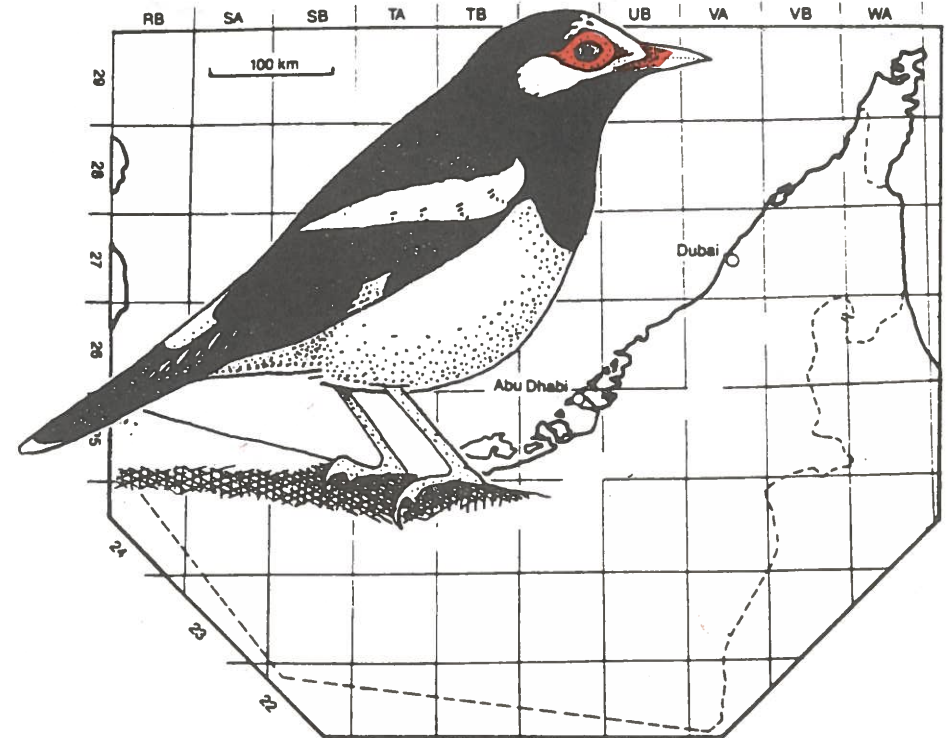
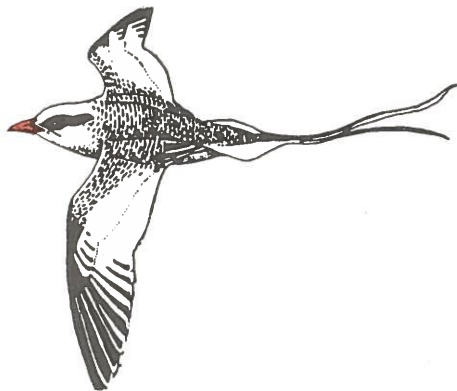
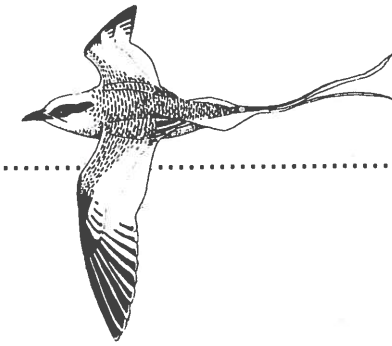


2 editorial
3 UAE's contribution to the Asian Waterfowl Census
4 First colonisers at new Creek Golf Club
5 Birding etiquette at the Emirates Golf Club
6 **Wildlife rescue in Jubayl, eastern province of Saudi Arabia** *Peter Symens*
8 **Notes on new UAE breeding records** *C.T.Richardson*
11 **UAE BIRD REPORT** January-June 1991
30 **The birds of Abu al Abyadh** *R.P.Morris*
33 **Black Drongo records in the UAE** *C.T.Richardson*
34 **Notes on identification of non-breeding Indian Pond Heron in the UAE** *C.T.Richardson & J.K.Bannon*
36 Birding sites - Ramtha tip, Sharjah
38 Breeding behaviour of Isabelline Shrike in the UAE
39 A selection of Arabic bird names *Assad al Fares*



full sightings report January-June 1991
new breeding records - birds of Abu al Abyadh
birding on Dubai's golf courses - arabic bird names - notes on Black Drongo & Isabelline Shrike - ID of Indian Pond Heron - special feature on ramtha tip - bird rescue in northern gulf

emirates
bird
report 15.....



.....contents

- 2 editorial
- 3 UAE's contribution to the Asian Waterfowl Census
- 4 First colonisers at new Creek Golf Club
- 5 Birding etiquette at the Emirates Golf Club
- 6 **Wildlife rescue in Jubayl, eastern province of Saudi Arabia** *Peter Symens*
- 8 **Notes on new UAE breeding records** *C.T.Richardson*
- 11 **UAE BIRD REPORT** January-June 1991
- 30 **The birds of Abu al Abyadh** *R.P.Morris*
- 33 **Black Drongo records in the UAE** *C.T.Richardson*
- 34 **Notes on identification of non-breeding Indian Pond Heron in the UAE** *C.T.Richardson & J.K.Bannon*
- 36 Birding sites - Ramtha tip, Sharjah
- 38 Breeding behaviour of Isabelline Shrike in the UAE
- 39 A selection of Arabic bird names *Assad al Fares*

Drawings Ruddy Shelduck (14), Red-crested Pochard (15), Great Snipe (18), Little Swift (21), Icterine Warbler (25), Hume's Lesser Whitethroat (26), Egyptian Goose (29), Black Drongo (33), Indian Pond Heron (35) and Red-billed Tropicbird (back page and logo) by Bill Morton.

Additional copies of Emirates Bird Reports 1-15 can be obtained from Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, price Dhs.10 (overseas rates on request).

Front Cover: Pied Mynah, settling in to a new life in the Emirates.



UAE's contribution to the Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC)



A major count took place in early January, as part of the AWC, of all wetland-related species present at the Emirate's most important sites. The wildfowl counts were the most thorough ever made in the country and the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) seemed pleased with our response.

21 sites were covered (see list below) with 86,518 birds of 81 species logged. It is interesting to compare our figures with those in Saudi Arabi, whose teams also surveyed 21 sites, counting 34,905 birds of 98 different species.

The greatest bulk of the UAE final figure was made up of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. Over 45,000 were found roosting on Khor Khan, Sharjah, from 3-6th January. It was interesting to note too that the UAE has more Greater Flamingos in winter than any other Gulf state. Only Oman's count of 2575 came near that of the UAE's 2616, and the majority of these were at Khor Dubai.

Coming in the early days of the Gulf War, the census figures served a useful purpose in quantifying the potential numbers of birds at risk from the ensuing oil spills. Unfortunately the war also had the effect of postponing all census work by teams in Bahrain and Kuwait.

Christian Perennou, the AWC International Co-ordinator has produced a very comprehensive report containing much data, including species counts and site lists of all Asian countries from the Gulf to Japan. The report can be obtained from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BX, UK (Price £6.00, including post & packing).

The participants in the UAE census were Adrian Chapman, Bob Clevely, Jim Footitt, Jim Hart, Dr.Reza Khan, Colin Richardson and Gerry Ricks.

Census Sites	Birds counted	Site Location
<i>Ayn al Faydah</i>	167	24°07'N 55°40'E
<i>Rafeeq Island</i>	193	24°12'N 54°05'E
<i>Bu Sharah Island</i>	354	24°12'N 54°06'E
<i>Bu Qusabi Island</i>	179	24°14'N 54°08'E
<i>Dhabbiyah</i>	3173	24°14'N 54°06'E
<i>Bu Khushaysha</i>	116	24°16'N 54°14'E
<i>Eastern Lagoon, AD.</i>	586	24°27'N 54°27'E
<i>Saffa park</i>	133	25°11'N 55°15'E
<i>Zabeel water treatment</i>	1265	25°12'N 55°18'E
<i>Khor Dubai</i>	8547	25°12'N 55°20'E
<i>Khor Mamzer</i>	416	25°19'E 55°21'N
<i>Khor Khan</i>	49665	25°19'E 55°22'N
<i>Sharjah cricket lake</i>	46	25°19'E 55°24'N
<i>Ramtha tip</i>	527	25°22'E 55°27'N
<i>Khor al Beidah</i>	2688	25°33'E 55°37'N
<i>Al Jazeerah Khor</i>	7742	25°45'E 55°50'N
<i>Ras al Khaimah</i>	600	25°50'E 55°57'N
<i>Rams</i>	8156	25°54'E 56°03'N
<i>Khor Khuwair</i>	165	25°57'E 55°05'N
<i>Ghalilah/Mina Saqr</i>	709	25°58'E 56°05'N
<i>Sha'am</i>	1091	26°10'E 56°06'N

If you regularly receive the bird report you may have noticed the non-appearance of the January-March edition. By way of a peace offering, two quarters have now been lumped into one and it has been decided to publish half-yearly. It is hoped the more attractive appearance and beefed-up content of this volume makes up for its delay. In addition to combining 6 months worth of records it has been possible to insert a number of notes and reports relevant to UAE ornithology. I hope this new outlet for information will stimulate a few would-be authors, artists, critics and so on, to submit their own contribution; a short note, letter or longer paper on any subject relating to Emirates' birds would be heartily welcomed.

All bird records and items of news, comments, letters or notes for publication in the next *Emirates Bird Report* should be sent to Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, by 1st February 1992, please.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO A FULLER EBR....

The UAE has no ornithological club or society and these reports constitute the only unifying medium able to reach and inform every interested birder of what has been recorded in the UAE during the designated period.

Whilst recognising that birdwatching is a leisure activity for nearly all readers, each taking his or her involvement in the hobby to the extent which he or she derives the greatest satisfaction, it is true that those of us who are seriously involved enough to carry notebooks should ensure their records are entered on record sheets as permanent historical facts.

The task of compiling the bird report will be made that bit easier if all the records are provided on the standard record sheets in taxonomic order (as appearing in your favourite field guide). It makes it so much easier to transpose them into the EBR. Blank record sheets are available on request from the Bird Recorder.

Many thanks to all who have contributed in the past and keep up the good work. And good birding!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emirates Bird Report 15 is published under the authority of the Emirates Bird Records Committee. I am very grateful for the support of the Emirates Natural History Group, without whose funding this new-style report could not have been printed. My thanks also to Runcorn-based artist Bill Morton for drawing the bird illustrations at such short notice. - CR

First colonisers at new Creek Golf Club

Dubai's new Creek Golf Club is scheduled for opening to golfers in Autumn 1992. By October 1991, 75% of the grass was ready and the birds were pouring in to make use of the abundance of insects. There were only 6 (date palm) trees on the site but thousands more trees were being made ready for planting. The open fields were attracting numbers of southbound waders, particularly Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Ringed and Kentish Plover, as well as rarities Caspian plover which made a brief appearance in August and September. The extensive salt water lagoons were ideal for Red-necked Phalarope and no doubt the sheltered stretches of water will attract grebes and other winter wildfowl.

