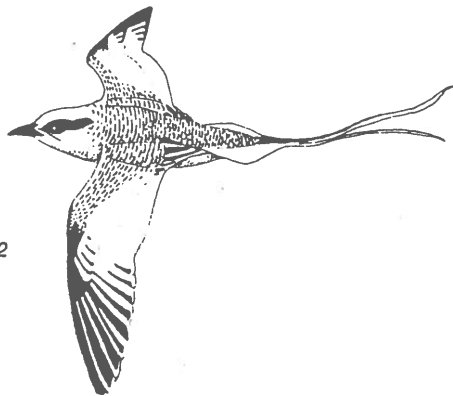
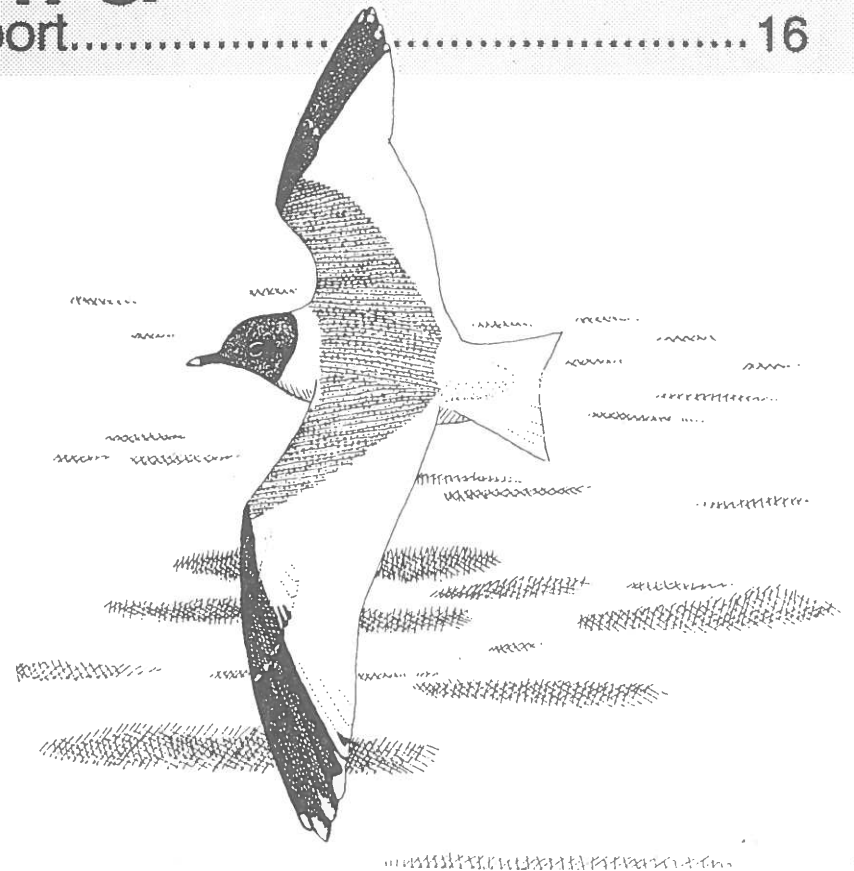


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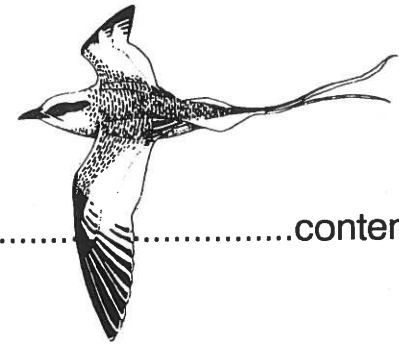
published August 1992



full sightings report July-December 1991
first records of Bar-tailed Desert Larks in the UAE
changing birdwatching sites - ID and status of
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Drawings Bar-tailed Desert Lark (9), Merlin (16), Sooty Falcon (17), Dotterel (19), Woodcock (20), Pied Kingfisher (23), Bimaculated Lark (24), Small Skylark (25), Brambling (30) and Red-billed Tropicbird (back page and logo) by Bill Morton. Hooded, Pied and Mourning Wheatears (33) by Rob Morris.

Additional copies of Emirates Bird Reports 1-16 can be obtained from Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai, United Arab Emirates price Dhs.20 (overseas rates on request).

Front cover: Sabine's Gull at Ramtha tip in July 1991



EDITORIAL

The UAE birdwatching fraternity declined further in April 1992 when Adrian Chapman departed for Hong Kong. Our loss will be Hong Kong's gain; Adrian's good company and birding skills will be greatly missed and we wish him lots of luck in his new birdwatching paradise. This decline in observers is only temporary we hope, as birding in the Emirates continues to be exciting, with new discoveries continuing apace. Additions to the country list are reported regularly and information on other lesser-known species is increasing, enhancing our knowledge of UAE birdlife.

A team of ornithologists studying Houbara breeding areas in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi, for the National Avian Research Centre (NARC), have documented much new information, including the discovery of several new lark species. In this edition former NARC team member Rob Morris details the UAE's first live Bar-tailed Desert Larks and puts the record straight on the status and ID of Mourning Wheatear in the UAE.

On a different subject, the environment should be high on the country's agenda this year following the 'Earth Summit' in Brazil. The Emirates are very proud of their record in this field, particularly with regard to the creation of parks, green belts and, (especially in Abu Dhabi emirate) the planting of large areas of irrigated woodland. Nevertheless, without a formal conservation policy, and with the random (but well-meaning?) introduction of 'indigenous' wildlife there is a potential problem. The rapid increase of introduced species such as Black Francolin, Common Mynahs and Rose-ringed Parakeets is in danger of getting out of control while important natural bird habitats remain unprotected by law.

In the autumn the Emirates Bird Group, in association with the Emirates Natural History Group and the National Avian Research Centre will be undertaking a survey of all the sites which are important to our birds. A comprehensive list of IBA's (Important Bird Areas) in the Middle East will be published in 1993 jointly by the International Council for Bird Preservation and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East. This project is well worth supporting and if anyone knows of a site on their local patch which should be listed please contact Colin Richardson.

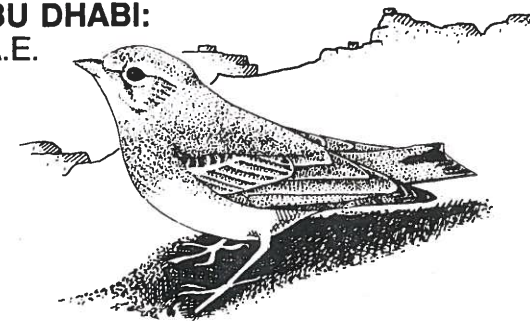
Thanks to all who have submitted their observations for inclusion in the UAE central record, which form a basis for the bird report in this issue. Telephoned reports are very gladly received (04 313378) especially of rare or interesting species. Record sheets are also available if you need them. Articles, letters, and notes for the *Emirates Bird Report* are always in short supply, so why not write something for inclusion in the next edition. Please send your records (January-June 1992) and all other contributions by 30th November 1992 to Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emirates Bird Report 16 is published under the authority of the Emirates Bird Group, which represents all birders interested in UAE ornithology. The Emirates Natural History Group once again kindly sponsored the production of the report.

BAR-TAILED DESERT LARKS *Ammomanes cincturus* IN THE BAYNUNAH AREA, ABU DHABI: The first live records for the U.A.E.

R.P.Morris



During late October and early November the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) survey team recorded Bar-tailed Desert Larks *Ammomanes cincturus* on a number of occasions in the desert area of Baynunah (23°50' 52°30'), 10-20 kilometres south of Ruwais. The first 8 birds were found on 29th October 1991 by Sheriff Baha El Din feeding on a gravel plain adjacent to a small outcrop. He did not initially realise the significance of the record and left the flock, mentioning the sighting to the other members of the team in passing. An hour later I found at least 6 birds in the same area. The following day 5 birds were recorded in another part of Baynunah. In total the survey team recorded Bar-tailed Desert Larks on ten occasions (a minimum of 40 birds).

In February 1992 the NARC survey team again recorded Bar-tailed Desert Larks in the Baynunah region. A flock of 17 were recorded on the 15th and 3 singing males were noted approximately 15 kilometres north of Ghayathi (just east of Baynunah).

Richardson (1990) and Richardson & Bannon (1991) had predicted the likelihood of Bar-tailed desert Larks occurring in the UAE. These records were long awaited since the record of a dead bird found in Dubai in 1971. Bar-tailed Desert Larks breed in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and in Central and Southern Oman (Hollom *et al* 1988) and in 1987 nesting was reported in Bahrain (Richardson 1990). Whether the birds found in the Baynunah region are resident or are simply nomadic flocks, wandering outside their normal range, is yet to be determined. The fact that birds have recently been found in song does suggest they may stay and breed in the area. Bar-tailed Desert Larks, unlike their close relative the Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* are found in areas of sandy and gravelly desert and not in mountain wadis. The Baynunah area is quite a remote part of the UAE and coverage of the area before October 1991 was very poor. There are probably other species to be discovered in the area. For example the NARC survey team also found Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula* at Ruwais, and had a flock of probable Dunn's Larks *Eremalauda dunnii* just south of Jebel Dhanna.

DESCRIPTION

In general appearance the birds were very similar to a small Desert Lark. The upperparts colouration was a pale, sandy brown. The underparts were a off-white with a slight buffy wash on the breast. The tail pattern was very distinctive - a black bar across the tip of the tail, that was slightly broader in the middle of the bar. The rest of the tail was a sandy brown. The tail pattern could only be seen properly in flight (like the tail of a wheatear for example). In flight the wings were also quite distinctive

showing dark wing tips and a buffy-orange wash across the flight feathers. The orangey panel in the wing could also be seen on the ground. The tips of the primaries extended noticeably beyond the tertials.

The head was very non-descript apart from a beady black eye. The bill was short and weak, noticeably smaller than that of Desert Lark. The bill colours varied from a pale yellowy-horn to a fleshy colour. The legs were also flesh-coloured.

The birds fed quietly on the ground moving around like a flock of buntings. They were very unobtrusive and could have been easily overlooked, particularly if we had not left our cars. They were very approachable, allowing views down to 7-8 metres. When the birds were flushed they only flew a short distance and gave a short call "dridd".

Several of the observers (myself included) had previous experience of Desert, Bar-tailed Desert and Dunn's Lark. Bar-tailed Desert Lark can be distinguished from Dunn's Lark (which inhabit similar areas) by the smaller bill, the tail pattern (Dunn's Lark's tail looks all dark with pale central and outer tail feathers), by the face markings (Dunn's Lark usually shows a distinctive pale eye-ring and a dark malar stripe) and by the stance (Dunn's Lark has a very upright carriage of the body).

The identification of Bar-tailed Desert, Desert and Dunn's Lark requires careful consideration. The best texts to refer to are *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* by Hollom, Porter, Christensen and Willis (1988) and a paper in *Birding World Vol.3:15-21, Identification of Dunn's, Bar-tailed Desert and Desert Larks*, (Shirihai et al 1990).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the NARC survey team for providing the records and NARC for providing support to investigate the avifauna of Abu Dhabi.

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- Wildlife Conservation Unit, Dept. of Zoology, Oxford University, South Parks Road, Oxford, United Kingdom.

BIRD NOTES AND NEWS

Colin Richardson

Golf Coursers

The Emirates golf course is the best site for watching Cream-coloured Coursers in autumn, the irrigated fairways providing them with good feeding together with the coolness of the nearby Gulf coastline. Their numbers peaked at 14 in September 1991, although by December most of the birds had moved on, probably returning to their inland breeding areas. However, 5 birds remained until January 1992 feeding on the driving range, a fairly dangerous place for birdies (as proved the case). On 10 January 1992, only 3 remained alive. One was lying on the 150 yard line, apparently hit by a golf ball and another was missing. A sad end for such enigmatic birds....

Offshore rarities

Most petrels, shearwaters and southern skuas remain out of sight to land-based seawatchers although are occasionally reported only a short boat ride from the coast. The Royal Naval Bird Watching Society (RNBWS) keeps tally of their members' observations and publishes the highlights in their annual journal, *Sea Swallow*.

Volume 40 (1991) lists a number of interesting species seen off the Emirates. On 30 July 1989, 70 Flesh-footed Shearwaters *Puffinus carneipes* were found approximately 150 kilometres due east of Kalba, in the Gulf of Oman. This species is common from April-November further south in the Arabian Sea and off Dhofar (Gallagher & Woodcock 1980) although the only previous UAE report is of one in the same general area on 17 December 1987.

