

The first Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* for Oman and the Middle East

PETER OLSSON

On the morning of 23 November 2012, Petter Olsson, Torbjörn Nilsson, Jakob Gustafsson and myself split up to search Wadi Darbat (17° 06.3' N, 54° 27.2' E, southern Dhofar, Oman, Sargeant *et al* 2008) for possible vagrants as well as hopes of getting good photos of the local birds. As I was trying to photograph some Bruce's Green Pigeons *Treron waalia*, I heard a call nearby which I immediately thought was a crake. Quite soon I found the crake, which I was unable to identify, a little bit further upstream. Fortunately I had my camera ready and was able to get a lot of photos (Plates 1–3, see also Plate 4) as well as some video of the crake at close range before it went into hiding in some grass. Since I was alone at the time I tried to phone Petter to make him aware of the finding, however he was out of range. After about 30 minutes, Petter showed up on the other side of the wadi and I told him about the crake. I tried to flush the bird from the small patch where I previously saw it. No crake was to be found. We birded our way back to the car and met up with TN and JG. I finally was able to show my pictures of the crake. Since Petter had done quite a lot of birding in southeast Asia he recognized the bird as one of the crakes that occurred there.

As I was still the only observer, we tried to find the crake again. We went back to the observation area near the parking lot at the end of the paved road. Petter walked around the wadi to the spot where I had seen the bird before. While he was doing this TN, JG and myself stayed on the road side of the wadi and quite soon found the crake feeding in the vegetation along the shoreline on the other side of the wadi. So when Petter reached the



Plate 1. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* Wadi Darbat, Dhofar, Oman, 23 November 2012. © Peter Olsson



Plate 2. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* Wadi Darbat, Dhofar, Oman, 23 November 2012. © Peter Olsson



Plate 3. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* Wadi Darbat, Dhofar, Oman, 23 November 2012. © Peter Olsson

place we could tell him about our recent observation and when he walked down to the shore to get some views, he flushed the bird which flew a couple of metres before it was lost in the vegetation again. After this, Petter came to our observation point where we could study the bird as it every now and then came out of the vegetation giving very good views. At this point we still had not properly identified the bird. With a little help from his phone, Petter managed to find some photos on the internet which made him confident of the identification. It was the first Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* for the Middle East. With all of us satisfied with our crake observations, we reported the finding to Jens Eriksen, recorder of the Oman Bird Records Committee. The record was subsequently accepted by OBRC as the first for Oman. The bird was seen again 4 December 2012 in the same locality by Karin and Örjan Fritz, Sweden.

Description (see Plates 1–3): back and wings more or less uniformly brownish. Breast from legs and forward, throat and head were rusty-reddish. Underpart of rump banded with black and white. The area just behind the legs was slightly reddish-grey. Only seen flying briefly and nothing special noted. Bill was blackish, iris red and there was a bright reddish eye-ring. Legs were red. Size of bird more or less as Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*



Plate 4. The water visible bottom left was where the Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* was discovered. The camel was beside the photographer all the time that the crake was being photographed. Wadi Darbat, Dhofar, Oman, 23 November 2012. © Peter Olsson

but hard to estimate since no comparable birds around. The photos and description preclude Red-legged and Slaty-legged Crakes *Rallina fasciata*, *R. eurizonoides* and Band-bellied Crake *Porzana paykulli* (Brazil 2009, Rasmussen & Anderton 2005, Robson 2007), the likely confusion species. The bird was clearly an adult (Krys Kazmierczak pers comm). The nearest parts of the species' normal range appear to be western India and northeast Pakistan (Grimmett *et al* 2011).

REFERENCES

- Brazil, M. 2009. *Field Guide to the Birds of East Asia*. Christopher Helm, London.
Grimmett, R, C Inskipp & T Inskipp. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Christopher Helm, London.
Rasmussen, PC & JC Anderton. 2005. *Birds of South Asia*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
Robson, C. 2007. *Birds of South-East Asia*. New Holland, London.
Sargeant, DE, H Eriksen & J Eriksen. 2008. *Birdwatching Guide to Oman*, 2nd edn. Al Roya, Muscat.

Peter Olsson, Stensbovägen 5, 771 92 Ludvika, Sweden. peter-ohlsson@telia.com