

Two new species for Lebanon, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, and two other interesting records for Lebanon

GHASSAN RAMADAN-JARADI & FOUAD ITANI

WHITE-HEADED DUCK *Oxyura leucocephala*

The White-headed Duck has a breeding range extending from southwest Mediterranean to northwest China and Mongolia, with the main population in Russia and Kazakhstan. It is a globally 'Endangered' species (BirdLife International 2017a). In the Middle East, the species is a common resident and winter visitor in Turkey (Kirwan *et al* 1998), uncommon resident and passage migrant and common winter visitor in Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008), former breeder and uncommon winter visitor in Israel and vagrant to Jordan (Shirihai *et al* 1999) and a winter visitor in Cyprus (Avibase 2017). It has never been recorded in Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). On 4 November 2017, a lone duck on the lake of Qaraoun (Beqaa valley, West Beqaa district) was shot from a hide by a hunter. The duck (Plate 1) appears medium sized with grey brown body, heavy black bill and large head with black/grey striped cheeks. Clearly, a White-headed Duck and the first record for Lebanon.



Plate 1. White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Qaraoun lake, Lebanon, killed 4 November 2017. © Bassel Janbieh

EYEBROWED THRUSH *Turdus obscurus*

This is a boreal species of the Siberian taiga during the breeding season. It is strongly migratory, wintering south to China and southeast Asia (Avibirds 2017). It has never been recorded in Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). Porter & Aspinall (2010) mentioned that it is a vagrant to Israel, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. It is also a vagrant in Cyprus (BirdLife International 2017b). A hunter phoned us asking for identification of a bird killed on 23 November 2017 at Bchaaleh (Batroun, north Lebanon). Surprisingly, it was a thrush (Plate 2) with grey head, neck and throat; pale rufous breast and flanks. A wide white supercilium, black lore, white belly and pale grey brown underwing coverts were also

seen and used to identify the bird as an Eyebrowed Thrush. This is the first record for Lebanon.

DESERT FINCH *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

This species is resident in surrounding countries such as Turkey (Kirwan *et al* 1998), Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008) and Jordan (Shirihai *et al* 1999). In Israel it is a common resident breeder but also common in winter but uncommon on passage (Shirihai *et al* 1999). In Lebanon, the Desert Finch is a scarce to rare winter visitor, almost exclusively in Beqaa (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1999). A singing male was at Aana, West Beqaa, between 24 June and 11 July 2006 (Colin Conroy in Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). Recently, FI saw at least two Desert Finches on 13 July 2017 and photographed one of them (Plate 3). They were feeding on seeds along with House Sparrows at Tal Znoub (West Beqaa), 4 km to the southeast of Aana. Hunters shown the photo on the back of the camera said that they usually hunt this species in summer in the Mansoura area, 4 km to the northeast of Tal Znoub. This second record of the species in summer should stimulate the appetite of birdwatchers in Lebanon to obtain evidence of breeding at least within the Aana-Tal Znoub-Mansoura triangle.

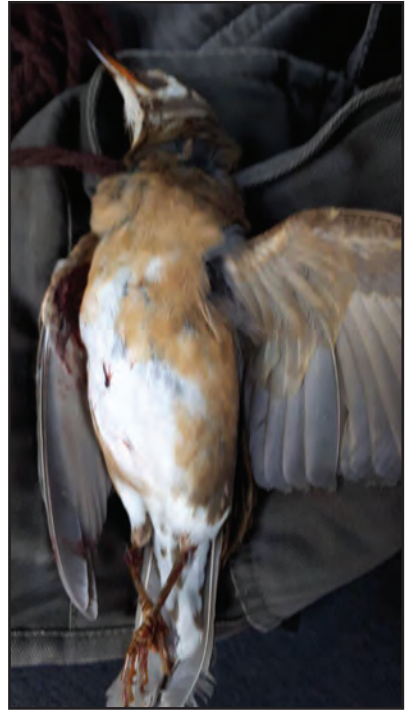


Plate 2. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* Bchaaleh (Batroun, north Lebanon), killed 23 November 2017. © Labib Dhagher



Plate 3. Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* 13 July 2017 at Tal Znoub, Lebanon. © Fouad Itani



Plate 4. Eurasian Crimson-winged Finches (a female and two juveniles) *Rhodopechys sanguineus* 30 August 2017 at Bcharre, Lebanon. © Fouad Itani

EURASIAN CRIMSON-WINGED FINCH *Rhodopechys sanguineus*

This species was recorded as a breeding resident in Lebanon mid May–mid July (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). On 30 August 2017, FI photographed a female and two juveniles (Plate 4) and a female feeding a fledgling in a rock cavity (poor photo) at Bcharre (64 km north northeast of Beirut) above the tree level. This record suggests two broods in Lebanon.

LITERATURE CITED

- Avibase 2017. <http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=CY&list=howardmoore>. [Retrieved 4 December 2017]
- Avibirds 2017. www.avibirds.com/html/Eyebrowed_Thrush.html. [Retrieved 4 December 2017]
- BirdLife International. 2017a. *Species factsheet: Oxyura leucocephala*. www.birdlife.org. [Downloaded 4 December 2017]
- BirdLife International. 2017b. *Species factsheet: Turdus obscurus*. www.birdlife.org. [Downloaded 28 November 2017]
- Kirwan, GM, RP Martins, G Eken & P Davidson. 1998. A checklist of the birds of Turkey. *Sandgrouse Supplement 1*: 1–32
- Murdoch, DA & KF Betton. 2008. A Checklist of the birds of Syria. *Sandgrouse Supplement 2*: 1–48.
- Porter, R. & S Aspinnall. 2010. *Birds of the Middle East*. Christopher Helm, London.
- Ramadan-Jaradi, G, T Bara & M Ramadan-Jaradi. 2008. Revised checklist of the birds of Lebanon 1999–2007. *Sandgrouse* 30(1): 22–69.
- Ramadan-Jaradi, G & M Ramadan-Jaradi. 1999. An updated checklist of the birds of Lebanon. *Sandgrouse* 21: 132–170.
- Shirihai, H, IJ Andrews, GM Kirwan & P Davidson. 1999. A Checklist of the birds of Israel and Jordan. *Sandgrouse* 21: 36–44.

Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi, Faculty of Science, Section 1, Lebanese University, Beirut, Lebanon. grjaradi@hotmail.com
 Fouad Itani, Birds of Lebanon, Quraytem, Beirut, Lebanon. fouaditani@yahoo.com