Meanwhile inside the Arabian Gulf, an immature Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* was off Jebel Ali on 16 February 1989 and in the same area Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* were seen on 22 November 1988 and 20 September 1990. The only previous UAE Great Skua record was off Jumeirah, Dubai in February 1989. All these skua reports seem to refer to one of the southern races which are sometimes treated as separate species, Antarctic Skua and South Polar Skua.

Indian Rollers at Digdaga

The range of Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* is steadily expanding south and west, while numbers in the north and east of

the country are also showing an increase. One of the best places for roller-watching is around the irrigated fields of Digdaga, Hamraniyah and Khatt, near Ras al Khaimah. The large fields at Hamraniyah (south of RAK airport) are very interesting for birders, many with groves of old ghaf trees in the fields and orchards and vegetable cultivations nearby. Numbers of Indian Roller can exceed 130 per 50 hectare plot, so the habitat is clearly ideal. On 15 February 1991 numbers were perched on power lines adjacent to the largest field. Below them, hundreds of large green caterpillars had come out of the grass on to the track below. At least 40 Indian Rollers as well as Great Grey Shrike, Common and Bank Mynah and a few Rose-coloured Starling were having a field day.

The larvae were thought to be that of the *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli*.

Ringed Flamingo found dead at Khor Dubai

A ringed Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* was recovered dead on 21 January 1992 near the water ski club at Khor Dubai. The Iranian ring had been fitted by the Tehran-based Department of Environment. The bird had no visible signs of injury and its death was probably caused by the poisonous toxin *Clostridium botulinum* which is present in putrefying mud. (This has been a common cause of death of some birds in the Khor Dubai area for several years).

The details of the find are being sent to Tehran in the hope that the date and location of ringing can be provided for the record. Previous recoveries in the UAE and Oman have shown that many of these flamingos come from colonies on Lakes Reziyeh and Vromiyah in the Azerbaijan region of northern Iran.

Other ringed recoveries...

At least 3 Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus* were recovered in the UAE in recent years with rings issued in Moscow. The details are not complete but are summarised as follows:

Great Black-headed Gull: Found at Sha'am, Ras al Khaimah on 31 December 1989. It had been ringed in the Astrakhan Delta on the Caspian Sea in May 1989.

Great Black-headed Gull: Found 9 January 1991, ring number DB 366014 (MOSKWA), on Jumeirah beach, Dubai. Details have been sent to the British Trust for Ornithology.

Great Black-headed Gull: Found mid-March 1991 at the Eastern Lagoon in Abu Dhabi, ring number DB 639374 (MOSKWA). The return indicated the bird was 3 years old when found (no other details are known).

Waterfowl Count 1992

The country-wide waterfowl count held in January 1992 on behalf of the International Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) yielded fewer birds than in 1991. However the coverage included 5 new sites. Of 12 wetlands counted, the new ones were Al Ghar lake (near Abu Dhabi), the Creek Golf Club (Dubai), the Emirates Golf Club, Das Island and Khor Kalba.

Gulls formed the bulk of birds counted, the most common being Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (over 23,500). Some species particularly ducks (Teal, Pintail, Wigeon and Gadwall) were unusually scarce, while Little Egret was totally absent. An increase in Cattle Egrets was encouraging, reflecting the spreading grassy habitats in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. Great Cormorant numbers had trebled since 1991, with 350 lounging on the exposed mudflats at Khor Dubai for most of the winter. The Khor Dubai Greater Flamingo flock was down to less than 1,000, although hundreds of immatures were found at several sites on the Gulf coast or at wet areas a short distance inland, where it had been previously unrecorded. A bonus for the count were 5 rare Pintail Snipes at the Emirates Golf course.

The count formed the UAE's contribution to the Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC), coordinated at Slimbridge by the IWRB. A full report published by the IWRB will be available later in the year.

Thanks go to this year's counters, Ian & Jill Andrews, John Bannon, Bish Brown, Roy & Simon Green, Dr. Reza Khan, Colin Richardson, Dave Robinson and Mike Wood (Das Island).

LETTERS

Kittiwake *Larus tridactyla* reported from Arabian Gulf

(Last year I received a report from Joachim Tafforeau of a Kittiwake landing on a Belgian naval ship while on patrol off Kuwait during the Gulf war. As this species is almost unknown in the Gulf, and as recording procedures in Kuwait are undefined, his report is quoted as follows for the record and future discussion. - Ed.)

KITTIWAKE *Larus tridactyla* on board the 'A961 Zinnia' in the Persian Gulf off Mina Saud (Kuwait) on 19 March 1991.

At 6.30am I went on deck to check if any birds were found sitting on the ship. Apart from a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and a female Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, I noticed to my great astonishment a Kittiwake sitting port-side. The bird was in bad condition, being all wet and soaked. It looked totally exhausted. One

could approach the bird very easily to less than half-a-metre. Due to its condition, its neckless appearance and short legs (which both constitute Kittiwake's typical jizz) the bird gave a compact, thick-set impression.

DESCRIPTION

Size comparable to Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Mantle and wings grey. Underparts white.

Wingtips black. Because the bird was not seen flying, the exact wing pattern could not be established.

The bird showed a small grey-black ear spot.

Legs black. Bill yellow to yellow-green.

The colours of the bare parts and the presence of an ear spot made me conclude the bird was an adult Kittiwake in non-breeding plumage.

At 7.00am I had to start working and went inside. At 8.45am I went out again to see if the bird was still there, but it had disappeared, presumably because from 8.30am the sailors start working on the decks.

J.Tafforeau, Kesselsesteenweg 88, B-2500 Lier, Belgium

Tagged Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* seen near Abu Dhabi

On the 22 February 1992, an adult Slender-billed Gull with a yellow shoulder-tag K7 was observed and photographed on the island of Abu al Abyadh (approximately 25°15'N, 53°45'E). The bird was with a flock of 46 adult Slender-billed Gulls. It was only observed on this one occasion during a high tide roost. I would be interested to hear from anyone who knows where this bird was tagged.

Rob Morris, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Department of Zoology, Oxford University, South Parks Road, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Quail killed by shrike

On the 18 September 1990 I was witness to the killing of a Quail *Coturnix coturnix* by a Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*. The shrike flushed the Quail from some grass on to a road on Das Island and then struck from a height of about 2 metres from a palm tree, almost ripping the head clean off its victim. I was driving a mini-bus and this happened in an instant a few metres in front of me. I

stopped and backed up a couple of metres. The shrike did not notice me, the driver, and almost at once flew back down to the now dead Quail and tried to move it off the road by tugging at it and flying backwards. The Quail proved too heavy. I then got out of the bus and retrieved the dead bird, which was in excellent condition apart from its neck wound. I put the bird in my freezer to keep for our 'resident taxidermist', Bish Brown. When I returned to the scene of the killing a few minutes later the shrike was flying to and fro across the road, wondering where its meal had gone.

Another Quail was seen at close quarters in the same piece of grass on the morning of 5 October 1991.

Rob Western, c/o Emirates Natural History Group, P.O. Box 2380, Abu Dhabi.

CHANGING BIRDWATCHING SITES

C.T.Richardson

SAFA PARK - Safa Park is shortly to emerge from its crystalis, with an official reopening in December 1992 after 2 years of noisy redevelopment. Our favourite birding corners have disappeared, but as time passes we shall see which species take to the new landscape. Already reed beds (*Phragmites communis*) are establishing themselves near the boating lake and Little Grebes seem to have settled into this new stretch of water (until the people and boats take over). Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were hunting over the lake in early August. During Safa Park's heyday from 1983-89, over 230 species were recorded, attracted by the variety and maturity of its irrigated habitat. Most of the Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) trees have been removed and the 'bird sanctuary' around the irrigation lake was badly disturbed during relining work.

On 27 April 1992 only 5 species were counted in the park compared to 38 on 23 April 1989.

RAMTHA TIP - Meanwhile at Ramtha tip, (a liquid-waste disposal site managed by the Sharjah municipality) the birds must be very adaptable. A constant flow of tankers pour waste into an upper lake. As the level rises, usually over several weeks, good habitat is formed for grebes, ducks and other waterfowl. Unfortunately bulldozers regularly breach the banks and the lake drains to the mudflats adjacent to the main road to Ras al Khaimah. However, this operation creates a number of very variable but interesting habitats

which luckily suit the dozens of Black-winged Stilts and Red-wattled Lapwings which breed there annually. The site is regularly contaminated with the botulinium toxin and hundreds of infected ducks, gulls and stilts have died in the last few years. In addition many of the birds become oiled or soiled in other ways, which must shorten their lives considerably. A plea has been made to the authorities for a more sensitive management approach to benefit the birds.

Rarities for the site include Greylag Goose (1988 & 1989), Ruddy Shelduck (1989 & 1991), Red-crested Pochard (1989), Long-toed Stint (1990) and the Sabine's Gull of summer 1991. (for more details and a fuller list see *EBR15* pp.36-37)

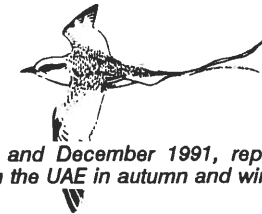
THE ZABEEL WATER TREATMENT PLANT (FISH FARM) - This Dubai site is changing rapidly. Although the 4 rectangular Telapia-stocked ponds which make up the bulk of the site have altered very little since they were first 'discovered' by birders in 1985, the bordering *Prosopis juliflora* trees have grown quickly. Many overhanging branches now provide ideal nesting habitat for several pairs of Little Grebe (first nested 1989), and are favoured by flocks of Bank Mynah. However, the stony shoreline no longer suits migrant waders and the muddy pools at low level are now covered by a giant reed bed. The reeds (mostly *Phragmites australis*) have grown thickly throughout the shallow pools making access quite difficult and observations amongst the growth almost impossible.

The sounds coming from the reeds in winter 1991/92 confirmed the colonisation of several pairs of Moorhen (the first breeding records in Dubai) and at least 2 vagrant Moustached Warblers (3rd & 4th UAE records) were in the reeds from mid November 1991 to the end of the year. Other *Acrocephalus* warblers found the site ideal, with Clamorous Reed Warbler and Marsh Warbler occurring in good numbers in spring. Reed Warbler nested in the reeds in spring 1992, a first record for the country and reared 2 broods (more details to be published soon).

These conditions have been created by allowing a constant overflow from the settlement beds to the low-level pools. The wetlands are bound to increase if this is permitted to continue as new pools are already forming in the desert beyond the reeds. The site is destined for greater things in the autumn of 1992 and beyond.

UAE BIRD REPORT

July - December 1991



260 species were recorded between July and December 1991, representing the excellent range and diversity of species to be found in the UAE in autumn and winter.

The top vagrants included a **Merlin** at Ras al Khaimah on 8 December (3rd record), a **Long-toed Stint** at Ruwais on 12 December (4th record), **Woodcocks** at 3 locations in early December (3rd-5th records) and a cluster of **Great Snipes** in the Jebel Ali area from early August to the end of the year. The National Avian Research Centre (NARC) team, while surveying the desert areas for Houbara west of Ruwais, discovered 2 new lark species for the UAE, including a party of **Bar-tailed Desert Lark** near Ruwais in late October and group of **Small Skylark** also at Ruwais. These species may be found more regularly in future as we learn more about their field characteristics and favoured habitats (see page 3). A **Moustached Warbler** (3rd record) was found in the reeds at the fish farm (Zabeel water treatment plant) in mid November and after being joined by another in mid December it was heard singing. 2 **Chaffinches** were seen briefly on Das Island in late November and early December. The previous 2 other UAE records were also from Das. At Ramtha tip the errant **Sabine's Gull** stayed until 26 July.

A number of other interesting sightings were reported, including 10 **Indian Pond Herons** at Khor Kalba in early October, up to 3 **Ferruginous Ducks** at Ramtha in November, numerous **Honey Buzzards** in Abu Dhabi from late September and 2 pairs of **Lappet-faced Vultures** soaring over the foothills north-east of Al Ain. Single **Imperial** and **Booted Eagles** were found in early November and at least one young **Lanner Falcon** was present in July. (4 other July reports of young 'Saker' falcons could have been this species).

Of crakes, a **Spotted Crake** was present in the reeds at Ramtha from September to October and a **Water Rail** was heard there in November. A 'large blue moorhen' seen briefly in the mangroves on 21 September was reported as a **Purple Gallinule**, though not seen clearly enough for the record.