The grass suits wagtails, larks, pipits and wheatears too, the most interesting to occur so far is Citrine Wagtail often as many as 5 or 6 together. When the trees mature, doubtless they will attract their share of warblers, chats and shrikes too in addition to other perching species.

Catching a potential birding site in the making is unique and here the conditions are ideal to study species colonisation. This is a good opportunity to see what colonisers arrive first.

These are the first species to be logged from the first visit on 24 July 1991 until early October:

<i>Grey Heron</i> (20.8.91)	<i>Sooty Gull</i> (7.9.91)
<i>Collared Pratincole</i> (7.9.91)	<i>Slender-billed Gull</i> (20.8.91)
<i>Avocet</i> (30.9.91)	<i>Yellow-legged Gull</i> (20.9.91)
<i>Little Ringed Plover</i> (24.7.91)	<i>Lesser Black-backed Gull</i> (7.8.91)
<i>Ringed Plover</i> (20.9.91)	<i>White-cheeked Tern</i> (24.7.91)
<i>Kentish Plover</i> (24.7.91)	<i>Palm Dove</i> (20.8.91)
<i>Lesser Sand Plover</i> (23.8.91)	<i>Rose-ringed Parakeet</i> (27.8.91)
<i>Greater Sand Plover</i> (7.8.91)	<i>Little Green Bee-eater</i> (7.10.91)
<i>Caspian Plover</i> (20.8.91)	<i>Indian Roller</i> (20.9.91)
<i>Pacific Golden Plover</i> (26.9.91)	<i>Hoopoe</i> (12.8.91)
<i>Little Stint</i> (27.8.91)	<i>Common Swift</i> (20.9.91)
<i>Temminck's Stint</i> (23.8.91)	<i>Short-toed Lark</i> (30.9.91)
<i>Curlew Sandpiper</i> (7.8.91)	<i>Crested Lark</i> (24.7.91)
<i>Dunlin</i> (30.9.91)	<i>Sand Martin</i> (7.9.91)
<i>Broad-billed Sandpiper</i> (26.9.91)	<i>Swallow</i> (20.9.91)
<i>Ruff</i> (7.8.91)	<i>Tree Pipit</i> (20.9.91)
<i>Curlew</i> (20.8.91)	<i>Yellow Wagtail</i> (20.8.91)
<i>Redshank</i> (7.8.91)	<i>Citrine Wagtail</i> (23.8.91)
<i>Wood Sandpiper</i> (7.9.91)	<i>Grey Wagtail</i> (27.8.91)
<i>Terek Sandpiper</i> (23.8.91)	<i>White Wagtail</i> (7.10.91)
<i>Common Sandpiper</i> (24.7.91)	<i>Isabelline Wheatear</i> (20.8.91)
<i>Turnstone</i> (7.8.91)	<i>Great Grey Shrike</i> (26.9.91)
<i>Red-necked Phalarope</i> (23.8.91)	<i>Common Mynah</i> (24.7.91)
<i>Pomarine Skua</i> (7.9.91)	<i>House Sparrow</i> (24.7.91)

Birding etiquette at the Emirates Golf Club



Those of us who enjoy the rich and ever-changing selection of birds to be found at the Emirates golf course are a privileged group. Birdwatchers are cautiously welcomed onto the course, at the discretion of the security gate and at their own risk. We hope this positive approach will continue unabated. However the golf course is a dangerous place (fore!) and birders should take care not to stray across fairways or other areas of play. Be aware of players teeing off and please keep quiet at all times. This should benefit your birding activities too!

Raptors caged on Sir Bani Yas Island

During a short visit to Sir Bani Yas Island (52°37'E 24°20'N) on 1st January 1991 Adrian Chapman was able to inspect the raptor cage, which revealed the following birds, all of which had been caught on the island this winter:

7 Spotted Eagles	1 Bonelli's Eagle	5 Pallid Harriers
2 Short-toed Eagles	1 Long-legged Buzzard	1 Marsh Harrier

The cage was appallingly overcrowded and some of the birds were in poor condition. Another recently-built cage nearby held captive about 6 Kestrels which, it was explained to Adrian, were used to catch falcons.

NOTES AND LETTERS

WILDLIFE RESCUE IN JUBAYL, EASTERN PROVINCE OF SAUDI ARABIA

In the wake of the huge oil slicks which polluted areas of the northern Arabian Gulf from the end of January 1991 a Wildlife Rescue Centre was set up in Jubayl by an NCWD team led by Peter Symens. The task involved the rescue and cleaning of thousands of oiled birds and turtles. This letter was sent to us on 28 September 1991.

The Wildlife Rescue Centre that we set up in Jubayl was quite successful as a public awareness and public relations operation. In total we received about 1,500 birds and 5 sea turtles. We released about 65% of the Great and Socotra Cormorants that came in, while we had a very low success rate with Great Crested and Black-necked Grebe (5% and 10% respectively). From all the other species that were brought in, including herons, ducks, waders, gulls and terns we had an average of 50% released. Of the 5 turtles, 3 Green and one Hawksbill were successfully treated and released.

Work in the centre was done by a few hundred volunteers from Saudi Arabia and 20 other nationalities including the British and American armies. This centre was set up in an emergency in a restaurant and recreation building, but now there are plans to create a permanent wildlife rescue centre in the area.

Beach counts indicated that at least 20,000, possibly 30,000 birds died along the Saudi coast, mainly Great (3,500) and Socotra Cormorant (5,000) and Great Crested (4,000) and Black-necked Grebes (5,000+).

The wader census gave us a lot of basic data on the importance of the area as a stopover site for these birds and indicated that the degree of impact by oil fouling varied a lot between the different species. Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover and Lesser Sand Plover were among the most impacted, followed by Little Stint and Kentish Plovers. At the time of writing (end of September 1991) there is no precise information what will happen to these oiled waders, but ringing showed that several of them were much lighter in weight than normal, decreasing their chances to end their migration successfully.

Ringing of migrating passerines showed that up to 10% of these birds caught in Tanajeeb at approximately 150 km. from the Kuwait border were sooted by the smoke, while in Jubayl (at 250 km.) this number was still 5%. Furthermore the retrapping rate of sooted birds showed that these were severely delayed in their migration. There also existed a negative correlation between body weight and degree of sooting. At this time I am bird ringing in Riyadh and find even now still 8% of the Sand Martins that I can catch (120 so far) are heavily oiled, presumably by dipping in the oil lakes of Kuwait. These oiled birds weigh average 20% less than normal and have nearly no fat reserves, so they probably will not make it. There appear also a lot of other oiled here in Riyadh these days (herons, pratincoles, waders).

Fortunately the breeding terns were not impacted by the oil this year. We found internationally important numbers of Lesser Crested (20,750 pairs) and Bridled

Terns (44,000 pairs) breeding on the Gulf islands. Furthermore we found some other small colonies along the coast, including a colony with six chicks of **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* on an island in the bay of of Tanageeb.



Bridled Terns courtesy of Peter Symens/NCWCD

Other activities in which the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) were involved were the clean-up of debris and oil of the islands, just before the breeding season of turtles and terns started: the monitoring of the Green and Hawksbill Turtles on the beaches of the islands (we had nights with more than 100 Green Turtles laying on a single night at Karan; up to 70% of them were measured, weighed and tagged, while their nests were marked) and advising and supervising of oil clean-up operations on ecological important areas, such as mangroves and salt marshes.

I would be very pleased to receive any records/counts of oiled or sooted birds from the UAE or anywhere else in the world.

Peter Symens, NCWCD, P.O. Box 61681, 11575 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

NOTES ON NEW UAE BREEDING RECORDS

C.T.Richardson

This note documents the change in status or the extension of range of 7 species. Breeding visitors Saunders' Little Tern and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater seem to be finding more suitable habitat and colonising new sites, while Eagle Owl seems to be finding suitable habitat in groves of ghaf (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees. Starling, Isabelline Shrike and Spanish Sparrow have not before nested in the UAE, and although evidence is mounting to list them as breeding species, nests have yet to be discovered. Bank Mynah, a feral species, seems to be spreading in the Northern Emirates.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*

The sandy beach adjacent to the Umm al Quwain breakwater was visited on Friday 28th June 1991. It is a good site to monitor coastal movements of gulls, terns and the, seasonally abundant Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* which breeds on nearby Siniyah Island. June is usually a poor month for birdwatching in the Emirates even for seabirds, and as expected there were few birds on the beach on this day. White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa* was the most common species present - there were over 20 adults. This is one of the last migrant terns to breed and has nested on nearby Siniyah Island (last confirmed 1973) and probably breeds on some of the other inshore islands nearby. There were also smaller numbers of young over-summering Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* and a few Saunders' Little Terns *Sterna saundersi*. Of the seven Saunders', six were adults in fine breeding dress, while the other was a younger bird. The juvenile appeared to be a newly fledged youngster and it was quickly shepherded away by two of the adults in attendance. Its cap was brown with a large white forehead patch and the forewing showed brown in flight. The bill was pale horn. It begged for food, a sure sign of youth.

The nearest known breeding site of *S.saundersi* is 200km to the south-west, near Abu Dhabi, rather far for fledgelings to disperse. There are a number of suitable inshore island sites near Umm al Quwain and some pairs seem to have made use of them this year - making this a first breeding record for the Northern Emirates. (ABBA square VB28).

Eagle Owl *Bubo Bubo*

A pair of Eagle Owls apparently nesting in a ghaf tree *Prosopis cineraria* produced young in spring 1991 (photographed 17th April 1991 by J.Hart) at a site about 10km from the Arabian Gulf coast near Ajman (ABBA square VB27). The area consists of arid sand dunes and scrub interspersed with small gravel plains (sihs) 50 kms west of its more favoured cave nest sites in the Hajar mountains. This is one of several recent reports of this species nesting in trees in desert areas of the country. Other undetailed reports of tree-nesting are from Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

On 28th June 1991, during a survey of Ras al Khaimah's fodder fields at Hamraniyah, near Digdaga (25°38'N, 55°55'E), two young Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were found. They were perched on an overhead power cable above a recently hay field. Soon, an adult arrived with a Cicada *Platypleura arabica* which was quickly taken by one of the juveniles. This suggested the young birds had only recently fledged (and probably bred nearby). 23 birds, including juveniles were found here on 23 July 1990, but dispersal or early migration was not then ruled out. This is the only breeding activity known on

the Arabian Gulf coast. It has only been recorded breeding in the UAE since 1988 at a number of sites on the East Coast (though no nests have yet been discovered.)

Digdaga, with its mixed fields and plantations also attracts European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* which breed in variable numbers annually. (Richardson 1988)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

On the 16th May 1991 two Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus* were observed engaging in courtship beside one of the large grass fodder fields at Hamraniyah. (See Page 38). The brightly marked male (race *isabellinus*) after shivering its wings flew to land by the side of the female, perching on a tree cutting about 1 metre from ground level. This kind of behaviour has not been reported before and there appeared to be a pair bond between the two. After sitting in close contact for a few minutes, the female flew off with the male in quiet pursuit.

