out Great White Pelican *P. onocrotalus*) and because of its large size and orange beak nail, absence of plume-like feathers and slightly pale eyes (ruling out Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*). It was most probably an immature. This record is the first for over 18 years.



Plate 1. A captive Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Lebanon (see text). © Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi



Plate 2. Male Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, shot by hunter 18 October 2015, Labweh, east Beqaa valley, Lebanon.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

The Namaqua Dove extends from Africa into the Arabian peninsula and southern Israel (Shirihai *et al* 1999). It may breed in Jordan (Shirihai *et al* 1999) and Syria (Porter & Aspinall 2010). It is a vagrant to Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Socotra, Turkey and Lebanon (Porter & Aspinall 2010). First record in Lebanon was two individuals in 1999 or 2000 at Tyre, recorded by FI. The second was 7 July 2003 Beirut and the third 6 February 2005 at Baabda (both individuals showed worn feathers indicating possible escapes) (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). The 4th record was 16 May 2006 eastern Beqaa valley (Haraldsson 2008, Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). In 2015, a male, with black mask and yellow bill (Plate 2) was shot by a hunter 18 October at Labweh in the eastern Beqaa valley, and a female was shot by Wassim Alam, another hunter, 24 October at Okaybeh, Kesrouwan (Plate 3). On the same day, 24 October 2015, a female was shot by the hunter Wissam Atallah at Qaa, eastern Beqaa valley, 20 km northeast of Labweh (photos posted on Yahoo group 'Birdtalk Lebanon'). These records, particularly the three October records in 2015, suggest Namaqua Dove is expanding northwards in Lebanon.



Plate 3. Female Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, shot by hunter 24 October 2015, Okaybeh, Kesrouwan, Lebanon.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Short-eared Owl is a rare breeder in the Middle East, in Turkey. It has bred Israel (Porter & Aspinall 2010), is a rare migrant in Jordan and formerly in winter (Andrews *et al* 1999) and is probably a rare winter visitor in Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008). In Lebanon, Short-eared Owl is a very rare winter visitor and probably very rare passage migrant (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). However, one individual was photographed by Ramzi Breik (Plate 4) 10 November 2014 at Shouf biosphere reserve on the eastern slopes of the Lebanon range between Barouk and Ain Zhalta villages. This is the first passage record for Lebanon for over 40 years. The species was recorded four times as a winter visitor, last record 1998 (Balmer & Betton 2002).

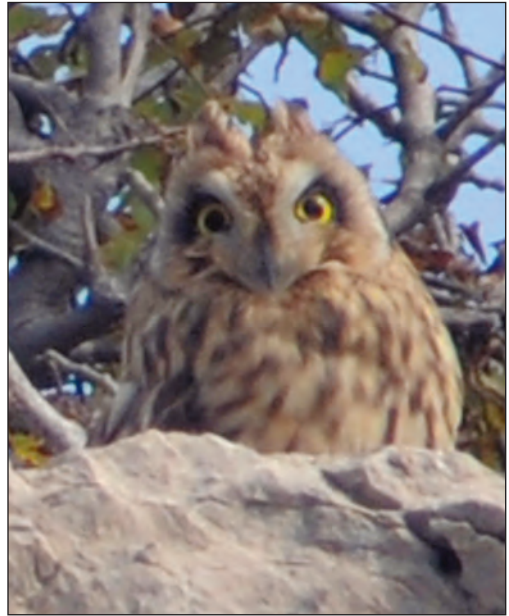


Plate 4. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* 10 November 2014, Shouf biosphere reserve, Lebanon. © Ramzi Breik

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

In the Middle East, this species is recorded as a vagrant in Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Lebanon, Firecrest was first recorded 13 October and 12 November 1958 in cedars near Bsharri (Flash 1959). On 13 November 2015, a Firecrest (Plate 5) was shot at high altitude near Zayneye' lake above Yammouneh by a hunter, Ali Mohamad. This is the second record for the species in Lebanon.



Plate 5. A Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, shot by hunter at high altitude near Zayneye' lake above Yammouneh, Lebanon, 13 November 2015.

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

Largely resident and dispersive in parts of the Sahara and Arabian peninsula and has occurred as a vagrant to Cyprus, Greece, Malta (IUCN 2015) and Croatia (1–4 Aug 2001, Muzinic 2002). May breed southeast Syria and Yemen, rare Kuwait; vagrant Syria, Bahrain, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Turkey, UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010) and Iraq (Salim 2010, Porter & Aspinall 2010). On 14 September 2015, Maher Rouhana photographed a wheatear at Roumieh village (33° 52' 24.22" N, 35° 36' 23.22" E) that was glossy black with black underparts down to legs, white on crown, tail, rump and under-tail (Plate 6). The bird showed a black centre to its white tail. The tail was without a distal black bar. We asked MR to provide us with other photos. He went again to the location. A man living there who saw him days back taking photos of the bird told him that he had already shot the bird. The man went home and retrieved the bird from a refrigerator. Inspection of the unlucky bird revealed a few black flecks at the tip of the tail (Plate 7).



Plate 6. A White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* 14 September 2015, Roumieh village, Lebanon. © Maher Rouhana



Plate 7. The White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* of Plate 6, from a hunter's refrigerator. © Maher Rouhana

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

In the Middle East this is a breeding summer visitor in central and northeast Turkey and northern Iran. It is a common migrant in eastern Iran (Shirihai 1996). The Common Rosefinch is a vagrant to Cyprus, Syria, Jordan (Porter & Aspinall 2010) and Iraq (Salim *et al* 2012). Shirihai *et al* (1999) indicated that it is a very rare passage and winter visitor as well as summer non-breeding visitor in Israel with a mention of ringed birds in autumn. Andrews *et al* (1999) didn't note it in the Jordan Bird Report for 1995–1997. A hunter, Mohamad Mahmoudi, shot an individual in Damour coastal area, 100 m asl, 7 May 2015 (Plate 8). The dead bird had a brilliant rosy-carmine head, breast and rump; heavy conical bill; dark brown wings and a white belly, appeared to be a male, and is the first record for Lebanon.



Plate 8. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, shot by hunter, Damour coastal area, Lebanon, 7 May 2015.

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