Large numbers of recent **Houbara** tracks were found in the Baynunah area from late October and a record congregation of nearly 600 **Black-winged Stilts** were feeding around the enriched Al Ghar desert lakes near Al Wathba for most of November. The **Crab Plover** colony at Abu al Abyadh continued to generate interest and 116 young were counted following the 1991 breeding season. **Cream-coloured Coursers** were found in new areas, including Shuwayhat Island in July and Das Island in September. One **Dotterel** was found at the Emirates golf course in mid July and there was a brief passage of **Caspian Plovers** from mid August to early September. Record numbers of **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at Al Ghar lake, peaking at 83 in late October, while some remained to overwinter, a rare occurrence for this species inland.

In July, extensive new **Bridled Tern** colonies were discovered on the sandy islets around Sir Bani Yas Island, with smaller numbers of **White-cheeked**, **Lesser Crested** and **Saunders' Little Tern** nearby. This represents an encouraging increase in these species ranges and numbers.

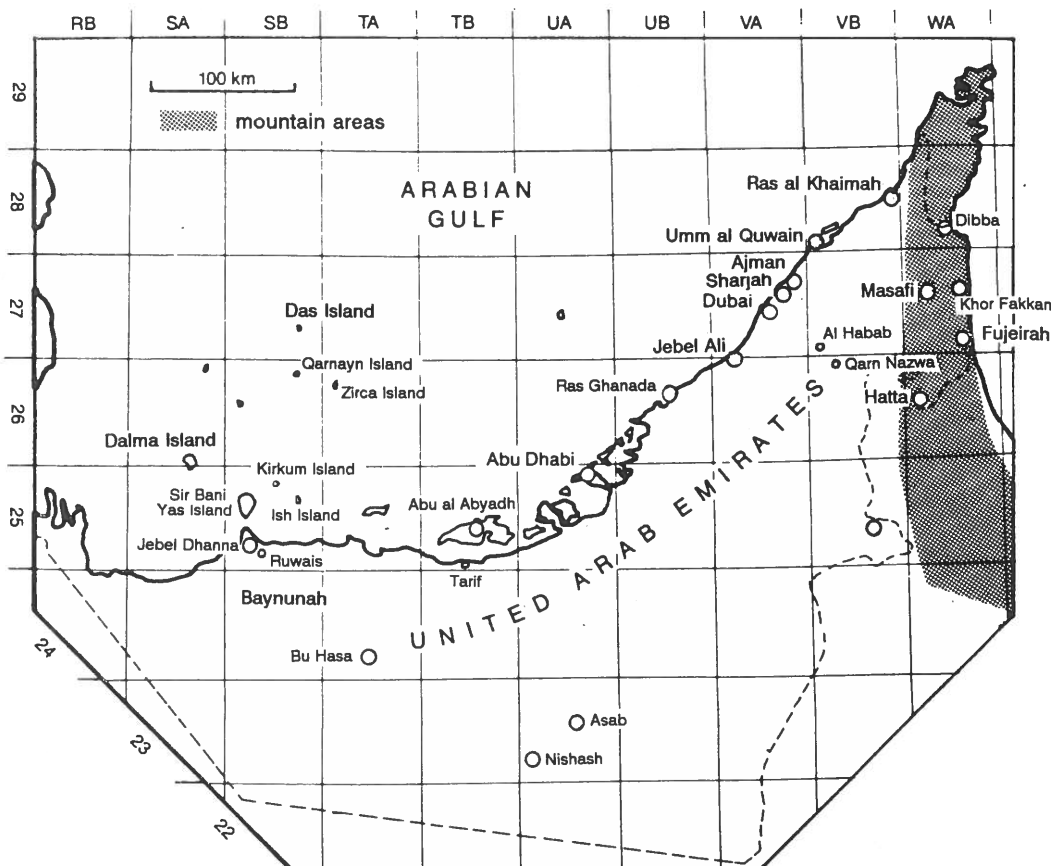
Other rarities found were **Bimaculated Lark** in December, an early **Thrush Nightingale** in September at Bu Hasa and male **Eversmann's Redstarts** at the Emirates golf course and Das Island in November. There was a scattering of **Hooded Wheatears** from September to November, including one on passage on Das Island. The discovery of major October-November passage of **Mourning Wheatear** in the Baynunah area was significant, providing new information of its status in Eastern Arabia.

Of warblers, **Grasshopper**, **Booted**, **Yellow-browed** and **Booted Warbler** were the most interesting, while the normally scarce **Barred Warbler** was reported at 3 locations from August-November. **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was elusive, with only 3

reported from mid October to early November. **Spanish Sparrow** produced young in late summer again at Hamraniyah, still the country's only breeding site, and probably overlooked even here for many years.

Das Island, proving itself once more as a veritable migrant trap by turning up many of the rarities for the period including several **Brambling** from late November to late December.

THE SITES



Map of the UAE showing locations of sites mentioned in the report.

ABU DHABI (UA25)

Eastern lagoon, Western road, Bateen wood, Mushref palace gardens, Al Wathba & Al Ghar lake (UB25), Futaisi, Dhabyah.

DUBAI (VA27)

Khor Dubai, Safa park, fish farm (Zabeel water treatment plant), Mushrif Park, Awir, Emirates golf course, Creek golf club.

SHARJAH (VA27)

Ramtha tip, Khor al Mamzer, cricket stadium lake.

RAS AL KHAIMAH (VB27)

Digdaga, Hamraniyah, Idhn (VB27), Al Jazeera Khor, Wadi Bih (WA28), Dhayah (WA28).

FUJEIRAH (WA27)

Rugheilat farm, Khor Kalba, Wadi Hayl.

AL AIN (VB25)

Jebel Hafit, Mahdah, fossil valley (Jebel Huwayyah).

UMM AL QUWAIN (VB28)

Khor al Beidah, Al Rifaa, Siniyah island.

HATTA (WA26)

Madam plain (VB26), Wadi Sumayni (VB26).

JEBEL ALI (VA27 & VA26)

Jebel Ali village (VA27), Jebel Ali hotel (VA26).

THE LIST

The list follows the order of Voous (1977) and the square numbers are those used by ABBA (the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia).

(Migrant numbers over the period in the report were noticeably lower than in previous years. The cause is believed to be linked to the Kuwaiti oil fires which were at their peak during the spring of 1991, affecting migration and onward passage (Symens 1991). Many species were in poor breeding condition (due to tared feathers, exhaustion, smoke inhalation etc.) and thousands seem to have been disorientated, diverting further south and east along unfamiliar migration routes. This combination may be the reason for species non-arrival at nest sites, breeding failure and a resultant meagre autumn passage).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Breeding pairs present at 3 sites:
Zabeel water treatment plant (the fish farm) - young noted in July, with 6 adults and 2 young there on 21 August. Probably at least 3 pairs.
Ramtha tip - 14 including one on nest on 8 August and 18 there on 11 October.
Safa park - 4 adults, 8 young present on 9 August.
2 on Sharjah gravel lake 31 October.
Present at Al Ghar Lake throughout period, breeding not confirmed.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

One adult in breeding plumage at Ramtha tip 16-23 August, was probably an early migrant. One, first seen at the Emirates golf course on 5 October increased to 2 by the end of December. 8 were at the fish farm, 3 at the new Creek golf course and 18 at Al Ghar lake by the end of the year.

An individual was present at Ruwais sewage works on 10 December.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

3 were seen offshore Fujeirah on 30 August, during an autumn pelagic trip, and 2 were off Dibba on 13 September.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

2 were still flying around the Umm al Fayarrin colony, off Musandam on 11 October (J.K. Bannon/C.Richardson)

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

First autumn record, 3 at fish farm on 24 November. 52 at Khor Dubai on 26 November increased to a maximum of 136 on 9 December.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis*

250 were present on Ghasha Island on 12 July, with evidence of a 'sizeable' colony present in winter months. However, also evidence of shooting, with many empty cartridges and dead cormorants (J.A.D.Chapman).

One adult at the fish farm 6/23 July, was unusual inland.

Otherwise up to 65 were seen on beaches and inshore areas in July-September.

c.2000 immatures were roosting on Khor Naid cliff, Musandam on 11 October and 3 were on Dibba beach on 8 November.

c.35,000 were found on 2 December at Siniyah island colony, most with well-grown young, (represents a nesting date of September). Large numbers feeding at Dhabyah on 20 December, estimated at 5-8,000 birds.

c.200 were found dead on shoreline south of Umm al Quwain on 13 December, believed shot.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One was at Al Ain zoo on 11 September and another was at Bu Hasa 11-14 September and one was seen briefly at the fish farm on 22 September and another was there on 22 October. One was seen at Rams mangroves (Dhayah) on 28 December.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Recorded at the fish farm throughout period, with maximums of 11 there in August and 18 on 9 September. 6 were at Mushref palace gardens, Abu Dhabi on 6 October while 7 were at Ramtha tip on 31 October, with 14 there on 24 November. Smaller numbers at other sites.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

Up to 2 were at the fish farm 21 August-9 September and one was on Das Island 3 September, indicating post-breeding dispersal. Regular at Khor Kalba, Eastern lagoon, Dhayah mangroves and other coastal sites, particularly breakwaters.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

One was at Ramtha tip 17 July and an immature *Ardeola* species was at the Emirates golf course 5 December.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

At least 10 were found at Khor Kalba 4 October (see EBR15:34-35) with one still there 7 November.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Noteworthy early records include up to 2 at the fish farm from 9 July-7 October (also 5/6 December). Up to 5 at Ramtha tip from 12-26 July and 2 there to mid December, increasing to 3 to end of year. One at Rugheilat farm from 11 November, 2 at Eastern lagoon 25 October and 9 there 26 November increasing to 12 on 16 December.

Winter influx from December, including 16 at Safa Park from 31 December.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

Very common and widespread from August, even inland sites, (though rarely far from coast). Up to 80 at Ramtha tip 8 August-20 October and 140 there on 23 August.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

One at Ramtha tip on 12-17 July. Ones and twos at freshwater sites from late August, with 3 at fish farm 25 August and one at Khor al Beidah on 6 September. Remarkably scarce after mid October with 2 at Ramtha on 3 November the only record.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

Small numbers from late July, at sites including the fish farm, Ramtha tip, Eastern lagoon, Al Jazeera Khor and Khor al Beidah. Up to 10 at Khor Dubai from 26 November. 8 at Bu Hasa on 9 September and 10 around Abu Dhabi's lagoons 18-25 October.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Up to 34 overwintered at Khor Dubai and the nearby fish farm July and August, with passage numbers increasing to 45 at fish farm during early September.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Singles were at the fish farm 31 August-11 September, at Bu Hasa on 11 September, at the Emirates golf course 20 September and 5 October, on Das Island 10-11 October, in Sharjah on 31 October and at Ramtha tip on 13 December. Up to 4 were on Das Island 15-16 September and 4 were at the fish farm on 22 September.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

One was at Ramtha tip from mid July to 21 September, and up to 2 were there from 3 November to end of year, with 3 there on 9 December.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Up to 6 were reported at Khor Dubai mid July and 14 August, and 2 were there most visits September and October, increasing to 12 on

26 November. Up to 5 were at Ramtha tip mid July to early September, with a pair on 4 August indulging in nest-building practice. 2 stayed on Das Island 9-10 October. 18 were counted at Khor al Beidah on 2 December and 14 were at Al Jazeera Khor on 20 December.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Juveniles more widespread than previous years: high numbers were on most khors and suitable shallow ponds near the coast from mid July.

Maximum counts from November: c.120 at Dhayah 8 November, 30 at Emirates golf club 12 November. 350 were at Al Ghar lake on 27 September where numbers increased to 633 by 29 November. 705 were at Khor al Beidah 2 December and 1300 were at Khor Dubai on 14 December.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

2 were at Al Hamra, near Ruwais on 13 December, probably dispersed from nearby introduced colony on Sir Bani Yas Island. 5 near Abu Dhabi's West Road on 25 October are probably resident.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

One was at Ramtha tip on 3 November, 9 on 24 November and 11 from 1 December to the end of the year. 2 were at Al Ghar lake on 29 November.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

A female at Dhayah on 8 November was first winter record. Small numbers (less than 5) recorded at fish farm, Al Ghar lake, Ruwais sewage works and Ramtha tip to end of year.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

One at Dhayah on 10 October was season's only record.