Isabelline Shrike is the most common migrant shrike in the Emirates and breeding has not been recorded before in the UAE or even Arabia. The nearest breeding grounds lie in southern Iran where for nesting it favours dry steppes, semi-deserts and barren mountains (Hollom, Porter *et al* 1988). There are on average less than five May records per year in the UAE (1988-91), most departing by the end of April. On 30 June 1989 an immature was found in Saffa Park, Dubai (*Emirates Bird Report 8*) but no nests or other signs of breeding activity was recorded.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Starlings are regular and often abundant winter visitors to the Emirates. As in Europe they are particularly evident at dusk, and here flocks join urban mynah populations at favoured roosts. This has been noted at Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah where counts of up to 500 have been recorded in January and February. Most have departed northwards by early March, although in 1988 some were still present until mid May in Dubai (*Dubai Bird Report 4*).

On 28th June 1991 at Hamraniyah there was a small party of Starlings feeding in the long grass in a 400 hectare field of alfalfa. They were very nervous and repeatedly flew in to the shelter of one of the dozens of Ghaf trees which were scattered over the area. There were at least 2 adults and 3 or 4 juveniles consisting of what appeared to be parents and recently fledged young. The nearest known breeding grounds of the species lies in the mountains of central Iran (M.C.Jennings *pers.comm.*), about 250 miles to the north and this would be the first indication of Starlings colonising Arabia.

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus*

The origins of Bank Mynah in the UAE remain a recurrent mystery. First records include a 100-strong colony in Abu Dhabi in the 1970's and two were reported in Dubai in the winter of 1975/6 (Bundy & Warr 1980). These days they are seen quite regularly in the Zabeel area of Dubai, where breeding was first recorded in 1988 (*Dubai Bird Report 4*). Flocks of up to 40 are still noted in Abu Dhabi during most months of the year and one was found in Al Ain in May 1989.

Evidence of their expanding range was noted during a birding trip to Digdaga on 5th April 1991 by John Bannon and CR. A flock of about 20 birds were feeding with Common Mynah *Acridotheres cristatus* in the grass of Hamraniyah's largest fodder field, and a face of excavated bank nearby was being visited regularly by some of the birds. The species was present on all subsequent visits in May, June and July 1991 and other separate populations were found several miles apart during a visit in May. Juveniles were seen on 25th July 1991 at Hamraniyah.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Spanish Sparrow has only been recorded 8 times in the UAE prior to 1991, though sometimes in large numbers and always in winter. (Up to 70 were reported in Abu Dhabi during the winter of 1977/8). It can be overlooked amongst the ubiquitous House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* flocks, although the bright white cheeks and broad bib of the former are usually easy features to identify in the field.

On the 5th April 1991, during a very productive day out (see above) JB and CR found a party of 10 birds at Hamranyah fodder fields. This was the latest UAE spring record of these 'migrants' and seemed unusual. On 28th June 1991, it was even more surprising to find at least 6 birds feeding with House Sparrows in the long grass. They were rather skittish and it was not possible to see if any young were present.

The species is recorded as a winter visitor throughout Arabia in variable numbers. Breeding also occurred in Riyadh and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in 1991 (M.C.Jennings *pers.comm.*) where huge irrigated fields of grass and cereals seem to provide the correct habitat throughout the year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Mike Jennings who commented on my first draft and provided information on the breeding distribution of these species in nearby states. My thanks also to Bob Richardson who sifted through Emirates Natural History Group Records in search of other breeding reports.

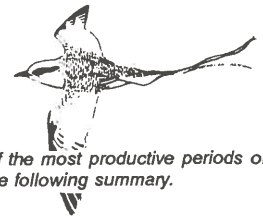
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Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai.

UAE BIRD REPORT

January - June 1991



273 species were reported in the first 6 months of 1991, one of the most productive periods on record. A number of exciting discoveries were made as can be seen from the following summary.

In total, 13 vagrants were recorded, the star of which was probably the adult **Sabine's Gull** which stayed at Ramtha tip for at least 4 weeks in mid summer. This bird is an Arabian first, and the first to be found in the Middle East for 11 years! Other rarities were a **Ruddy Shelduck** in Al Ain in mid January (6th record) with 2 in Sharjah in early May (7th record) while 3 **Red-crested Pochards** spend several weeks at Dubai's fish farm in January (5th record). 14 **Dotterel** were found at Al Wathba, near Abu Dhabi in mid February and single **Namaqua Doves** were at Asab, Digdaga and Bu Hasa in April and May (5th-7th records) - it seems just a matter of time before these opportunists breed. Two **Little Swifts** at Khor Kalba in late February were only a 4th record while an **Olive-backed Pipit** at Bu Hasa in mid April was a 5th record. 16 **Bimaculated Larks** at Al Wathba in February and an **Icterine Warbler** in Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi in mid April were both 8th records. A very mobile **Black Drongo** was reported at Jebel Ali Village, and the Jebel Ali Hotel 5 miles away, throughout January and February.

Rarities reported include 2 **Hume's Lesser Whitethroats** in March, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** in late April and a **Cinereous Bunting** in early May. A **White-breasted White-eye** reported from Al Ain in November 1990 is under consideration for a first record, while a **Red-headed Bunting** found at Asab looks like another UAE first. Other interesting birds include a **Great Snipe** at the Emirates Golf course in March and April and a **Spotted Sandgrouse** at Madam in March. Up to 2 **Pied Kingfishers** overwintered at Ramtha, while individuals at Dibba-Bayah (Oman) in May and August are first East Coast records for this species. 11 **Hypocolius** were near Al Ain in March and a **Finsch's Wheatear** was at Sharjah in early April.

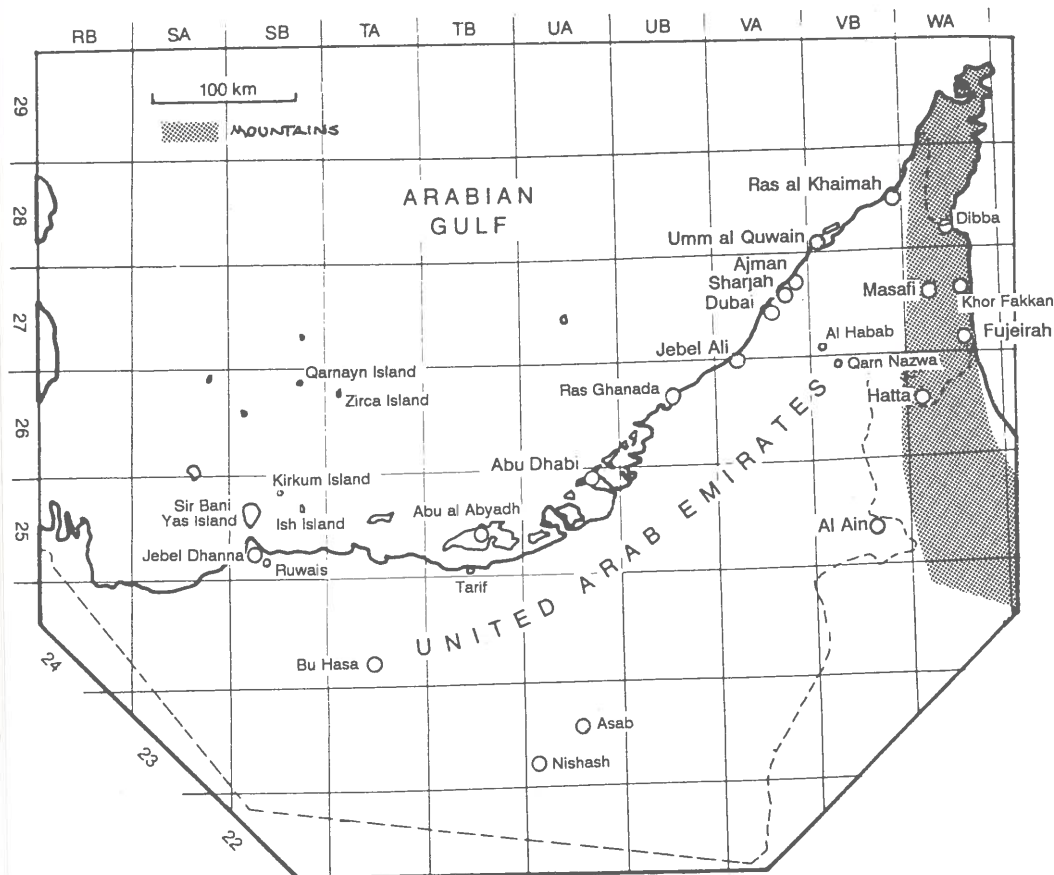
Of raptors, the most interesting were one, sometimes two **Honey Buzzards** in Abu Dhabi from January to June with **Black Kites** at Ramtha, Al Ain and Asab. **Hen Harriers** were seen at Ras al Khaimah and Sir Bani Yas Island, while a late **Booted Eagle** at the Emirates Golf course in May was a surprise. **Sooty Falcons** were at Fujairah and Sir Bani Yas Island (a likely breeding site), a young **Lanner Falcon** was in a Hamranyah field (Ras al Khaimah) in June and a pair of **Barbary Falcons** were over a jebel near Masafi.

Ready to join UAE's exclusive list of breeding species, **Quail** was very active, while **Starling** and **Spanish Sparrow** seem definite candidates. Range extensions can be credited to **Socotra Comorant**, **Lesser Crested Tern** and **Bridled Tern** following survey work around Abu Dhabi's western inshore islands. Further expansion was reported of **Saunders' Little Tern**, **Turtle Dove**, **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, **Eagle Owl** and **Bank Mynah**. Colonists **Alexandrine Parakeet** and **Streaked Weaver** are establishing themselves in the suburbs of UAE Gulf cities.

It was an excellent spring for migrants, perhaps a result of the drifting smoke from Kuwait, which was occasionally visible on the north-west horizon. Particularly abundant were chats, including **Nightingale**, **White-throated Robin**, **Whinchat**, **Rufous Bush Chat**, **Rock Thrush** and **Black-throated Thrush**. Good numbers of **Upcher's Warbler**, **Barred Warbler**, **Masked Shrike** and **Pale Rock Sparrow** were also reported.

The details of all these, and more, can be found in this report.

THE SITES



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

- Abu Dhabi sites (UA25):** Eastern lagoon, Western road, Bateen wood, Mushref palace gardens, Al Wathba & Al Ghar lake (UB25), Futaisi, Mussafa, Dhabbiyah.
- Dubai sites (VA27):** Khor Dubai, Saffa park, fish farm (Zabeel water treatment plant, Mushrif Park, Awir, Emirates golf course, Jumeirah Ramtha tip, Khor Khan, cricket stadium lake.
- Sharjah sites (VA27):** Digdaga, Hamraniyah, Khatt, Idhn (VB27), Al Jazeerah Khor, Wadi Bih (WA28), Dhayah (WA28).
- Fujeirah sites (WA27):** Rugheilat farm, Khor Kalba, Qurayah, Wadi Hayl.
- Al Ain sites (VB25):** Ain al Faydah, Jebel Hafit, Mahdah, fossil valley (Jebel Ruwayyah).
- Masafi sites (WA27):** Daftah, Uyyaynah.
- Umm al Quwain (VB28):** Khor al Beidah, Al Rifaa, Siniyah island.
- Hatta sites (WA26):** Madam plain (VB26), Wadi Fay, Wadi Sumayni (VB26).
- Jebel Ali (VA27 & VA26):** Jebel Ali village (VA27), Jebel Ali hotel (VA26).