Teal *Anas crecca*

An individual at the fish farm 9 September, was season's first record. Fairly common from November.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Passage noted from 23 August, when 3 were seen at the Emirates golf course. Maximum, 146 at the fish farm on 5 December.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

First winter record, one at Ramtha tip 21 September. Maximum flock of 88 at Khor Dubai 9 November and 59 at the fish farm 3 December.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Small numbers on passage from 19 August, with 24 at Ramtha tip 9 September. 3 still at the Emirates golf course until 12 November. Smaller numbers at other sites.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

First winter record, 4 at the fish farm 25 September. Up to 20 at Khor Dubai from 3 October, 20 at Al Ghar lake on 22 November (decreasing to end of year) and 17 at Ramtha tip on 3 November increasing to 38 from 13 December. Smaller numbers on passage at Safa park, the fish farm and the Emirates golf club.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

2 arrived at the fish farm 10 November, increased to 13 by 24 November, with 11 there to end of year. 6 were at Al Ghar lake 29 November and up to 3 were at Ramtha 24-30 November, with one at Emirates golf club 30 November-5 December and 2 at Ruwais on 13 December.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

One was reported at Ramtha on 15 November, with 3 there on 24 November.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

2 at the Emirates golf club on 20 November.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Individuals were reported in Mushref palace area of Abu Dhabi 30 September-2 October. Up to 3 were in the area from 14 October-18 December.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Individuals were at Ramtha tip 21 September, Wadi Wurrayah on 2 October, in fish farm/Khor Dubai area 7 November-21 December, at Dhayah mangroves 8 November and at Hamranyah on 8 December.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus*

One pair was soaring over foothills near Mahdah village (VB25) and another two were over Wadi Sumayni (VB26) on 6 December. Both were inside Oman territory.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

2 were at Ras al Khaimah 21/22 September and singles were seen near Masafi 4 October, south of Jebel Ali on 11 October and near Dibba 7 November.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Individuals at Al Habab on 5 September and at Dhayah mangroves on 6 September were season's first records.

Maximum of 7 were at Dhayah on 8 November. Up to 3 were seen at several sites from October, including the fish farm, Khor Dubai, Umm al Quwain, Al Ghar lake, Ras Ghanada, Ramtha tip, Abu Dhabi and Hamranyah. 4 were at the Eastern lagoon on 25 October.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Up to 2 were reported at Al Wathba's fodder fields 6 September, 1 & 24 November and 20 December and a superb male was seen there several times from 29 November-30 December. Other singles were at Ras Ghanada 13 October, Das Island on 20 October, at Jebel Dhanna 12 December and daily in the Baynunah area 25 October-14 November. 2 were at Hamranyah 8 November with 5 there 2-20 December. A possible was at Dhayah 8 November.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

13 birds recorded, the highest number ever recorded in a season. Two males and one female overwintered at Al Habab fodder field until last sighting 12 September when only one bird found. One was at Bu Hasa 27-29 August and 13 September and another was at nearby Wadi Reum, on 15 September. One was at Ghanada on 5 September, up to 2 were at Hamranyah 6-22 September and 3 probably this species, were there 20 December. 2 were at Al Wathba on 27 September.

"Ring-tail" Harriers

2 on Das Island on 22 September, one at Al Ghar lake 27 September and another at Hamranyah on 15 September were not identified to species.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

7 were on Ghanada island 15-23 October, and singles were at Mushrif park on 13 October, Das Island from 22 October-5 November, the fish farm 22 October, Khor Kalba 7 November and Jebel Dhanna on 12 December. One wintered at Hamranyah from 2 December.

(Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo (vulpinus)*

One was at the fish farm on 19 August and another was at Hamranyah 6-11 September, with up to 3 there 25 October and 20 December. A late bird was at Ghanada on 13 October.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Healthy numbers were around Bu Hasa daily from early August to late September, probably resident in area, peaking at 18 on 5 August and 12 on 6 September. Individuals were at the fish farm on 4 September and at Dhayah mangroves on 10 October. Ones and twos

were in the Baynunah area 15 October-14 November and singles were over Hamraniyah fields on 8 November and at Ramtha tip on 24 November.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

Commonest eagle in the Northern Emirates, first individual was reported at Bu Hasa on 11 September. 2 were at Hamraniyah on 25 October and noted regularly until the end of year, with 4 there on 20 December. Maximum together was 5 at Dhayah on 8 November. 2 wintered in the fish farm/Khor Dubai area from 2 November. Individuals were reported at other nearby sites.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Rather uncommon. One at Digdaga on 25 July was early. Singles were at the fish farm 13 August (and 5-13 November), at Al Habab on 5 September, Bu Hasa on 7 September, Hamraniyah and Dhayah on 8 November and 5 provided interest at Hamraniyah on 8 December.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

One was at the fish farm on 5 November (R.P.Morris).

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

One seen on Shuwayhat Island, near Jebel Dhanna on 8 November (D.Robinson).

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

One in 'snake' wadi, near Hadf (Hatta) 13 August, probably resident nearby.

2 at Hamraniyah 6 September and 3 there 25 October. Singles reported in Wadi Hayl 4 October, at Ghanada on 6 October (found shot 12 October) and at Dhayah on 8 November.

1 at the fish farm throughout the period with 2 on 22 September, 18 October and 17-24 November.

Up to 2 reported around Abu Dhabi mid to late October (D.Robinson).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Island records - Evidence of nests found on all small sandy islets north and east of Sir Bani Yas Island, including pairs seen on Umm al Kirkum and Ghasha Islands on 12 July. 10 were found on Futaisi Island on 29 July. Up to 2 regularly on Ghanada August-October and on Shuwayhat Island in July and late October when possible nest site seen on cliffs. 2 were at Zirca Island on 10 November.

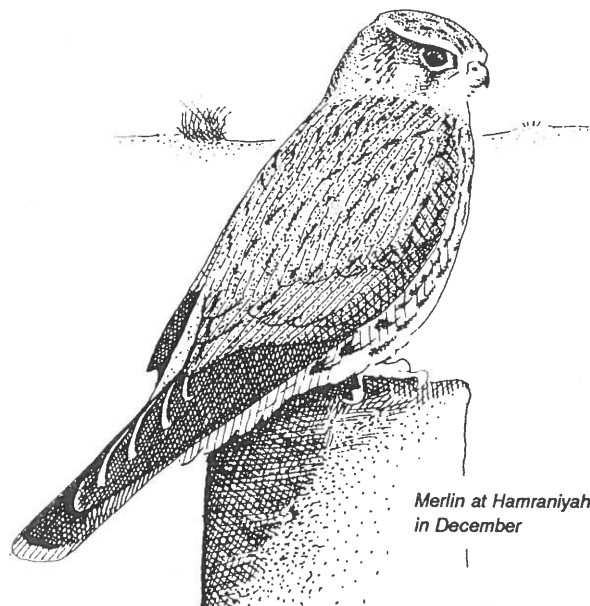
On the east side of Musandam, 2 active nest sites were at Ra's Dillah and one on Umm al Fayarrin with pairs present at 2 of the sites on 11 October.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

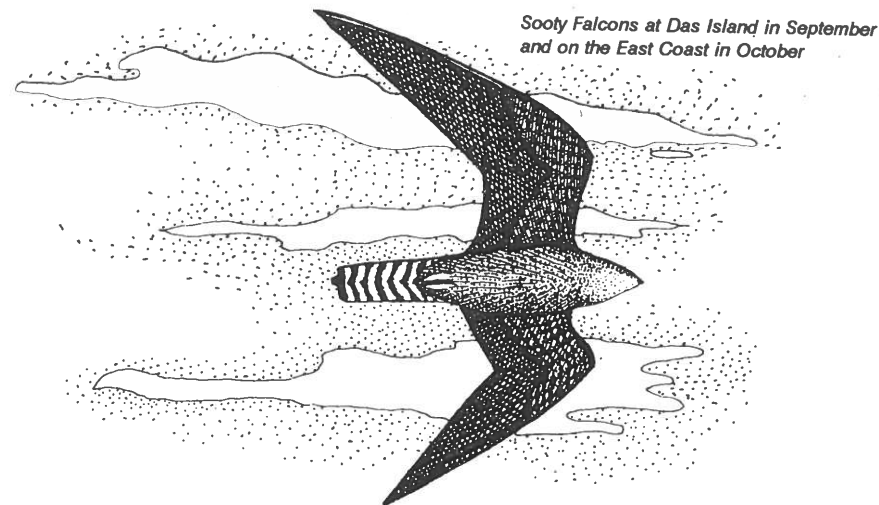
Singles were reported in Abu Dhabi on 4 October and at Qarn Nazwa on 11 October. 3 were at Hamraniyah on 8 November and one male remained there 1-8 December.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

One of the *pallidus* subspecies was at Hamraniyah on 8 December (J.K.Bannon) - 3rd UAE record.



Merlin at Hamraniyah
in December



Sooty Falcons at Das Island in September
and on the East Coast in October

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Singles were seen at Mushref palace gardens on 26 September, at Rugheilat farm on 4 October, at Hamraniyah 8 November and at the Emirates golf course on 12 November. 2 were on Das 10-13 October, a day ahead of peak swallow passage. 3 were together at Ruwais from 14 October-1 November.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

One was on Das Island on 1 September and 18-26 October. While on the East Coast, one was at Khor Kalba on 2 October and another was seen hunting along the shoreline at Dibba 4 October.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

An immature bird at Ruwayyah on 8 July may have been this species. Another immature at Digdaga on 25 July was confirmed as this species from a photograph (C.Richardson).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Singles reported at Digdaga on 13 July, Ramtha tip on 18 July and at Abu al Abyadh on 30 July lack descriptions and may have been Lanners. Singles at Mushref palace gardens on 16 November and at Jebel Ali on 19 December.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One passed through Das Island 7 September.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*

A pair were at Ra's Dillah and another adult was flying around Umm al Fayarrin island in the Musandam region on 11 October (J.K.-Bannon/C.Richardson) - records subject to OBRC acceptance.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

Common on Abu al Abyadh, confirmed extension of range. A pair with 4 young were found in Safa park 2 October, very late in season.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Singles were flushed on Abu al Abyadh 2 August, at the Emirates golf course on 20 September and at Mushref palace gardens on 30 September. One killed by a shrike on Das Island on 18 September (R.Western)

Water Rail *Pallus aquaticus*

One was heard in the reed beds at Ramtha tip on 3 November (J.K.Bannon).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

One was also in the reeds at Ramtha from 21 September-4 October.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

One was seen at Bu Hasa on 24 September (D.Robinson).

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Present at the fish farm throughout the summer, nesting strongly suspected - up to 7 there from September to December, with 3 immatures seen on 7 October.

An adult seen carrying nest material at Safa park on 21 July; no other breeding activity noted though a pair had been present for many months.

10 counted at Ramtha tip 26 July, probably 2 pairs with young, present to end of year. Passage noted from late August - one at Bu Hasa on 28 August, one at the Emirates golf course 5 September and 5 October. 2 were at Ruwais from 24 October.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio*

One seen briefly at Dhayah mangroves 21 September, believed this species, though insufficient detail noted for the record (S.Turner).

Coot *Fulica atra*

One overwintered at the fish farm, where the first migrants arrived 27 October, peaking at 30 on 31 December. Smaller numbers at Emirates golf course, Creek golf club and Ramtha tip.

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*

Tracks found suggesting 60-100 birds were in the Baynunah area from late October and one was seen near Sila (UAE's western border with Saudi Arabia) in November (NARC). Individuals were found on Das Island 26 October and on Abu al Abyadh in early December.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Maximum flocks recorded, 60 at Khor Kalba, 40 Dibba on 4 October and 47 at Dhabyiah on 18 October. Larger numbers Khor Dubai (though not counted). Also recorded other coastal sites.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

The UAE's largest breeding site for this species is now Al Ghar Lake, near Abu Dhabi - c.200 there including at least 6 on nests and 10 young visible on 2 July, plus many juveniles. Up to c.570 there on 6-29 November, fewer to end of the year.

45 at the nearby Wathba jail sewage overflow on 30 December.

c.110 at Ramtha tip on 16 July, 160 on 23 August and 35 remaining to December.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

One at the Emirates golf club 30 September-9 October and one at the unfinished Creek golf club 21-30 October. Up to 2 at Ramtha 31 October-15 November and 4 there on 24 November.

Most recorded at Al Ghar lake, with up to 15 there 6 November-27 December.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

300 were at Abu al Abyadh colony on 27 July, where 116 young were raised and fledged, most leaving by mid August (R.P.Morris). 7 were reported on Futaisi Island on 29 July. 80 were at Dhabyiah on 11 October and 200 by 25 October.

At Khor al Beidah, numbers increased from one on 26 July, to 184 on 6 September and 236 on 20 December.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*

One reportedly caught by beduin at fish farm, 17 October.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

Up to 5 at the Emirates golf club from 12 July-2 August, increasing to 14 by 8 September. Up to 7 remained there to 12 November and 5 until 30 November.

One appeared briefly on Das Island on 12 September.

4 at Al Wathba on 19 July noteworthy. One was at Jebel Ali on 13 December and 8 at Shuwayhat Island on 21 July.

Maximum 8 together during several sightings in Baynunah area 24 October-14 November (NARC).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

One at Ramtha tip 16-18 July and up to 4 were at the Emirates golf club 4-24 September with singles there to early October. 2 were flying over Hamranyiah fields on 25 October.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Pairs and juveniles reported at fish farm and inland Dubai 6-9 July.

c.100 at Ramtha tip on 12-16 July, and flocks of up to 40 seen at several sites in the Northern Emirates in August, and fewer from September. Scarce from early October.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Commonly seen feeding on grass of new Creek golf club, up to 60 there from 26 September to early December.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

c.3,000 at Al Ghar Lake in mid August (ENHG).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

c.1000 at Khor Dubai on 3 October, represents typical passage.

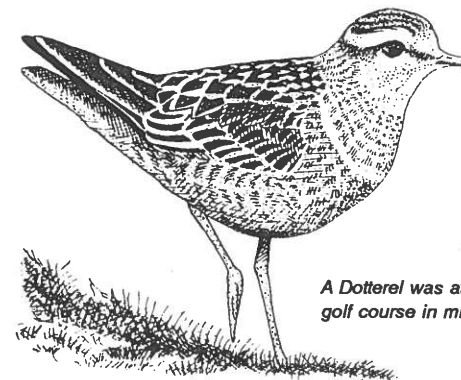
Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*

One was at the Creek golf club on 20 August and 2 were there 27 August (C.Richardson/J.K.Bannon) while up to 4 were on Das Island 25-31 August (M.Wood). One was at Al Wathba on 6 September (R.A.Richardson).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

First season's record, one at Emirates golf course 6 September, with up to 5 until November then up to 15 from 5 December to end of year.

Maximum at the Creek golf club of 10 on 7 October. 21 at Khor Dubai on 26 November and 11 at Al Wathba 27-30 December. Smaller numbers were seen at Ramtha tip and Mushref palace gardens.



A Dotterel was at the Emirates golf course in mid-July

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

One was by some flooded salt flats at the Emirates golf club on 18 July (C.Richardson).

Red-wattled Lapwing *Hoplopterus indicus*

2 adults and 2 juveniles were at Rugheilat farm on 4 July, with 16 there from 23 November. Young were also found at Ruwayyah pool (Dubai-Al Ain road) on 8 July.

One juvenile visited the fish farm 9-15 July and 3 were seen there on 22 September.

Up to 16, mostly immatures counted at Ramtha tip 12 July-3 November, with fewer to end of year.

13 were at Hamranyiah fields on 2 December.

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*

One was recorded at Ramtha tip from 6 September, with 6 there from 3 November-13 December. Another was at the Emirates golf course 9-15 October.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

7 were at Al Habab on 6 December and another was at Al Wathba 27-30 December. One was at Bateen airport pools at the end of December.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Small numbers, up to 10 together were at several coastal sites August-December, including Dibba, Jebel Dhanna, Umm al Quwain, Abu Dhabi island and Khor Kalba. 50 were counted at Dhabyiah on 11 October.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*

One found at Ruwais town sewage works on 12 December (J.A.D.Chapman) is a 4th UAE record.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

c.3000 were at Al Ghar lake on 12 October (D.Robinson) while at least 100 were feeding on new grass at the Creek golf club 7-21

October. 100's were on Khor Dubai throughout period, with smaller numbers on shallow coastal pools and muddy areas within 20km. of the coast.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One was at the fish farm on 26 July. Singles at Bu Hasa, the fish farm, the Creek and Emirates golf clubs from 23 August. 8 were at the Emirates golf course on 6 September and up to 4 were at Ramtha tip and the fish farm 6-23 September. Scarce from late October.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

c.2000 at Al Ghar lake on 12 October. Up to 150 feeding at the new Creek golf club from mid September to late October, decreasing to 20 in late November with none seen there on 7 December.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

At Khor Dubai, 850 counted on 3 October and 117 on 9 November.

30 were at Abu al Abyadh on 22 July, with up to 5 at Al Jazeerah Khor, Bu Hasa, Ramtha and the Emirates golf club from 16 August-26 September with smaller numbers other sites to end of year.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Maximum flocks, 300 at Al Ghar lake on 22 November, up to 24 at Ramtha 23 August-3 November while 40 were at the Creek golf club 21 October-2 November and 40 were counted at Wathba jail sewage overflow on 30 December.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

One was at the fish farm on 4 December.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

First migrants were seen at the Emirates golf club and Bu Hasa on 23 August. Numbers increased to a noteworthy 17 at the golf course by 16 December to end of year.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*

One was at the Emirates golf club 6 & 22 August, 16 September-9 October and 5 December. One remained at Jebel Ali village from 27 December.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

One was hit by a car near Sweihan on 1 December (per R.Khan). Singles were also at Jebel Ali village and the Emirates golf course on 5 December (J.K.Bannon/C.T.Richardson). 3-5th UAE records.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

6 were counted on shoreline at Khor Dubai from mid August to late November, and singles were at Abu Dhabi on 6 September and Ramtha tip 6 September and 9 December, the Creek Golf Club 21-30 October and the fish farm 5 November. 5 were counted on the Eastern lagoon on 22 December.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Fairly common on mudflats and khors: 150 were at Khor Dubai on 19 July and c.200 were at Khor al Beidah 20 December.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One was noted at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon on 19 July. Fairly common on passage from late August to late September, with 23 at the Creek golf course 8 September. Smaller numbers in other months on khors and coasts.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Fairly common throughout period. c.50 counted at Khor Dubai 13 July, probably early migrants. 85 at Khor al Beidah 6 September. Smaller numbers at other sites.

One long-billed *orientalis* noted at Ramtha tip 20 October.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Singles were at the Emirates golf course on 6 September, at Ramtha tip on 20 October (4 there on 3 November) and at Al Ghar lake on 16 November.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Small numbers reported on passage from mid August. Up to 3 at Ramtha 16 August-31 October and at Al Ghar lake from 16 November to end of the year. Singles were in Abu Dhabi on 6 September and at the Emirates golf club 22-29 August and 14 October. 3 were at Al Wathba jail sewage works on 30 December (possibly from nearby Al Ghar lake).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Fairly common from 20 July to late September, becoming scarce from October. 2 at Ramtha tip on 3 November.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

First autumn record, 2 were at Ramtha tip on 16 July and 5 on 26 July. Steady passage was seen from August to October, with 10 at the fish farm 23 August-4 September and up to 4 at several sites including Mushref palace gardens and the Emirates golf course. Up to 3 were at Ramtha 3-15 November. Singles were at Ramtha, Ruwais and Al Wathba jail sewage works in December.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Up to 8 from 12 July to December at several sites, including Khor al Mamzer, Khor Dubai, Al Jazeerah Khor, Dhahiyah, Khor al Beidah, Khor Kalba and Mirfa. 12 were at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon on 25 October.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Localised throughout period, passage evident from mid August, with 32 at the Creek golf club on 20 August, 40 at Dibba 4 October and 30 at Dhahiyah on 11 October.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

One was at Ramtha tip 18 July, 12 on 23 July and 6 on 23 August. Up to 5 were on Das Island from 16-31 August and up to 6 were at the Emirates golf club from 22 August, increasing to 12 by 20 September, with one remaining to 20 November. 10 were offshore Fujairah on 30 August and one was off Abu Dhabi's corniche on 4 September. Up to 15 were on the lagoons at the new Creek golf club 7-30 September, with one still there on 20 November.

c.100 were in Dibba bay at dusk on 4 October. Autumn migrants arrived at Al Ghar Lake to peak at a high of 83 on 25 October, and 7 were still there on 28 December presumably wintering. This is the first inland winter record of this species in recent years.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

One flew 'inland' up Dubai creek near Garhoud on 7 September.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

One on Das Island on 15 November was the only reported sighting.

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*

Up to 50 daily on Das Island August-October decreasing to 6 by end of December. One on Eastern lagoon on 19 July, 2 off Fujairah 30 August; ones and twos at Creek golf course 7 September-25 November. Small numbers East Coast throughout. c.50 were counted at Zirca Island on 10 November.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

First winter record: one at fish farm 11 December. Small numbers were recorded to the end of year at sites including Ramtha tip, Khor Dubai and Umm al Quwain. 10 were at Dhahiyah on 20 December.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

The adult reported in EBR15 remained at Ramtha tip from 24 June until it was last seen on 26 July (C.T.Richardson/R.A.Richardson) First record for the UAE (and Arabia).

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Major influx in early December. Maximum counts 4,300 on Khor Dubai 9 December and 7,000 at Creek Golf Club on 19 December (where they remained as a pest all winter).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus geneii*

Typical counts: roosts of c.100 were at Khor Dubai 19 July/9 September with 365 there 9 November. 170 were at Ramtha tip 16 August and 420 at Khor al Mamzer 31 October.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

c.1,000 were lounging on the newly grassed fairways at the Creek Golf club on 12 December.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Recorded from mid August, with passage from 11 September. Small numbers present at Khor al Beidah, Al Jazeerah Khor, Eastern lagoon, Ramtha tip and Khor Dubai throughout. 18 at Khor Dubai on 26 November.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

12 were roosting around Khor Dubai 19 July, 34 were there on 9 November and 15 were counted at Dhahiyah on 20 December. Smaller numbers other sites throughout period.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*

Noteworthy records: Up to 10 daily 24-31 August and 1-15 November on Das Island (none reported Sept/Oct). One was amongst a mixed tern flock at Khor Dubai 14 August. 2 were at Umm al Quwain's breakwater on 11 September and 2 were on Zirca Island on 10 November.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

On 12 July, 150 pairs were found on Umm al Kirkum island, 50 pairs on Ghasha Island (including well-developed young) and a 'sizeable' colony on Umm Qaser Island (J.A.D.Chapman). c.100 found at Futaisi Island on 29 July, were probably nesting nearby. One at fish farm on 4 September and one at Khor Dubai 9 September were unusual. 62 were at the Umm al Quwain breakwater on 11 September while c.50 were counted on Zirca Island on 10 November. 320 at Khor Kalba on 7 November was greatest roost recorded.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

142 first-summer birds were at the fish farm 6 August, with only 4 remaining to 11 August. Up to 285 at Khor Dubai roost mid August to September. 326 at Khor Kalba 4 October. Steady movement along coasts all months.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*

On 12 July, JADC found 1500 pairs on Umm al Kirkum Island, including many eggs and juveniles at all stages of development, and 750 pairs on Ghasha Island some with well-developed young.

76 eggs were counted on a berth at Das Island on 8 July (though gone a week later). 830 at Khor Dubai 9 July and 311 at Futaisi Island on 29 July. 100's off Kalba and Fujairah 30 August with 720 at Khor Kalba on 4 October (Common off Das Island July to mid



3 Woodcocks were found in December

September and off East Coast early-mid October). c.300 on Zirca Island on 10 November. Small numbers at lagoons and mudflats late summer to autumn.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

Selected sightings listed.

2,500 pairs were found on Ghasha Island, including many well-developed young on 12 July, 250 pairs were at Umm al Kirkum and a sizeable colony was present at Umm Qasr Island on the same date (J.A.D.Chapman). 3 were on Futaisi Island on 29 July. 7 were offshore Fujairah 30 August and 6 were off Umm al Quwain on 11 September. Common in October, when c.100 were seen off Dibba. 1,000's were off Musandam and in Khawr Habalayn on 10 & 11 October, and the colony on Umm al Fayarrin Island was still active with hundreds of birds and many fledged young there on the 11th.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*

c.20 pairs on Ghasha Island, including well-developed young on 12 July (J.A.D.Chapman). Numbers increasing at Ramtha tip from 30 on 12 July to 155 on 23 August. Otherwise (immatures) fairly common coasts and mudflats until late October: c.200 off Dibba 4 October and up to c.250 at Dhabyah on 11-25 October. 22 were at fish farm on 9 November and 2 were at Siniyah island on 2 December.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

17 birds reported. Ones and twos were at several sites including Ramtha tip, Al Wathba, the fish farm, Creek golf club and the Emirates golf course until 12 December. 3 were feeding at Ramtha 19-26 July, 21 September and 3 November. 4 were at the fish farm 19 August and 5 were reported on 7 October. One was at Hamraniyah fields 8 November.