THE LIST

This list follows the order of Voous (1977) and the square numbers are those used by ABBA (the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia). A short description of sightings of species marked * are awaited by observers.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Up to 21 wintered at Zabeel water treatment plant (known as the fish farm here onwards) Jan-Feb, fewer Mar-Jun; courtship was reported in mid-January with nesting from end of month. At least 2 pairs were active and chicks seen early April.

Two pairs were resident Saffa Park and nested from mid-January with 4 chicks seen 2 April; 12 birds were counted there 17 May. One adult and 3 chicks were at Al Ghar lake 28 June (though no nesting habitat seemed available). Over 15 remained at Ramtha tip throughout period.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Up to 12 were at the fish farm to mid Feb and numbers declined to one by late March. 32 wintered at Sharjah (cricket stadium) lake, where 5 remained to early April. Some wintered at Al Ghar lake with 13 reported there on 14 February. Smaller numbers were at Ramtha tip and the Emirates golf course.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*
5 were seen off Fujeirah on 4 February and 5 were counted in the Straits of Hormuz 6 February (J.Tafforeau).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*
c.300 were reported at Qarnayn Island breeding colony 10 March.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
276 were counted at Khor Dubai 10 Jan, maximum flock reported. A young straggler was at Abu Dhabi's eastern lagoon 14 April-15 May.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis*
c.400 were on Umm al Kirikum island 6 March and c.100,000 came to roost on Fata Island (24°21'N 52°51'E) at dusk 8 March, covering the whole islet. At the Emirates golf course one juvenile was noted at one of the fish ponds 10-18 March. c.500 were lounging on Qarnayn Island 10 March and c.100,000 were at Siniyah Island 2 May.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Singles at Asab on 26 April and at Sharjah cricket stadium dump on 26 June, were only

records for period.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Up to 10 were in trees around fish farm most of period January to June, with 16 counted there 11 March. Up to 14 (21 on 11 April) were at Ramtha tip over same period. Smaller numbers other sites.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

One was at fish farm 19 February-9 March, 25 March-5 April & 10-11 May and another was on Abu al Abyadh 5 June. One at Saffa park 15 March was probably this species.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

One seen at Khor Kalba 4 April was only record.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Numbers are showing a steady increase over the years.

Max. numbers were 29 on Abu Dhabi island January to mid February, 18 there 12 March and one still present to 7 May; ones and twos in Saffa Park peaked to 8 between 20-24 January; 11 were at Ramtha tip and Sharjah roundabouts 18 February-26 March, one remained to 10 May. 13 were reported at Rugheilat farm on 21 February, declining to 2 by 6 May.

Adults came into breeding plumage and dispersed from late April. Also reported at fish farm, Bu Hasa, Al Ain and Jebel Ali hotel.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Small numbers wintered at freshwater sites, becoming scarce after early April. Maximum 5 were at Ramtha tip on 4 January and 2 remained until 11 April.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

27 were at Khor Dubai 18 January, typical of numbers wintering there and 3 were reported at Ramtha tip 10 May. Most had departed by late April though individuals overwintered at some sites.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Widespread and common throughout period: 62 were counted at Khor Dubai 10-18 January and 20 were still there on 27 June.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Unusually scarce. One was reported at Abu Dhabi's eastern lagoon on 2 March while Singles were at Abu al Abyadh 1 February, and at fish farm 11/24 March & 25 June. 2 were at Ramtha tip on 18 April.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

A flock of 24 wintered at Hamraniyah, Ras al Khaimah, with a steady decline in numbers to 2 on 5 April, when last reported. 2 were seen at Al Ain 12 February and 21 dropped in at Khor Dubai 17-19 March. One was at Bu Hasa on 5 May.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

The 2 remained at Ramtha tip to early May, with just one seen to end of June.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

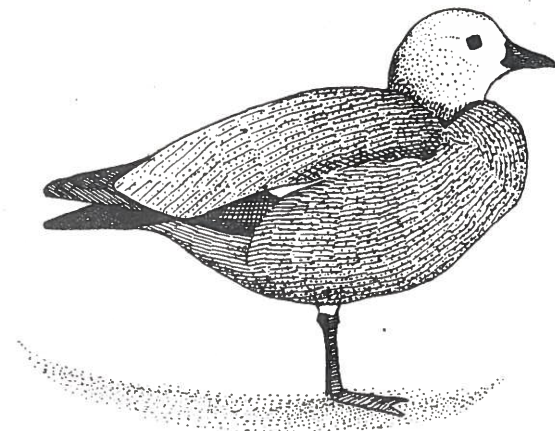
Up to 33 were counted at Khor Dubai throughout January, with 16 from mid February and 12 in March, some staying to end of June; 22 at Khor Khan on 5 January; up to 23 reported at Khor al Beidah 18 January to late March and up to 14 were at Al Jazeera Khor 25 January-3 April. One was at fish farm on 24 April and 3 were at Ramtha tip on 28 June.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Greatest numbers present at Khor Dubai as follows: 1124 on 18 January and 1700 on 16 February. Fairly widespread this winter, with many parties of young birds at inland pools and salt flats.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Up to 14 seen at a Dubai beach palace where they were reported overwintering, 4 remaining 23 March (K.Hyland); 2 were at fish farm amongst 'army yard ferals' 22 March-9 April, one remaining to 12 April.



Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

One was found on pools at Ain al Faydah 11 January (J.A.D.Chapman) and 2 were at Ramtha tip on 10 May (S.Turner/C.Richardson/J.Bannon) - 6th & 7th UAE records.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

2 were at Ramtha lagoon on 18 January, increasing to 9 from 1 February-1 March. 2 were at Al Ghar lake on 14 January and up to 2 were reported at Khor Dubai 18 January, 18 February and 17 March; one was at the fish farm 5-12 April.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Up to 7 wintered at the fish farm to 11 March, with 21 there on 3 February, 2 were present 22 March to 30 April. Smaller numbers at Ramtha tip and Al Ghar lake to early March. A drake was seen at the Emirates golf course on 25 April.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

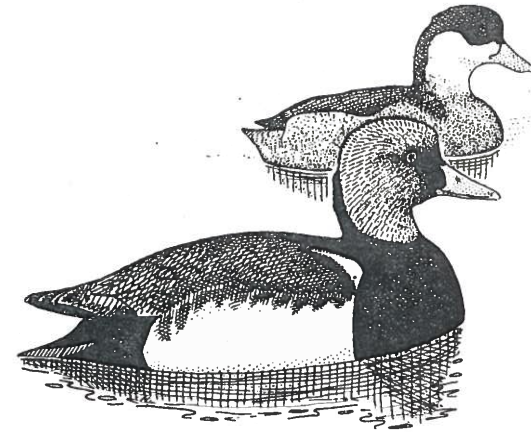
2 at Saffa park on 4 January and at the fish farm 5-8 January, 3-13 & 26 February, were possibly the same birds. 2 were at Ain al Faydah 11 January; 4 were reported at Khor Dubai 5 January and another was at Saffa park 6 February. 2 were at Bu Hasa 31 March on passage.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Numbers wintered at fish farm, 142 there 30 January; most departed by late March, with 4 remaining to 18 April.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

444 were counted at Khor Dubai 18 January and c.800 flew over the fish farm 3 February. Reported at many other sites including Ain al Faydah until 26 April.



Pintail *Anas acuta*

Wintered at several sites. Maximum of 20 were at fish farm mid-January and up to 2 drakes still there 11 April-4 May. 35 at Khor Dubai 10 February.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

First spring individual was at fish farm 8 February. General passage from mid February to late April. c.30 were at Ramtha tip 15 February and 55 were counted on 2 April. Last spring record, one drake on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Up to 29 wintered at fish farm, decreasing to one by 30 March. Maximum 25 were at Ramtha tip 4 January. Smaller numbers present Khor Dubai and Al Ghar lake.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

3 were at the fish farm 5-30 January (C.Richardson) - 5th UAE record.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

One wintered at Asab to 31 January. One was at Ramtha 4-11 January, with 8 there 15 February; up to 16 were at Khor Dubai 4-18 January and up to 15 wintered at Al Ghar lake until 1 March.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

One was at the fish farm 12-30 January and 23 February.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

2 were seen at Khor Dubai 4 January; 2 on Hatta lake 11 January (before it dried up). Up to 32 were reported at Al Ghar lake 1 February-1 March (11 reported still there 22 March (JADC) awaits confirmation); one was at Ramtha tip 8-18 February.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

2 were on Abu Dhabi island 18/22 January, with individuals 6/18 April, mid May & 21 June, one of which could be same bird. One was seen at Qadara, near Mahdah 8 April.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

One wintered at Ramtha tip until 11 February; Singles were at Al Ain sewage works 21 March, at Asab from 28 March-22 April and in Abu Dhabi mid May.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

One was seen in Wadi Qadara, near Mahdah 8 April.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus*

4 were soaring near Wadi Hamadi (Wilayat of Mahdah) on 15 March.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One was seen at Dibba 26 December 1991. Other individuals were at the fish farm 8 January and Ramtha tip 22 February; another was over Jebel Ali port 14 February; 2 were over foothills near Khatt on 5 April and 2 were at Asab on 12 April.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Ones and twos were at several sites (3 at Ramtha tip) to early April; Khor Dubai's wintering individuals peaked at 4 from 22 February-6 April.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

No adult males reported. One on 22 March at Ras al Khaimah (JMH), no details; one female was on Sir Bani Yas Island 3 May.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Singles were seen in the Abu Dhabi area 22 January, 8 & 23 March and another was at Dhabyah on 25 January. 5 single 'ring-tails' in a number of locations 24/25 January & 14-19 March could have been this species. Individuals were also reported at Asab 30 March-1 April, Ramtha tip 3 April and Khor al Beidah & Digdaga on 19 April.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Total 4 birds, probably this species were reported at Al Habab 24 January & 14 March and at Khor Dubai on 19 March. A male was seen near Jebel Ali on 3 April and one was at Al Wathba on 4 April. Usual confusion is with female or immature Hen/Pallid Harriers.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Singles were reported at Al Ghar lake 1 January, Asab from 20 January-28 April, Mushrif Park 5 February, fish farm 7 & 24 March, Al Ain 8 March and Rugheilat farm 4 April.

(Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo (vulpinus)*

2 were at the fish farm 13 February & one buzzard species was at Digdaga on 28 June.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Individuals were present at the fish farm 8/12 January & 22 February and another was near Asab on 7 April.