White-winged Black Tern

Chlidonias leucopterus

16 birds reported. 2 were at Ramtha 16-26 July and up to 2 were feeding there 23 August-31 October. Singles were at the fish farm and Al Wathba from September to early October. 15 passed through Das Island on 3 September and up to 4 stayed at the Creek Golf club 16 October-12 December (7 were there 25 November) and up to 4 were at Al Ghar lake from 8-29 November.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse

Pterocles lichtensteinii

Up to 6 were flushed from a wadi near Masafi 4 July and 30 August. One reported on Das Island on 3 September, no details (M.Wood).

c.50 came to drink after sunset at Wadi Bih on 6 September and 41 came to drink at a brackish mangrove pool at Dhayah on 8 November.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse

Pterocles exustus

Nesting recorded on Ghanada Island (UB26) with c.25 counted including juveniles July-August (R.P.Morris).

One was reported at Digdaga on 13 July. Seen flying over, or drinking near the Emirates golf course from July, with 9 there on 2 August, 33 on 23 August, 60 on 9 September, 42 on 20 September and 10 on 5 October.

2-20 seen daily in Baynunah area late October to early November, confirms extension of known range.

4 were sitting in the middle of Khor Kalba roundabout on 7 November.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

One on Das Island on 9 December is a significant extension of range.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

43 (mostly juveniles) were around the Hamraniyah fields on 25 July and 4 were recorded there until 6 September.

Ones and twos widespread on passage from 12 August-9 October while 6 were at Wadi Reum fodder fields on 19 August.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Now resident on Das Island, with up to 8 seen daily (M.Wood/L.Reaney). Not resident in 1988 (LR)

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Formerly rare now regular at Dhayah, Mirfa, Ruwais, Al Awir, Al Habab and Jebel Ali Village. One was at Bu Hasa (TA24) on 9 September.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One was flushed from the mangroves at Khor Kalba on 30 August.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

One was seen briefly in the headlights at Al Ghar Lake on 29 November.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

Pair present at Qarn Nazwa on 8 July. (2 pairs observed there early 1992)

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Singles birds, all presumed resident, were at Qarn Nazwa 8 July, Masafi 30 August and near Idhn 25 October.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Individuals were found on Das Island 9-12 December (M.Wood *et al*) and on Abu al Abyadh in mid December (R.P.Morris).

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Singles were found at the Emirates golf course on all visits 15-28 September, at Sheikh Mohammed City (Western Region) on 14 September and at Bu Hasa on 16 September.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Scarce. First reported at the fish farm on 9 July, with 10 there on 18 August. Brief passage on Das Island 25-28 September. Few other reports.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

c.50 at the fish farm on 7 October, first autumn report. c.50 seen at Ruwais sewage works 10-13 December may breed nearby.

White-collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*

6 were seen 4 October, and 9 on 7 November at Khor Kalba.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

First autumn birds were at Abu al Abyadh on 15 August and Ramtha tip 6 September. Passage peaked in mid September when 2 were flying around at the Emirates golf club on 20 September.

Up to 2 wintered at the fish farm from 22 October.

Also reported at Dhayah, Khor Kalba, Eastern lagoon and Jebel Ali hotel breakwater.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

A bird was seen perched on wires at the same location near the coast at Diba Bay'ah (Musandam) on 16 May (R.P.Morris) and on 3 August (R.Digby)

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

Common and increasing in range and numbers. Juveniles abundant in July. c.100 birds counted around fields at Digdaga on 25 July.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

15, including 11 juveniles were at Rugheilat farm and 3 immatures were found at Khor Kalba on 4 July.

2 seen at Al Habab fodder field 19 July, suggests local nesting (VB27) and 65 were there 1-8 August.

Common from early August to late October, fewer to early November particularly Northern Emirates. 60 were on Ghanada Island on 2 September, 45 were at the fish farm 23 September and one was still there on 5 November. c.40 were feeding around Hamraniyah on 11 September and 3 were still present on 8 November.

3 on Das Island 14-15 November was last autumn record.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

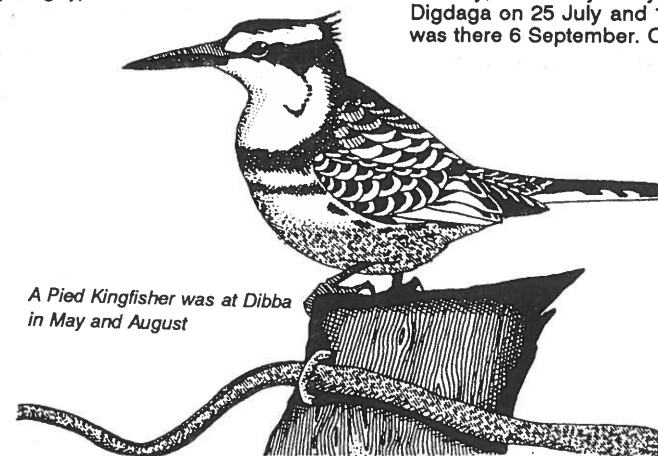
Only 2 were in the Digdaga area on 25 July, shows a decrease in breeding numbers.

Passage commenced on 2 August with c.30 at Abu al Abyadh and flocks over Al Ain zoo in mid August. At least 20 were at the fish farm 27 August-2 September and 16 were there 23 September. 15 were at Bu Hasa on 3 September and 25 were at nearby Sheikh Mohammed City on 14 September. Up to 30 were around Mushref palace gardens in Abu Dhabi 13-27 September and last recorded, 2 at the Jebel Ali hotel on 14 October.

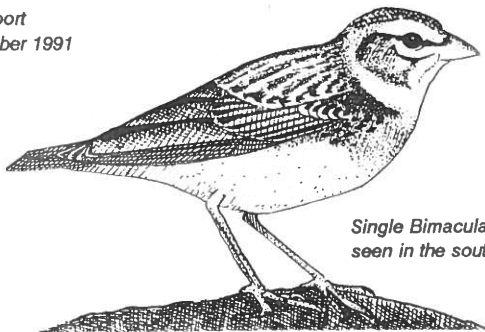
A report of up to 3 on Das Island until 16 November requires confirmation.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*

Up to 3 immatures were on Abu al Abyadh 14-24 July, unusually early. 2 were found at Digdaga on 25 July and 16 August, and one was there 6 September. One was at Bu Hasa



A Pied Kingfisher was at Dibba in May and August



Single Bimaculated Larks were seen in the south in mid December

on 13 August, increasing to 4 by 2 September. Up to 2 were on Das Island 1-7 September and 17-20 October. 3 each were at Rugh-eilat farm fodder field and at Bidiyah field, Khorfakkan on 4 October. One was at the Emirates golf club 1-4 November and another was at Ramtha on 15 November. Others were reported during peak passage, from 24 September to end of October and one reported on Das Island until 27 November, needs confirming.

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

2 were found dead in Abu Dhabi on 27 September and another (alive this time) was there on 15 October, first Abu Dhabi records for many years.

Up to 190 were counted at Digdaga and Hamraniyah on each visit 25 October-8 December, suggesting large resident population in area.

A migrant was on Das Island from 18 November-21 December.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Up to 5 were in Safa park from 12 July, 4 at Ramtha on 16 July, 9 at Digdaga 25 July and one at Awir on 19 July all probably nesting locally. Main passage was noted 3-20 September (from mid August on Das Island).

Very common in the 200 hectare fodder field at Hamraniyah where 29 were counted from 25 October-8 November.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Singles on passage were on Das Island 29-30 August and 3 September, at Bu Hasa 3 & 9 September (2 were there on 12th), in Safa park on 10 September, at the Emirates golf course 20 & 24 September and in Mushref palace gardens 21 September and 7 October. A wintering bird was in Safa Park on 31 December.

Black-crowned Finch Lark

Eremopterix nigriceps

Maximum recorded: 350 were at the Emirates golf course on 15 August and 200 were in Wadi al Reum on 15 September.

Up to 4 reported on Das Island in July, August and November.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*

8 birds were found 10 kilometres south of Ruwais on 29 October (S.B.El Din) - a 1st living UAE record. They were then seen regularly in the Baynunah area from late October to early November (R.P.Morris).

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

A new population was found on Jebel Dhanna late October 1991.

2 were on Das Island 10-14 November.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

Singles at Das Island 13-20 August and at Dhabiya on 18 October were range extensions.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

One was found about 10 kilometres west of Ruwais on 10 December (J.Bannon/C.Richardson). Singles were also found near Jebel Hafit in early December and at Al Wathba on 30 December.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Passage was first noted on Das Island with up to 5 arriving on 18 August, recorded occasionally until 14 November. Numbers arrived at Al Wathba early September and increased to 84 by 20 December. Up to 4 were at Bu Hasa 6-9 September and up to 7 were found at Al Habab 9-12 September (with 10 there 3 October). 4 were at the Emirates golf club on 10 & 24 September and 6 were at the Creek golf club on 30 September. There was further light passage 12-21 November.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

6 overwintered to August at Ras Ghanada (ENHG), awaits more detail. Up to 8 were on Das Island from 26 November-7 December and 25-27 December. 11 at Al Wathba on 30 December, awaits confirmation.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

One on Das Island on 14-21 November was noteworthy.

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

8 at Ruwais sewage works on 18 November was a 1st UAE record (S.B.El Din). The 2nd record, was of 2 at Al Wathba on 27 December (C.Richardson).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

The first winter influx came with 2 at the Emirates golf club on 9 November, and 4 at the Creek golf club on 10 November (34 there by 7 December). 56 were at Al Wathba 29 November, 20 were found at Hamraniyah on 8 December and 25 were at Al Habab on 25 December.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

2 each were at Bu Hasa on 18 August and the fish farm on 25 August, starting off the autumn passage. Passage peaked late September, with 60 at the Creek golf club and c.50 at the fish farm on 26 September and 50 at the Emirates golf club on 28 September. Scarce after mid October and some wintering in south-west, at Al Wathba, Ruwais, Al Ghar lake, Mirfa and Jebel Dhanna, with a maximum of 4 together.

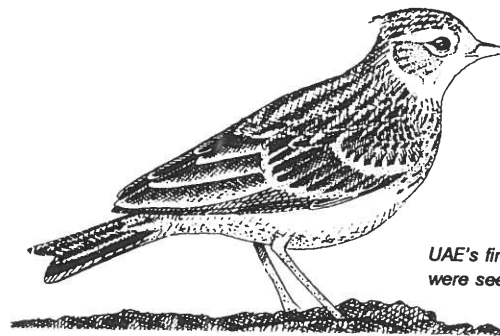
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

First autumn report, 2 at Ramtha tip on 18 July. Passage peaked mid September (earlier in south) to early October. c.100 were reported at Khor Kalba on 4 October. Scarce after early November (latest on Das Island 17 November) with 2 wintering at Al Wathba jail sewage outflow on 30 December.

A hybrid Swallow/House Martin was seen on Abu al Abyadh on 27 July (R.P.Morris), details awaited.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Up to 8 over Das Island 17 August-9 September and 2 at Al Ghar lake on 12 October, were the only records.



UAE's first Small Skylarks were seen near Ruwais in November

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

One was at the Emirates golf club 20 September and at the Creek golf club 30 October-25 November; singles were also reported at Ramtha tip, Al Habab and Safa Park 13-31 December; 2 were at Al Wathba on 27 December.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

One in Safa Park on 21 July was very early. First migrant was on Das Island 16 August, with small numbers on the mainland from 6 September, increasing in late October with 9 at the Emirates golf club on 24 October and 17 there on 14 November.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

One was beside a field at Bidiyah, Khorfakkan on 8 November (C.Richardson/J.K.Bannon).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

One at the Emirates golf course on 8 September and up to 2 at Bu Hasa 9-16 September were first of the autumn passage. Steady passage until 4 November. 3 on Zirka on 10 November was last report of the year.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

One was at the Emirates golf club on 15 November, up to 2 were on Das Island 21 November-22 December and 8 wintered at Jebel Ali village green from 28 November. Flocks of up to 13 were together at several sites in December, including Hamraniyah, Al Habab, Ruwais sewage works, Creek golf club and Al Wathba.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

3 on Das on 9 September is one of earliest ever records.

At least 8 at the Creek golf club on 16 October was first indication of passage. Recorded from end of October at the Emirates golf club, Ramtha tip, Ruwais, Al Habab and Al Wathba, with peaks of 22 at the Creek golf club on 10 November and 19 at Al Wathba on 27 December.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Ones and twos on Das Island from 15 October. 9 were at the Creek golf club on 10 November, and up to 24 from 15 November-12 December. Up to 100 were at Ruwais sewage works on 10-13 December, 14 at Al Wathba 8 November and at least 8 were in Al Habab fields from 25 December.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

13 at Creek golf club on 20 August was first autumn report. Steady passage noted until early October. Maximum together, 45 at the Emirates golf course 8 September. Up to 5 were still present at the Creek golf club until 3 November and 2 on Das Island to 18 November.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

One of the best seasons for this species. Singles at Asab on 19 August and at the Creek golf course on 23 August were first autumn migrants - up to 2 were at the golf course until 7 September. Reported at Bu Hasa from 29 August-16 September, with peak of 4 there on 9 September. One was at the Emirates golf club on 5 September. Up to 3 were in Mushref palace gardens 20-27 September. At least 2 were at Ramtha tip from 20 October to end of year and another 2 were in the Jebel Ali hotel grounds on 1 November. Up to 3 were at the Creek golf club from 2 November, and 8 were there from 15 November to end of year. Single birds were at other sites including Ruwais sewage works.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

First recorded in CR's Dubai garden on 21 August. Rather scarce, ones and twos on passage to mid October. Up to 4 on Das from mid October-mid November. Individuals were at Rugheilat farm on 7 November and at Ruwais sewage works on 13 December.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

First migrant was at Mushref palace gardens on 30 September.

Yellow-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus xanthopygos

One was in Bateen wood on 13 July and 13 September (recorded nesting there April/May 1991).

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes*

Reported in Bateen wood (possible nest site) 19 July, 7 there 13 September and 2 still there on 6 November. 2 were on Abu al Abyadh in late July (breeding site?).

Of migrants, one was at Wadi al Reum on 19 August and 2 were there on 15 September. One was at the Emirates golf club 6-10 September. 8 were at Sheikh Mohammed City on 14 September and 2 were at Rams on 22 September.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Heard calling at the Jebel Ali Hotel on 28 November.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

One was reported at Bu Hasa on 9 September (D.Robinson), the earliest known autumn sighting.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Singles were on Das Island 19-21 August, at Bu Hasa and the Emirates golf club 3-20 September and ones and twos were in Bateen wood 13 September-5 October.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Earliest migrants were seen on Das Island on 26 October & 1 November and 2 were at the fish farm on 5 November. Small numbers wintering numerous sites. (Note: A considerable reduction in passerine numbers, including juvenile/immature Bluethroats, was noted this autumn and winter.)

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*

Up to 2 females were at Bu Hasa 30 August-3 September, and one was at Wadi al Reum on 15 September (D.Robinson).

Eversmann's Redstart

Phoenicurus erythronotus

A male was seen in the garden of a compound of villas near Jebel Ali on 8 November then possibly the same bird was at the nearby Emirates golf course 12 November (C.Richardson/A.Simms).

Another male was on Das Island 1-2 December (I.Sherman/L.Reaney/M.Wood)

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

A male at the Emirates golf course on 17 October was the first autumn record. 8 were at Mushrif park, the country's best site for this species on 23 October. Passage noted throughout November, becoming scarce in December.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Up to 2 were recorded most days on Das Island 30 August-3 November and 2 were reported at Al Wathba on 15 November. No migrants reported on mainland.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

One was at Bu Hasa on 12 September then 2 on 16 September. One was at the Emirates golf course on 24 September and 2 were on Das Island 26-28 October.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

One passed through Das Island 26-29 October. Wintering reported at Emirates golf course, Al Habab, Al Wathba, fish farm and Shuwaib from November. Up to 6 were at Ruwais on 10-12 December. All of eastern races, predominantly *maura*.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Early autumn migrants were at Al Wathba on 19 July and at the Emirates golf course on 27 July, while general passage was noted from early August. Peaks of 10 were at Al Habab on 9 September and 15 on 3 October. Up to 7 were at the Emirates golf course from October to end of December.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

The first migrant was at the Emirates golf course on 23 August. Single birds were reported from 24 September to late October. One was at Hamraniyah on 8 November and 8 December. Singles, probably female, were at Al Habab on 25 December and at Al Wathba on 27 December.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Less than 20 birds reported. Ones and twos were seen from 3 September at Al Habab, Dhayah, Bu hasa (with 4 there from 16-24 September), at Qarn Nazwa on 3 October and at Jebel Ali village on 17 October. 5 were at the Emirates golf course on 24 October, indicating peak passage. Individuals were at several sites until 14 November with one straggler at Jebel Dhanna until 26 November (ENHG).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

One at the Emirates golf course on 29 August, one on Das Island 1 September and 2 at Ras Ghanada on 5 September were first migrants reported. Common on passage from late September. Up to 10 were at Al Wathba 29 November-30 December.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopygma*

2 at Qarn Nazwa on 3 October was first autumn report (passage noted on Das Island late October). Common to end of year in wadis, foothills, isolated jebels and sometimes desert rubbish dumps.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

The Qarn Nazwa bird returned in song on 12 September, and was joined by up to 2 more from 3-11 October until a total of 2 overwintered. 2 were at Rams on 22 December and on Dibba gravel plain 3 were counted on 4 October with 4 there 8 November. One wintered near Masafi from 8 November. One was in song at Birkat Khaldiyah, Musandam on 11 October.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

(These records in the south-west suggest a need to review the status of this little-recorded species).

24 birds were found in the Baynunah, Ruwais and Jebel Dhanna area from 24 October to the end of the year (NARC per R.P.Morris). One was at Ruwais sewage works 10-13 December and another was on Jebel Hafit in mid December.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

One male was found near the Jebel Rawdah-Mahdah road on 12 September (also found there in November 1987). Single females were on Jebel Dhanna on 1 November and on Das Island on 20 November.

Two males, one in song, were found in Wadi Sai al A'la, near Khasab on 11 October.

Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*

Singles were seen in numerous location in mountains throughout the period. 12 were in a small wadi near Masafi on 8 November.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

Up to 3 were on Das on 19 August and 1-5 September (with 4 on 27 September) and one in Mushref palace gardens on 21 September.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Individuals were in Abu Dhabi on 21 October, near Masafi on 8 November and on Das Island on 19 November.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Noticeably fewer wintering than previous years.

One on Das Island 6-11 August (M.Wood) was exceptionally early.

First winter record, was of 3 on Zirca Island on 10 November. One was at the Emirates golf club on 14 November.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Up to 2 on Das Island 30-31 October undetailed (M.Wood), would be a noteworthy rarity.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis*
6 were at Sheikh Mohammed City (TB24) on 14 September (D.Robinson), extension of known range.

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*
All records - at least 2 were seen in Masafi area 4 July, 4 October and 8 November, with 6 there on 30 August.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*
One was flushed in Al Habab fodder field on 9 September.

Moustached Warbler
Acrocephalus melanopogon
One arrived at the fish farm on 13 November and overwintered. At least 2 were there on 19 December (C.Richardson) - 3rd and 4th UAE records.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
One was on Das Island briefly from 6-8 September and another was heard in the reeds at the fish farm on 12 October.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
Up to 3 each were at the fish farm and the Emirates golf club from 4 September to 11 October.

Clamorous Reed Warbler
Acrocephalus stentoreus
Heard and seen at Khor Kalba and the Eastern lagoon mangroves throughout period. 8 were at Abu al Abyadh mangroves on 26 July. Passage birds include singles on Das Island 19-21 August, at the Emirates golf course on 5 October and near Bateen wood 29 September-3 October and 14 October. Up to 2 were at the fish farm 4-19 December and 2 were in Ramtha reeds 3 November-1 December.

Great Reed Warbler
Acrocephalus arundinaceus
One was present on most visits to the fish farm 4 September-22 November. One was at Bu Hasa on 6 October and 2 were at the Emirates golf club 10/20 September.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*
Reported in Bateen wood in July and 3 young were seen in a nest on 19 July. Small numbers were on passage from 22 August-19 September, locally common to late November, mostly in Bateen wood, where up to 13 were present 6 September-14 October and 7 on 15 November.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*
One was reported on Das Island 19 & 21 August (M.Wood)

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*
One in a wadi near Masafi on 4 July was a very early migrant. 2 were on Abu al Abyadh on 23 July, with singles at Bu Hasa on 3 & 9 September, and Bateen wood on 21 September & 13 October being only other sightings.

Menetries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*
One at Qarn Nazwa on 12 September was one of earliest ever autumn records. 2 were at Al Wathba on 4 October, one was at the Emirates golf club 1/14 November and one was at the fish farm on 4 December.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
First autumn record was at Ghanada on 6 October. Common from late October. 6 were in Fossil valley, near Buraimi on 6 December, a reliable site for this species.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*
One in CR's Dubai garden on 18 October was the first autumn record, and up to 2 were there 18-20 November and 7 December. Other individuals were at the Emirates golf course on 1 & 12 November and at Al Wathba on 30 December.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*
2 immatures were on Ghanada Island 16-20 August and another was there on 13 October. Individuals were also found at the Emirates golf course on 9 September and on Shuwayhat Island on 3 November.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
One was at Bu Hasa 9 September and others were in Bateen wood 13 & 27 September. Passage of *blythi* race noted from 3 October, continuing in small numbers until early December.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*
Rather early reports in mid August at Bu Hasa and Asab, await detail. 2 were in Saffa park on 2 October. Main winter influx from early November and reported until the end of the year at numerous sites, including Mushrif Park, Qarn Nazwa, the fish farm, Dibba plain, Safa park and mountain wadis and Acacia plains.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
Light passage noted, from 17 August on Das Island to mid September on the mainland.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
One stayed on Das Island 11-18 November (M.Wood *et al*) confirmation requested.

Yellow-browed Warbler
Phylloscopus inornatus
Singles were on Das Island 26-28 October (M.Wood) and most days 21 November-25 December (L.Reaney/M.Wood), possibly same bird. One was in the gardens at Remah guest house (Abu Dhabi-Al Ain road) 10 December (NARC)

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*
One was at Bu Hasa on 16 September (D.Robinson).

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*
2 migrants were found on Ghanada Island on 18 October. 3 were recorded in typical mountain habitat on 5 November.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
Uncommon in autumn. Small numbers on Das Island from 19 August-8 September. Individuals were at Bu Hasa on 6 September, at the Emirates golf course on 9 October and a late migrant was at the Jebel Ali hotel on 1 November.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
One at Bu Hasa from 22 August was first record. Most on passage from 3 September. Last recorded 24 October.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
One was on Ghanada Island 16-18 October and another was in the Jebel Ali hotel grounds, a regular site for this species, on 21 October. One was reported near Shuwayhat Island 3-4 November (R.P.Morris).

Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps*
Recorded at Khatmat Malaha, Digdaga, Mushrif park and Wadi Sumayni.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*
8 were at Al Wathba on 30 December, at the edge of its known range.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
Migration started with 17 on Ghanada Island from 17 August-30 September. Also reported at the Emirates golf club from 23 August and Das Island from 30 August. One was in song in CR's garden on 31 August. Up to 6 together at other sites including the Emirates golf club, Bu Hasa, Safa Park, Digdaga from 5 September-5 October.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*.
Migration commenced on Das Island on 17 August and at Jebel Dhanna on 31 August, after which it became fairly common from 4 September until the end of the year. Up to 8 at the Emirates golf club most visits.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*
Up to 2 were at the Emirates golf club 5-10 September. Individuals were at Digdaga on 6 September, Das Island on 7 September, Sheikh Mohammed City 14 September, Wadi al Reum 15 September, Safa park on 2 October and at Ramtha tip on 11 October.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*
One was on Das Island on 20 August with ones and twos there until 21 September and another on 12-13 November. Up to 2 were at Bu Hasa 27 August-6 September.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*
Of passage birds in September, one *pallidirostris* was at the Emirates golf club on 5 September and 2 were at Digdaga on 6 September including one of *elegans* subspecies. Migrants were on Das Island 11-13 November and 2-6 & 21 December.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
Singles were at the Emirates golf club 15 & 23 August and 2 passed through Das Island on 11 October.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*
Individuals were on Abu al Abyadh 20-22 July, at the Emirates golf club 10 September and on Ghanada Island 13 October.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*
600 were at Dibba on 4 October. One was on Das Island from the last week in October to end of December, a first for Das Island. Another was at Umm al Dalkh oil complex c.20 Km. offshore, on 10 November, possibly strayed from Sadiyat Island 'colony' adjacent to Abu Dhabi.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*
Flocks of up to 25 were still at Asab and Bu Hasa in August and September.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
7 at Hamraniyah on 11 September were very early migrants. Small flocks of up to 6 were reported at Ruwais, the Emirates golf club, Jebel Ali village, Ramtha tip, Abu Dhabi and Das Island from 2 November.