Singles reported from 26 April to early May at Asab, Sir Bani Yas Island and Tarif.

3 were at Bu Hasa from 28 April increasing to 14 on 25 June - these exceptionally high numbers were sustained throughout the summer months.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

Singles seen at Khor Dubai 7 January, Khor al Beidah on 18 January, fish farm 9 February and in Abu Dhabi on 8 March. Up to 2 were soaring over Hamraniyah fields 25 January & 15 February. 2 seen over Hatta-Mahdah road on 21 March, were believed this species.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

One was at the fish farm 11 January. One probable seen from distance on 2 February and one confirmed 22 March at Ramtha tip.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*

One late individual was found at the Emirates golf course on 10 May, only record for period.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus*

One immature was at the fish farm 30 January & 16 February.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

6 were seen around Futaisi island on 10 January, empty nest seen (ABBA square UA25). One adult was hunting with a juvenile at Umm al Quwain breakwater 1 March and one was seen at its nest on Sir Bani Yas Island 2/3 May.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

4 were found at Hamraniyah fields 5 April, 4 were at Asab 16 April and 5 were near Dibba on same day. 2 were seen on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Pair seen with young in nest hole Jebel Ruwayyah (fossil valley) 8 April (ABBA square VB25). Nest found with 3 eggs at Bu Hasa (square TA24), 2 hatched over period 16-27 April.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Singles were reported at Asab 15/26 April, at Kalba 29 April and at Bu Hasa 2 May.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

One flew northwards over Rugheilat farm on 21 March. Up to 2 were seen on Sir Bani Yas Island from early May and 5 were there 13 June (J.N.B.Brown), probable nest site (square SB25).

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

One young bird was found at Hamraniyah on 28 June (C.Richardson), photos confirm. Breeds locally.? (square VB28)

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Singles were seen at Khor Dubai 18 January, at the fish farm 16 February and at Uyaynah, near Masafi on 1 March.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Individuals were in the fish farm/Khor Dubai area 15 & 26 January, 22 February & 17 March & another was in Abu Dhabi 25 January.

Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinoides*

One, seen on Jebel Hafit on 1 January (previously recorded there) may be resident. One was at Dhabbiyah on 4 January; one, suspected this species, was seen on a mountain crag near Idhn, 25 January (square WA28). A pair were sailing around a jebel at Daftah on 4 April, a possible breeding site (square WA27).

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

3 reported near Ras al Khaimah 22 March (J.Hart), details requested.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

4 were on Abu al Abyadh 29 June (ABBA square TB25) extension of known range.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

At least 6 were calling in a Digdaga fodder field 22 March & 5 April (ABBA square VB28); one was in Saffa park 13 April and 2 were there from 22-23 April.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Up to 2 were in reeds at fish farm 20-26 April and 15 May; one was at Abu al Abyadh 5 May and one was seen at Saffa park pond 17 May.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

Exceptional numbers reported in spring: individuals were in Saffa park 23-27 April & 13 May, on Sir Bani Yas Island 2-3 May during wildlife survey, one with injured leg at Emirates golf course 7 May and the last at Ras Ghanada on 14 May.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Several interesting breeding records: up to 3 throughout period at fish farm, one only found from 7 March to end of June, at least one pair possibly nesting in reeds.

Pair present throughout period Jan-June Saffa park pond (observed nest building in early July'91).

At least one pair established in reeds at Ramtha tip throughout Jan-June.

One adult seen at Sharjah cricket stadium sewage pool on 10 May with 3 very young chicks plus an older (previous) brood of 3 juveniles One at Ain al Faydah 26 April, possible nest site. (square VB25)

Coot *Fulica atra*

Up to 30 wintered at fish farm, 44 there 7 March, 2 remained to 26 April, and one overwintered. 25 wintered at Al Ghar lake to 8 March. Smaller numbers reported at Ramtha tip, Emirates golf course and Sharjah cricket stadium lake.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

2 were on Abu al Abyadh during July, origins not known, though with private zoo on island they were probably introduced.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

c.100 were counted at Al Ghar Lake from 22 March, with 50 reported nesting 31 March and 320 reported there 24 May, including many young; birds on nests to July, though clutch sizes not known.

Maximum 62 were counted at Ramtha 10 June.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

One was at Ramtha tip 10 January-22 February; up to 3 were at Khor Dubai 4-18 January with one there 28 February; 2 were found at Al Ghar lake 8 March.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

c.500 were at Khor al Beidah 4 January, 400 on 22 February & 148 there 1 March (only one found there 5 April). 100 were seen on Dibba-Bayah beach (Oman) 1 March, the greatest number recorded on the East Coast. c.600 were on Abu al Abyadh throughout May, nesting recorded, chicks seen (*Tribulus* 1:2).

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

One was at Dhabbiyah 15 March and 2 were found at Hamriyah (Ajman) on 6 April.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

2 were found inland from Dubai/Abu Dhabi road 13 May, probable nesting site (ABBA square VA26).

Up to 5 were reported at the Emirates golf course from late June and 2 were found at Al Rifaa mud flats, Umm al Quwain 28 June, suspected on passage.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

Singles were at Asab 12 April, Rashid School playing fields 20 April, Das island 22-23 April, Bu Hasa 5 May, Al Wathba 10 May and at Ramtha tip from 28 June.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Earliest spring migrant, one at Ramtha tip 10 January. 3 chicks seen at Wadi Bih pool 16 May.

Nest with 4 eggs found at Ramtha tip 28 March, very early.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

c.300 reported at Al Ghar lake 4 April, including chicks. About 1,000 birds were counted there May & June, including many young.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

A noteworthy 1,900 were at Dhabbiyah 15 February & 1,000 were near Futaisi island on 18 March.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

2 were seen at Emirates golf club 12 October 1990. A large flock of 14 was at Al Wathba 14/15 February.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Up to 15 were in Saffa park 4-20 January, 26

on 12 February, declining to 3 on 6 May; 2 were seen on Kalba beach 22 February and over 60 were seen west of Abu Dhabi on 20 March. 18 were at the Emirates golf course on 7 April and 30 on Hodairiat island 8 May was the last spring report. Smaller numbers were at Khor Dubai & Ramtha tip.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Hoplopterus indicus*
Resident at Ras al Khaimah fodder fields (Dig-daga, Khatt, Hamraniyah), Ramtha tip and Rugheilat farm. 14 were counted at Hamraniyah 25 January; a large group reported at Al Ain sewage works 15 February; at least 12 counted at Rugheilat farm 21 February; nest found with 4 eggs at Ramtha tip on 28 March and 12 birds including juveniles were present there on 26 June.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*
One reported on Das Island 3-4 June (per ENHG) - details awaited for 5th record.

White-tailed Plover *Chattusia leucura*
One or two were reported at Ramtha tip 4/18 January, 15 February and 1 March. 7 seen at Khor Khan 16 November 1990 was noteworthy.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
Up to 2 overwintered at Ramtha tip and 5 were there 4 February.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*
6 were found at Abu Dhabi 10 January, otherwise ones & twos usually on Umm al Quwain beach and around Abu Dhabi, March and April; one at Bu Hasa 23 April; 4 at Ramtha tip 10 May.
Note: This species seems not as common as previously believed.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
Singles seen at fish farm 5-12 January & 19 February and up to 2 were at Ramtha 8 March-5 April.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
Generally few in winter months in Northern Emirates.
Up to 200 at Dhabbiyah 4 January-mid February. 110 counted at Khor Dubai 18 January during IWRB census. Common in March on passage.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*
483 were counted at Khor Dubai 18 January (IWRB census).

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
Localised January to early April. c.200 counted at Al Ghar lake 8 March and 150 there 29 March-16 April.
Last spring sightings: 2 at Emirates golf course 7 April with up to 4 at Bu Hasa 5-12 May.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*
One was chanced upon at Emirates golf course 10 March and a possible was near Dubai police college 18 March.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
c.25 were counted at Ramtha tip 2 April. Last spring report, one at Emirates golf course 7 May.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*
One was at the Emirates golf course 18 March & 7 April.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
At least 2 were identified at Ramtha 1-8 January while 4 were at Khor Dubai 12 January and 2 at Al Ghar lake 8 March.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
2 were on Sir Bani Yas island 1 January and at Abu Dhabi on 3 January; up to 4 were at Ramtha tip 4/8 January, 1 February and 11 April (one there 19 February and 22 March). Meanwhile 10 were at Al Ghar lake 29 March.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
36 at Al Ghar lake 29 March, noteworthy.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
Common in winter at Ramtha (11 there 11 January). Fewer other sites. 2 at fish farm 9 April, were last spring migrants.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
Most departed by early May. One, presumably on passage was at Asab 27 April-3 May; 6 were at Ramtha tip 10 May and 6 at Bu Hasa 12 May; one at fish farm on 15 May, was last spring record.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
31 were counted at Dhabbiyah 25 January, 102 at Mussafah 1 February-1 March and c.100 at Al Jazeerah Khor 15 February. Smaller numbers other sites. 2 at Bu Hasa in the western desert 6-20 May were obviously on passage.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*
50 were seen 2km. off Fujairah 14 March; up to 2 were on ponds at Emirates golf course 18-22 March. 3 were at fish farm 17 March and one was there 24-27 March; c.45 were offshore (10-12 km) Gulf 26 April. 3 at Al Ghar lake 24 May, was last spring record.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*
Reported by several observers off Gulf and East Coasts 4 March-14 May. Less than 20 birds total.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*
One was seen off Dubai 8 February.

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*
Small numbers were reported at coasts and ports early February-April. c.200 were at Qarnayn Island 10 March (known nest site); c.100 were counted at fishing nets, Kalba beach 4 April and at least 7 were offshore Dubai 26 April.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
Small groups were reported January to early April, peaking late February to late March. Noteworthy records: 50 off Abu Dhabi 10 January, 60 at Fujairah 29 January, 25 at

Qurayah and 29 sheltering on sabkha flats at Khor Kalba 22 February. 2 were still at fish farm to 28 April, and one immature bird was at Emirates golf course 10 May.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*
An adult in breeding plumage was in the Ramtha tip gull roost from 24 June-26 July (C.Richardson/R.A.Richardson/S.Turner). - a first record for UAE and Arabia.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
Large numbers, estimates varying from 5,000-45,000 counted at Khor Khan roost 3-6 January. Of flocks at Ramtha tip early February, about 10% found dying of botulism.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
Individuals mid-January to early May, Khor al Beidah, Al Jazeerah Khor and Ramtha tip.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
Recorded inshore January to May. Up to 17 at Khor Dubai until March.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*
Apparently small resident population - one was off Abu Dhabi 10 January, up to 4 were noted off East Coast 29 January-15 February and one was off Dubai 8 February. Otherwise small numbers (up to 3) with Lesser Crested Tern inshore, mostly Northern Emirates from late March.

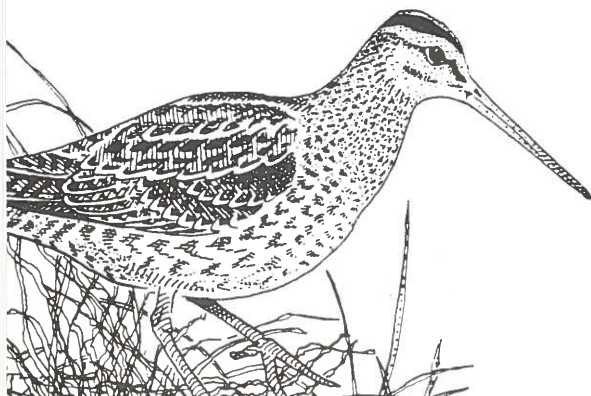
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
c.30 were counted off Abu Dhabi 10 January and c.30 off Kalba 15 February. Generally rare in winter.

Up to 50 reported Ish & Qarnayn Islands (west of Abu Dhabi) 6-10 March, probable early migrants. 90 at Sir Bani Yas roost 3 May, possibly nesting on one of nearby islands, extension of known range (ABBA square SB25).

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
One adult was at fish farm 10 May.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*
9 were found on Ish Island 7 March. c.200 feeding at fishing nets, Kalba beach 4/5 April, was first sign of spring influx.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
Most common species offshore Dubai in late April. 8 off Sir Bani Yas Island 12 June, perhaps breeding nearby (ABBA square SB25).



Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*
c.75 were off Abu Dhabi 10 January. Other-
wise only ones & twos January, more com-
mon from March. Breeding on inshore islands
west of Abu Dhabi.
One juvenile with parents was on Umm al
Quwain beach, 28 June, extension of known
breeding range. (ABBA square VB28)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
Numbers wintered at Ramtha tip (8 there 1
February) and up to 3 were present on all
visits to end of June; up to 3 were at Al Ghar
lake 1-29 March.

White-winged Black Tern
Chlidonias leucopterus
Up to 2 wintered at Ramtha tip 4-10 January,
recorded again 22 March-5 April; one was at
Al Ghar lake 15 February & 5 were there 22
March; one was seen at Sharjah pools 14
March and at fish farm 10/11 May.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse
Pterocles lichtensteini
15 seen at Wadi Wahiyah near Hatta 27 Janu-
ary; 240 were counted after sunset at Wadi
Bih, 10 May. Up to 6 were flushed in a wadi
near Masafi 21 March & 15 April.

Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*
One was reported near Madam on 8 March
(U.Wernery), field description requested.
(First report since 1970)

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse
Pterocles exustus
Nest found with 3 eggs, believed this species,
at Ummus Suqeem (10km south-west of
Dubai) 13 April 1990.
Reported regularly at Al Wathba mid April-
May.
c.50 breeding on Ras Ghanada Island (ABBA
square UB26), juveniles photographed August
1991 (R.P.Morris).

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
300 were on Sir Bani Yas island and 245 were
seen moving east over Abu Dhabi on 1 Janu-
ary; c.7,000 were feeding in a field of stubble,
Hamranyah, Ras al Khaimah 16 May.
One at Bu Hasa (ABBA square TA24) 11 April
& 14 June, was an extension of known range.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
5 were seen at the Emirates golf course on 5
April, earliest spring record; 240 were feeding
with thousands of Collared Doves in a stubble
field at Hamranyah on 16 May, and 64 adults

& 40 juveniles there 28 June.
Reported at Sweihan (VA25) on 7 June, on Sir
Bani Yas Island (SB25) and Abu al Abyadh
(VB25) 14/20 June, probable breeding sites
and range extension.
Nest with 2 eggs found at Nishash (UA24) in
the western desert, 5 May.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
c.1,000 were roosting at Al Wathba 11 Janu-
ary.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*
One female found at Asab 3-21 April
(L.Reaney), one male seen on wires over
fields at Digdaga 19 April (J.Bannon/C.Richar-
dson/S.Turner) and one female was at Bu
Hasa 10 May (D.Robinson). - 5th, 6th and 7th
UAE records.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
60-70 were regularly seen flying to roost at
dusk at Al Ain in January. 3 at Dhaid 25
January, was an extension of range; 3 were at
Asab at the end of March and one was seen
at Bu Hasa 3 April & 14 June, noteworthy
western desert records.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Single birds were seen at Saffa park 10 April,
and on Das island and Abu Dhabi on 15 April.
Up to 2 were at Bu Hasa 3/4 May.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
One seen in Sharjah 27/28 February
(S.Green).

Scops Owl *Otus scops*
Individuals were at Asab 7 April and on Das
island 24 April. One was found dead in Mush-
rif park, Dubai 28 April.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*
A pair nested in a *Prosopis cineraria* tree
about 10 km. inland from Ajman (ABBA
square VB27) where one recently-fledged
juvenile was photographed 17 April (J.Hart).
2 adults and 3 juveniles were at Qarn Nazwa
29 April.
One was reported inland from Ramtha tip 22
April (R.Green).

NOTE: These interesting records of this spe-
cies nesting in trees (and far from mountain
areas) has not been observed in other parts of
Arabia (M.C.Jennings *pers.comm.*) There are
a number of other such records for the UAE
including those published in *Emirates Bird*
Reports 9-11.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*
A pair was at Jebel Ruwayyah (fossil valley) 8
April, with young seen in holes on hillside.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
One was in woods of Jebel Ali hotel grounds
5/25 April; one, possibly 2, were on Sir Bani
Yas Island 1-3 May and up to 3 were at Asab
2-6 May.
Single birds were recorded 26 April-12 May in
Al Ain, Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*
c.30 were soaring around buildings in Abu
Dhabi 8 April, probably nesting nearby.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*
2 were over Khor Kalba on 21 February
(C.Richardson) - 4th UAE record.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
One (2 on 18 January) wintered at Ramtha tip
until last sighting 15 February. One at Dibba-
Bayah (Oman) 16 May and 3 August - first
East Coast records.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater
Merops superciliosus
31 were at Khor Kalba 21 March, first spring
record. Up to 8 were at Asab 5-8 April. Other-
wise rare on Arabian Gulf coast, apart from
ones & twos early to mid May. Latest migrant,
was one at Jebel Ali village 3 June.
2 juveniles, (including one being fed by a par-
ent) were at Digdaga 28 June, further evi-
dence of breeding in this area.

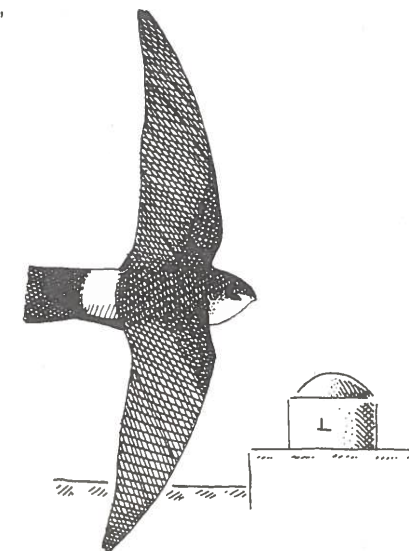
European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
One was seen at Jebel Ali village 29 March,
first spring record.

Regular over gardens and cultivations April to
early May, with flocks of 15-30 common. c.50
were at Khor Kalba 4 April; 18 were feeding
continuously at beehives on Sir Bani Yas
Island 1-3 May, and several shot by the bee-
keeper. c.70 were at Abu al Abyadh 7 May.
Up to 34 were present at Digdaga & Hamran-
iyah April - June, found at nest holes 19 April.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*
One at Emirates golf course 21 April, was the
first spring record. Up to 6 were at Bu Hasa
23 April-12 May & up to 7 were at Asab from
22 April-6 May.
Otherwise small numbers, mostly single birds
from early to mid May.
Up to 4 at Digdaga 22-28 June, suggests local
breeding again this year, though no other evi-
dence of nesting has been found. One was
near Abu Dhabi airport 26 June, probably a
late migrant.

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
40 perched side-by-side on a power cable at
Hamranyah 15 February, hunting caterpillars
in field below - hundreds present in locality.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Recorded throughout period. Passage influx
noted from 12 February.
14 were near Mina Zayed, Abu Dhabi 19
March. Calling and territorial behaviour was
noted in Mushrif Park in mid March and in
Saffa park 6 May. Nesting also suspected
Fujeirah and Ramtha tip, Sharjah. 2 flightless
fledglings were at Hamranyah 19 April
(J.A.D.Chapman).



Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

First spring records: singles were seen in Dubai 20 February & in Al Ain 26 February. Individuals were seen 8 March-25 April in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Al Wathba and Asab. Up to 2 were at the Emirates golf course 17-21 April and in Bateen wood 22 April.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

One at Asab 27-29 April, was well away from known range (ABBA square UA23).

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

Al Wathba had 16 on 1 February & 6 on 15 February (R.A.Richardson/J.M.Hollingworth) - Greatest flocks ever recorded and only 8th UAE record.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

4 were at Al Wathba on 1 January, increasing to 46 on 1 February, and 9 were there on 15 March; 3 were seen at Asab and one was on Qarnayn Island on 10 February; 3 were at Al Habab fodder fields 14 March.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

c.10 found at Khor al Beidah 4 January probably overwintered. 8 were seen on Das island mid February and c.30 were found on Futaisi Island 18 March. 12 reported at Ramtha tip 18 April (ST), lack detail.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

110 wintered at Al Wathba, and one remained to 15 March; up to 22 wintered at the Emirates golf course, increasing to 31 on 12 February; 9 were at the Jebel Ali hotel on 14 February, with 2 still present on 1 March. Smaller numbers were reported in Saffa Park.

Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta*

One was seen near the Sharjah cricket stadium 4 June, probable breeding site (ABBA square VA27).

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Single birds were at Asab 12 March and on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Rare in winter with following exceptions: up to 100 were seen over Al Ghar lake 1-3 January, with c.100 there again on 16 April, including 2 birds of red-bellied *savignii* race (J.A.D.Chapman) - 1st known record. Otherwise a 'fall' in Dubai on 18 March was followed by peak passage from 26 April-12 May.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Individuals were recorded at Asab 26 February & 8 April and at the fish farm 9 & 18 March. 2 were at the Emirates golf course on 18 March.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Numbers wintered at Ramtha: c.35 were there 8-11 January.

Heavy passage was noted 2-18 February: 21 at the fish farm 14 February, was maximum spring flock recorded. Further passage occurred mid to late March.

Latest spring records: 2 were at Asab 9-30 April and at Bu Hasa 14 April.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

One was at Al Wathba 8-15 February and on Das island 14/15 February. Up to 8 wintered in Saffa park to 2 April, with one remaining there to 27 April.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Up to 18 were at Al Wathba until 22 March; up to 8 wintered at the Emirates golf course until 26 March & up to 9 were in Saffa park until 13 April. Smaller numbers other sites.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

10 at Fujeirah 29 January, was noteworthy and perhaps a regular wintering site. Small numbers were found in a wadi north of Masafi - 3 on 15 February & one there 22 February. One was heard in song 4 & 16 April and is first indication of breeding in that area since 1972.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

One was at Bu Hasa on 14 April (D.Robinson) - a 5th UAE record.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

One at Asab 27 January-1 February, could have been an early migrant. Other winter records unconfirmed.