Pied Mynah *Sturnus contra*

Up to 4 recorded at the fish farm throughout period, with 6 there on 24 December. Resident at Ramtha tip with 4 recorded most visits 26 July-30 November.

One was flying with Common Mynahs in Abu Dhabi on 27 September.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*

Widespread though few sightings. One adult was at Digdaga 25 July and another was at Abu al Abyadh for some days from 26 July. One was seen at the Emirates golf course on 6 September and 3 were there on 5 October. 2 were at Rugheilat farm on 4 October. An immature was at the Creek golf club on 2 November while 8 were at Hamraniyah on 2 December.

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus*

Up to 10 seen regularly at the fish farm, 6 July-18 August. Up to 94 at Hamraniyah 2-20 December.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

One on Das Island 7 December was a range extension.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

2 immatures were seen on 16 August and 6 September at Hamraniyah, the UAE's only known nest site.

Yellow-throated Sparrow

Petronia xanthocollis

Present at breeding sites until 16 August (latest sighting record). No obvious passage noted.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*

Becoming more common. Of 30 birds, one was carrying nest material in Safa park 12 July.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

A male was on Das Island on 21 November and 2 were there 17-21 December (L.Reaney/I.Sherman/M.Wood)

10th & 11th UAE records.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

A female was found on Das Island from 27 November-1 December and a male was there 3-20 December (I.Sherman *et al*) - 3rd & 4th UAE records (All previous records have been on Das Island)

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Up to 5 were at Bu Hasa 14-16 September and 2 were at Wadfi al Reum on 15 September (D.Robinson).

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata*

Few records were received of this normally common mountain resident.

4 turned up on Das Island from 20 August-9 September, peaking at 14 on 6 September and up to 2 were there 26 October-12 November.

6 were in 'snake wadi' near Hatta 9 August. 50 were seen between Mahdah and Sumayni on 6 December.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Only one record, one at Bu Hasa on 16 September.

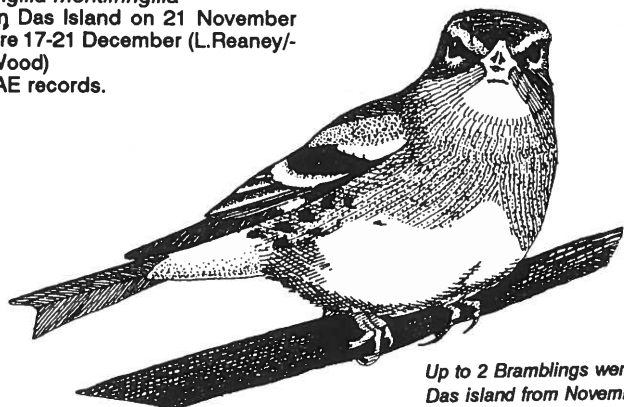
Black-headed Bunting

Emberiza melanocephala

No adult males recorded. 2 were at the Emirates golf club on 29 August with 4 there on 5 September. One was at Bu Hasa on 30 August and 2 were at Al Habab on 12 September.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

At least 5 were around Ruwais township from late October to early November. and one was on Das Island 14-22 November. 16 were at Al Habab on 25 December while 2 were at Al Wathba on 27 December.



Up to 2 Bramblings were on Das island from November

ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Black Swan

One was running loose on Das Island, before being recaptured on 19 November (L.Reaney).

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Small numbers breed on Abu al Abyadh (*per* R.P.Morris).

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

Small numbers breed on Abu al Abyadh (*per* R.P.Morris)

Common Crane *Grus grus*

2 were on Abu al Abyadh from 26 July to the end of the year.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Up to 2 were seen in Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi 21-27 September.

OTHER SPECIES RECORDED

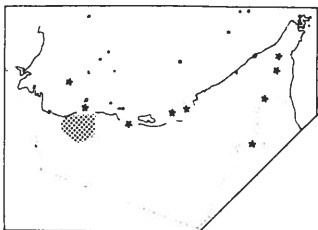
Egyptian Vulture, Kestrel, Sand Partridge, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Redshank, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, White-cheeked Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, Chiffchaff, Common Mynah.

OBSERVERS AND GROUPS

J.K.Bannon; J.N.B.Brown; J.A.D.Chapman; R.Clevely; R.Digby; S.B.El Din; R.Green; S.Green; J.Hart; P.Hellyer; J.M.Hollingworth; M.Jongbloed; R.Khan; R.P.Morris; L.Reaney; C.T.Richardson; R.A.Richardson; G.Ricks; D.Robinson; I.Sherman; A.Simms; S.Turner; U.Wernery; A.Willson; M.Wood; Emirates Natural History Group (ENHG); National Avian Research Centre (NARC).

THE IDENTIFICATION OF MOURNING WHEATEAR *Oenanthe lugens* AND ITS STATUS IN THE UAE

R.P. Morris



Map showing isolated sightings (*) of Mourning Wheatear in UAE and general area of sightings (shaded) October 1991 - February 1992

The Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* was considered by Richardson (1990) to be a scarce winter visitor and before October 1991 there were only 15 certain records (involving 16 birds). Most of these records were from the eastern mountains (10) and the others were from western Abu Dhabi (the Jebel Dhanna region and offshore islands).

In the autumn of 1991 the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) survey team noted a considerable passage of Mourning Wheatears of the Iranian sub-species *persica* in the Jebel Dhanna/Ruwais region. The first bird was noted on the 24th October and a minimum of 24 birds were recorded between then and the 10th November. A single bird was also seen on Jebel Hafit in December.

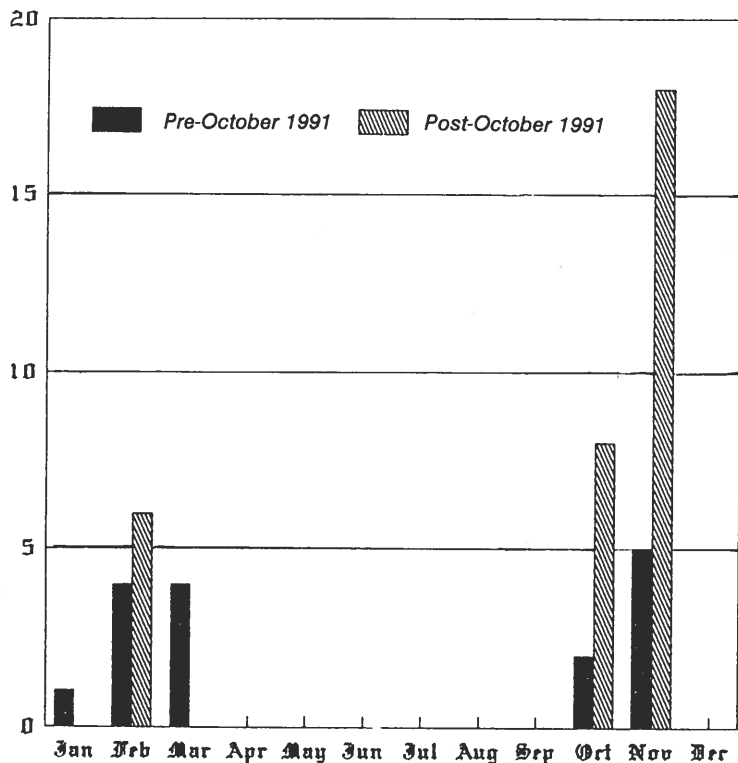


Figure 1: Mourning Wheatear in the UAE
(Note, each bird is recorded once, on the date of first occurrence)

On 6th February 1992, 6 birds were again recorded in the Jebel Dhanna area, which were almost certainly the same birds that were recorded here in October/November 1991 (it is a little early for returning migrants) but they are included on the bar chart as new sightings since no one visited the site between these times. A summary of all the records can be seen in the bar chart in Fig.1.

IDENTIFICATION

Mourning Wheatear is a small, stocky wheatear similar in appearance to male Pied *O. pleschanka*, Hooded *O. monacha* and the white-crowned sub-species of Eastern Pied Wheatear *O. picata capistrata*.

Richardson (1990) suggests that some Mourning Wheatear records may be misidentified Pied Wheatears. This short note should help to dispel any future identification problems. The male and female of the Mourning Wheatear that occurs in the UAE, *O.l. persica* are alike (there is no sexual dimorphism). All the birds that I have observed in the UAE have shown the following features: (also see fig.2).

1. The white on the crown and nape does not extend down the neck alongside the ear covers as it does on Pied. Some birds show a grey wash on the white crown.
2. The black on the throat does not extend on to the breast as it does on Pied.
3. The vent is yellowy-orange.
4. The primaries and secondaries have white outer shafts that show as a whitewing panel in flight.

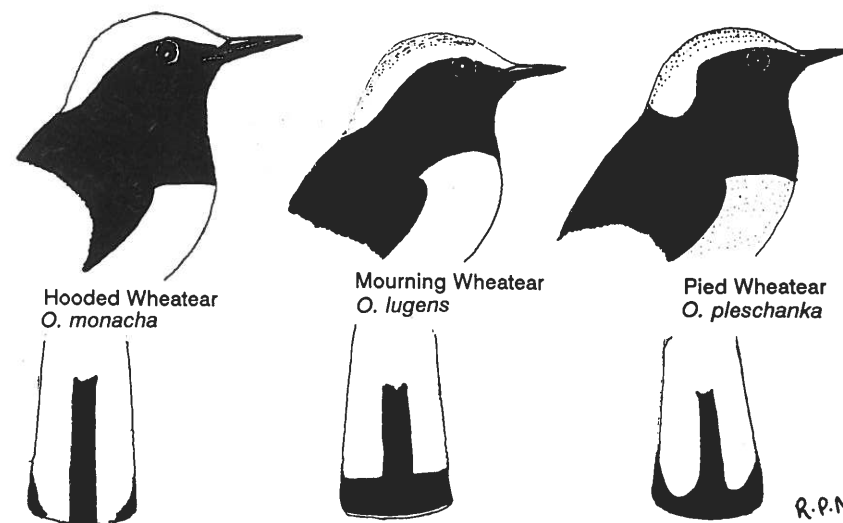


Figure 2: The head and tail patterns of (left to right) Hooded, Mourning and Pied Wheatears.

5. The bill is quite small and fine (unlike Hooded which has a long almost thrush-like bill).
6. The tail pattern is quite different from Hooded, (which basically looks all white except for the black centre) and Pied (which has less black at the base of the tail and

black extending up the outer tail feathers). Close examination of a Mourning Wheatear's tail shows very fine white tips to the tail feathers.

7. The underparts are pure white throughout the non-breeding season. Male Pied Wheatears in autumn show warm buffy-orange underparts. In spring this feature should be used with care although most Pieds do still have some warm colouration.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *O.p. capistrata* has no white in the wing and has a head and face pattern similar to Pied Wheatear. This sub-species of Eastern Pied Wheatear has not been recorded in the UAE and if it does occur may cause some confusion. Hooded Wheatear is a much larger bird that should be easily ruled out on size, bill shape and tail pattern. Male Pied Wheatears in the autumn lose their black and white appearance showing broad silvery fringes to the coverts and tertials, buffy underparts and a darker crown.

The Mourning Wheatears recorded in late 1991 were found in a range of habitats - sandy desert scrub, gravel plains and around small jebels. On passage it appears that they may be found anywhere. The passage of birds in western Abu Dhabi suggests that Iranian migrants are filtering in to the UAE via Qatar, where it is also recorded mid October to mid March (Warr 1986, *pers comm.* Richardson 1992). In the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia Bundy *et al* (1989) report that Mourning Wheatear is widespread and common on passage between October and March. They are regular on Bahrain at the same time of year, particularly around the jebel. It is also interesting to note that Gallagher & Woodcock (1980) do not mention the occurrence of Mourning Wheatear as a migrant in the northern Omani mountains, suggesting they are scarce that far east.

Anyone wishing to delve deeply into wheatear identification should refer to *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* (Hollom, Porter, Christensen & Willis 1988) and *British Birds* Vol.80 Nos.4 & 5 (1987) *Field Identification of West Palearctic Wheatears* by Peter Clement. *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* by Colin Richardson gives the reader a good idea of when and where any particular species is likely to occur.

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