One was in Saffa park 8 February & 2 were at Jebel Ali hotel 14 February, early records. Common migrant from early March to mid April. Maximum flock was 12 in Saffa park 13 April. One at Asab 30 April was latest spring record.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Small numbers wintered at Al Wathba, last noted 15 February (peaking at 15 on 8 February). Otherwise very localised: one near Ummus Saqem 6 January, 3 at Al Habab 9 January, 11 at Jebel Ali hotel 17 January & 11 at Hamraniyah 25 January.

Only spring migrants recorded: 2 at Al Wathba 5 April and one at Mushrif palace gardens on 14 April.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Scarce in winter in Northern Emirates: singles were at Abu Dhabi on 6 January and at Bu Kushayshah on 20 January; up to 14 were at Al Wathba 1-15 February. Passage was noted 29 March-12 May: 15 were in Saffa park 10-13 April, up to 12 at Emirates golf course 17 April-5 May, 10 at Bu Hasa 14-16 April and 10 on Abu al Abyadh 7 May.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Up to 12 were at Al Wathba 1 January-15 February, with one remaining to 15 March; 2 were seen at Ummus Saqem 6 January and up to 6 wintered at Ramtha tip until late February; up to 10 were in fields at Hamraniyah on 15 February and at Al Habab on 14 March; up to 9 wintered at Asab, with stragglers remaining to 1 April. One at Bu Hasa 3 April, was last spring record.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

2 of black-headed race were at Al Wathba 14-15 February. General passage was from 8 March, mostly black-headed *feldegg* race to end of March, thereafter light passage of other races in April (*flava*, *feldegg*, *thunbergi* and *lutea* identified), increasing in May. Common early to mid April Bu Hasa, with 15 there on 3 April.

Maximum flock recorded: 16 at the Emirates golf course 7 May.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Up to 4 were at Ramtha tip 4 January, with one still there 22 March; singles were at Abu Dhabi 6 January, Rugheilat farm 21 March and at fish farm on 30 March.

Ones & twos were also reported at Asab and Kalba January to mid April. One at fish farm 20 April was last record.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Wintered locally: one at Khor al Beidah 11 January, 2 at Hatta 29 January and one in Wadi Sumayni 1 February. One was recorded in Saffa park 12 February-22 March. Most passage occurred March to 14 April. Up to 2 at Asab 16-26 April, were very late migrants.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Most wintering birds gone by 5 April (later in south). Stragglers were in Abu Dhabi to 24 April and at Asab until 28 April.

Yellow-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus xanthopygus
Found in Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi on 21 April; on 24 May one parent seen carrying food to calling fledgeling (R.A.Richardson) - 1st recent breeding record so far west and away from normal range.

Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*

11 were found at Umm Ghafa cultivation, near Al Ain 15 March (R.Khan).

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes*

63 birds were reported. One was seen at Al Jazeera Khor dunes 15 February. Most on passage from mid March to early May. Breeding records: one displaying on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May; 8 counted in Bateen Wood 13 June, breeding assumed; one in song (and probably nesting nearby) at Dhayah 19 April; 10 found in Mushrif park 12 May, likely nest site.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

One wintered in Saffa park to 12 February, at least 2 were in Jebel Ali hotel gardens until 1 March and one was in Dubai Zoo gardens to 25 February.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

Singles occurred at Bu Hasa 3 April and 12 May (description requested), in Saffa park 21-23 April and at Emirates golf course 25 April.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

65 birds were recorded. Passage was from late March, with most from 9 April to mid May. c.10 were on Abu al Abyadh 6 May, up to 5 were at the Emirates golf course 7-10 May and 5 were found in Saffa park 17 May.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

2 at Ramtha tip 28 March, was latest winter record. One blue-spotted Caucasian race was seen at Jebel Ali village 12 April (G.W.Ricks).

White-throated Robin *Iranina gutturalis*

One of best springs on record for this species, with 14 birds reported. A female in Zabeel garden 25 March was first spring record: 2 were seen on Das island on 1 April. Ones & twos occurred from 8-25 April in Saffa park, Emirates golf course, Bu Hasa, Asab, Wathba and Al Ain.

Eversmann's Redstart

Phoenicurus erythronotus
One report from Das Island on 20/21 February, awaits confirmation.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

Most winter visitors departed by early March. 4 were at Mushrif park 7 March. Last recorded 10 March.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

One early bird was in Saffa park 8 February. Most passage occurred from early March, becoming very common 13-17 April: 36 were counted in 1 hour in Saffa park 13 April and c.30 were on Abu al Abyadh 7 May.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

3 were in Saffa park and 2 at Ras al Khaimah 13 April. Small numbers (up to 3 together) to early May.

Exceptional fall reported throughout the country 7 May, when smoke haze to north-west was particularly bad - at least 70 were found on Abu al Abyadh and 13 at Emirates golf club; up to 4 were at Al Wathba 2-17 May.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Up to 3 (though usually 2) wintered at several sites until 10 March. One of Siberian races seen at Jebel Ali village 11 January-5 February; c.10 were at Zirca Island 6 March and one was at Jumeirah beach park 20 March.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Up to 6 wintered at Emirates golf club January & February; up to 11 were counted at Al Wathba 14 February-22 March; 10 seen on Abu al Abyadh early May. Smaller numbers seen at other sites. Most departed by 10 May.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One early migrant was at Dubai sewage works 12 February. Peak passage occurred 1-19 April, with maximum of 9 at Asab 15 April. One at Bu Hasa 2 May, was last spring record.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

2 were seen at Dhabbiyah 15 January. Passage was noted from mid February in the south and west, and late February in Dubai area. 10 were at Asab 24 February, 8 were there 6 March while 6 were at Emirates golf course 22 March. Females recorded from 5 April, with stragglers to 20 April.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

Individuals at Jebel Dhanna 28 February, at Ruwais on 1 March and on Zirca Island 6 March. 2 were at Bu Hasa on 21 March, one black-throated form was at Emirates golf course and another was at Al Wathba on 22 March. One female was found near Wadi

Daftah on 4 April.

Last bird of spring was seen on Abu al Abyadh 26 April.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Fairly widespread in winter, occurring mainly in desert & scrub areas. Few after mid March. Last individuals at Al Jazeerah Khor and at Al Ghar lake 22 March with one straggler reported at Asab until 24 April.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii*

One was found at Khan, Sharjah on 2 April (D.Evans).

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna*

Apart from wintering records in foothills and wadis, singles were at Awir 25 January, at the Emirates golf club 1 February and at Jebel Ali 22 February.

Latest individual in Saffa park on 8 March was probably on passage.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

A male & female wintered separately (1 km apart) at Qarn Nazwa, last seen 24 January and 1 February respectively.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

One was reported on Das island 23-26 February, *no details.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

4 were found near Hatta 28 January and another was at Wadi Fay 29 January.

One male was seen on Jebel Hafit on 11 January, and 2 males were near the summit on 8 April, including one singing and displaying (ABBA square VB25).

2 on Das island 23-26 February, *awaits confirmation.

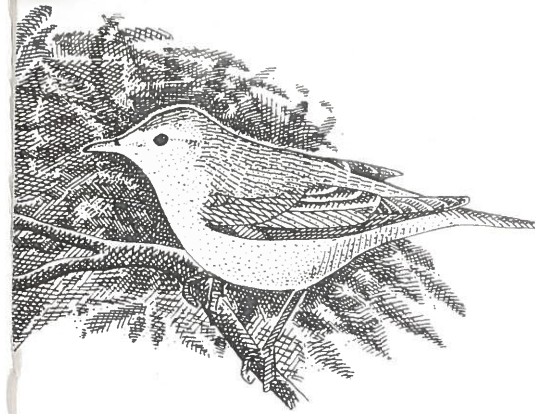
Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*

Breeding records: one was in full song near Idhn, Ras al Khaimah 25 January and courtship was noted by a pair on Jebel Hafit at the end of February; one was carrying food for young in Wadi Tayibah 29 March.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

99 birds reported: one was at Asab and 2 were at Jebel Ali on 22 February, first spring records. Passage from 1 March, mostly single males.

3 males were found near Futaisi island 18 March. Passage increased from 13 April with 3 males seen at Emirates golf course 25 April and up to 4 at Al Wathba 17-19 April, 3 at Bu Hasa 27 April and 3 at Asab 5 May. 6 males



were on Sir Baniyas Island 2 May, 15 were on Abu al Abyadh 6 May and 7 on Ghanadah island 13 May. Last recorded 16 May at Jebel Ali village.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Individuals were seen at Hatta 28 January, at Fujeirah 30/31 January, at Asab 15 February, at Uyaynah and Madam on 1 March, on Qarnayn Island 10 March, at Al Wathba 15 March and at Awir 22 March. 2 were found in the garden of the Oceanic hotel at Khorfakkan and another was near Wadi Hayl on 22 February.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

17 birds were reported throughout the country, proving this to be the first influx since the winters of 1982/83 and 1984/5.

Up to 2 males were at Jebel Ali village 1 January-13 March, first and last records. (G.W.Ricks).

One was in Saffa park on 4 January, with a maximum of 4 males counted there on 12 February. Ones and twos were also found in Abu Dhabi, Bu Hasa, Mushrif park, Al Wathba race course, Jebel Ali hotel, Emirates golf course and Asab.

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*

A pair found at a nest in *Acacia* (1 metre from ground) near Masafi 21 March, had vacated before 4 April.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

One was seen in the Jebel Ali hotel grounds 29 March; 3 were at the Emirates golf course 21 April and another was there 19 May; one was flushed in Saffa park 23 April.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

A probable was at Ramtha tip 11 April. Another was seen in Bateen wood 31 May.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

No definite records amongst Reed/Marsh Warblers in March and April. Evidence of passage from early May (late April at Asab) increasing mid-month. 16 were at Al Wathba 17 May and 6 were at the Emirates golf course 19 May.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Passage was noted from late February. At least 3 were calling in fish farm reed beds from 10 March to the end of April. Some confusion with Marsh Warbler to end of May.

Ciamorous Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus stentoreus

One, possibly 2 wintered around Saffa park pond until 12 March. Calling was heard at Khor Kalba Jan-June. Heard at two locations Ain al Faiyadah *Phragmites* reed beds 8 April and at Dhayah mangroves 19 April, probable nest sites.

Great Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

Ones and twos, (usually seen and heard) were at fish farm 10 April, in CR's Dubai garden 18 April, at Asab 2 May, at the Emirates golf course 7-19 May, on Abu al Abyadh 7 May, at Bu Hasa 12 May and on Sir Bani Yas Island 16 May.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*

2 at Al Wathba 22 March was year's first record. Fairly common on passage from 11 April to mid May, peaking 11-18 April in Dubai; up to 10 were in Bateen wood from 15 April to end of June, probable nest site.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*

Found at Khor Kalba 21 February-1 March and in song 4-24 April (at least 2 present). Up to 10 birds were in mangroves, including one feeding young on 29 April (J.Tafforeau). One was seen on Abu al Abyadh 6 May. One was at the fish farm 18 April and another was on Sir Bani Yas Island 3 May.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*

3 were found near Madam 8 March and 2 were in Abu Dhabi 25 March. Ones and twos were reported in a variety of locations throughout April. A good 10 were counted at Al Wathba 19 April. 6 were at Bu Hasa 2 May, with just one on 6 May. An individual on Sir Bani Yas Island 16 May, was latest record.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

One was found in Bateen wood 14 April (J.A.D.Chapman), details not yet received. - possible 8th UAE record.

Menetries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*
Winters locally. First individuals on passage noted 25 January. Common mid February to mid April. Latest records: one on Sir Bani Yas Island & 2 at Bu Hasa 2 May.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
2 were still in fossil valley 8 April, latest spring record.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*
Small numbers wintered: up to 4 birds at Al Wathba, Ramtha tip, Saffa park, fish farm and golf course to mid February. One was at Jebel Dhanna 28 February. Passage was noted 4 March to 13 April, with high of 5 counted in Mushrif park 15 March. One on Das island 1 June, very late.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*
34 birds reported. First spring record: one at Bu Hasa 14 April. Exceptionally widespread from 16 April to 7 May - ones & twos were at Emirates golf course, Saffa park, Abu al Abyadh, Sir Bani Yas island, Abu Dhabi and private gardens in Dubai and Sharjah. Up to 6 were found in Saffa park 17-21 April, including one in song; 3 were at Bu Hasa 16-23 April; up to 4 at Al Wathba 17-19 April; 4 at the Emirates golf course 21 April. Last record, was one at Bu Hasa 12 May.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
Ones and twos seen in January, February and early May. Main passage at Asab noted 28 March-23 April; up to 8 were at Bu Hasa 2-12 May and one straggler remained to 20 May. One on Das island 1 June.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*
Stragglers were reported to mid April.

Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*
Individuals were at the Emirates golf course 18 March and in Saffa park 24 March (C. Richardson). - 5th & 6th UAE records (only recorded as a separate species since 1988).

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
One at Kalba on 1 February was very early. Latest record, one on Das island 1 June.

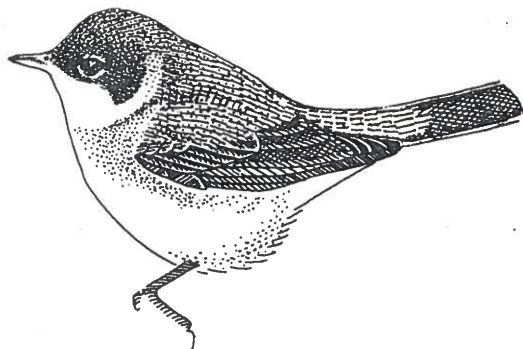
Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
Singles recorded at Asab 28 March (earliest ever record) and 3 May, at Jebel Ali hotel on 26 April, in Saffa park 30 April and at the Emirates golf course on 19 May.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
Ones & twos were reported 5 April-17 May with following exceptions: 3 were at Bu Hasa 16 April; maximum of 8 were counted in Saffa park 17 April.

Yellow-browed Warbler
Phylloscopus inornatus
One at Bu Hasa 23 April was only 14th UAE record. Also reported Das island in February, *no details.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*
One at Sir Bani Yas island 2 May was the spring's only record.

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*
Individuals were found in two locations in the Wilayat of Mahdah (Oman) on 11 January. 3 were in a wadi near Masafi 22 February and 2 were at Uyaynah, near Masafi on 1 March.



Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
2 at Asab 29 March, were first spring migrants. Main passage occurred from early April, peaking in early May, when c.300 were on Abu al Abyadh 6-8 May and 52 were counted in Saffa park on 6th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
c.150 counted on Abu al Abyadh 6-8 May.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
Only spring report, 2 in Bateen wood 19 May (JADC), were rather late and confirmation requested.

Semi-collared Flycatcher
Ficedula semitorquata
Single males were in CR's Dubai garden 4 March (earliest ever record), in Abu Dhabi 9 March, in Saffa park 17 March and in Jebel Ali hotel grounds on 22 March. One female was at Bu Hasa 14/16 April.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*
Up to 2 at Asab 18-31 January, were 150 km. south-west of nearest known breeding grounds.

White-breasted White-eye
Zosterops abyssinica
One reported in Al Ain on 19 November 1990, is under consideration for 1st UAE record. (Al Ain Natural History Group)

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
Up to 12 were at Bu Hasa 3-16 April, up to 5 stayed at Emirates golf course 25 April-19 May and up to 3 were seen together in an orchard on Sir Bani Yas Island 2/3 May. 3 were on Ras Ghanadah 27 April and 3 were on Abu al Abyadh island 6 May. 3 in Saffa park 10-21 May were latest records. Smaller numbers other sites.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*
Common and fairly widespread in winter with additional numbers recorded on passage. Up to 6 were at the Emirates golf club 7-25 April and at Saffa park 23-27 April. 21 at Al Wathba 17 April and 18 at Abu al Abyadh were the greatest numbers recorded. Most migrants had departed by 10 May, except for following stragglers: singles at Abu Dhabi 16 May, on Sir Bani Yas Island 17 May and 2 males at Emirates golf course 19 May. Male appeared to be courting female near Hamraniyah fields on 16 May.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*
Passage was noted from 4 April, peaking in early May, when up to 11 were present at the Emirates golf course 7-10 May and c.30 at Abu al Abyadh 7 May. Heavy passage was experienced on southern Gulf islands 8-17 May. 8 were at Al Wathba 10 May and 9 were found on Sir Bani Yas Island 17 May. Last spring records, one at Bu Hasa 20 May and one on Das island until 1 June.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*
25 birds were reported. Singles were in Saffa park 13/22/23 April, at Asab 16-19 April and at Jebel Ali hotel on 25 April. Steady passage continued 2-16 May with 10 seen on Abu al Abyadh island 7 May.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
One at Sir Bani Yas island 1 January, may have overwintered. One at Hatta 28 January was assumed an early migrant. Light passage occurred from 13 February, picking up from 10 March (4 at fish farm 11 March), peaking 22-26 March and continued to early April, with one or two recorded to end of April at Saffa park, Al Wathba and Emirates golf course. One at Bu Hasa on 2/5 May was the latest spring record.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*
A total of 35 birds were reported. One was in Saffa park on 8 March (one of earliest ever recorded) and one at Bu Hasa 16 March; 2 together occurred at Jebel Ali village 5 April, at Bateen wood 16 April, at the Emirates golf course 17-25 April and at Saffa park 17-24 April. 4 were seen at Al Wathba on 17 April. 2 males on Ghanadah island 13 May were latest reported.

Others were recorded from 2 April-10 May at several sites including Al Jazeerah Khor, Ramtha tip and Sir Bani Yas Island.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*
One at Jebel Ali hotel 30 November 1990, 22 February and 1 March 1991 (J.Hart/J.M.Hollingworth) and one at Jebel Ali village from 1 January-24 February (G.W.Ricks) could possibly have been same bird (see page 33) - 3rd (& 4th) UAE records.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*
Flock of 70 counted in Zabeel, Dubai 6 January. Pair attending nest (contents not seen) in *Casuarina* tree in Saffa park 13 May. 3 flew over Jebel Ali village 19 February, possibly nest prospecting.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*
Increasing flocks seen in western desert from late April, maximum 90 at Asab 2 May. 4 chicks were found in a nest at Bu Hasa (ABBA square TA24) 11 April.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Winter visitors were last seen 22 February. Maximum flocks: c.70 on Sir Bani Yas Island 1 January, 30 in Abu Dhabi 9 January, 30 at Ramtha 8 February (138 counted there 6 December 1990) and 15 were in Saffa park 24 January. 12 at Fujeirah 22 February, was first East Coast record.
2 adults and 3 recently fledged juveniles were found at Hamraniyah fodder fields 28 June (C.Richardson) - a first breeding record for the UAE (and Arabia).

Pied Mynah *Sturnus contra*
Species appears to be spreading and may already be feral.
Up to 3 were present throughout period at fish farm, one was carrying material (or food) to nest 6 April. Up to 6 were seen at Ramtha tip throughout, one carrying food 18 April.
2 were reported regularly at Jebel Ali village to early March and one was at Jebel Ali hotel 7 April; one was seen in Dubai suburbs of Jumeirah, 24 May. 6-8 were seen at Mushref palace gardens, Abu Dhabi on 17 May.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*
Present at Hamraniyah fields: 7 were there on 15 February, 10 on 22 March and 20 on 5 April. One was at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon 23 March.

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus*
Present at fish farm January-June, maximum flock was 45 on 13 January.
First Ras al Khaimah records at Digdaga/Hamraniyah fields: c.20 there on 5 April and 46 (at least 2 colonies suspected) on 16 May - extension of known range.
7 were at Ramtha tip 1 January and 2 on 18 April - 1st records for Sharjah.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
10 adults were in Hamraniyah fields 5 April and 6 were found there 28 June (C.Richardson) - probably nesting. 1st UAE breeding season record.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla*
Up to 28 were counted in several parties at Emirates golf course 10 March-7 April. Also heard on gravel plain near Khatmat Malaha on East Coast 21 March.

One was at Al Ghar lake 22 March and up to 18 were at Asab 28 March-17 April, with stragglers still present to 29 April; c.60 were counted at Hamraniyah and c.30 were found in foothills near Idhn on 5 April.

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*
One male in song at Mushrif park 15 March, was very early and at least 9 were calling near Khor Kalba on 21 March.
Passage noted at Asab 2-26 April. Reported in song on breeding grounds at Masafi, Digdaga, Khutwa, Qadara and Wadi Midfah from 4 April to end of June.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*
4 were at Mushref palace gardens 4 January and one was at Asab 29/30 January & 12-25 February. Some also reported at Jebel Ali hotel in early January (ENHG).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
One male was seen at Asab 8 April, first known April record (occasionally late August to early November).

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*
One of yellow-bellied race *semenowi* was found at Abu al Abyadh 6-8 May (R.M.Morris). - 7th UAE record.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
Up to 4 were at the Emirates Golf course, Murawah island, Bateen wood, Al Wathba, and Saffa park from 26 March; up to 7 recorded at Bu Hasa 11-27 April and up to 18 were at Asab 8-22 April and 4 were still there 6 May; up to 7 at golf course 21-25 April and 6 were logged on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May. c.15 were on Abu al Abyadh 6-8 May.
Last record, was one on Sir Bani Yas Island on 17 May.

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*
One male with flock of House Sparrows at Asab, 14 April, probable wild bird (L.Reaney). - possible 1st UAE record.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*
One male was in Abu Dhabi 23 February and 4 other individuals were recorded at Umm al Quwain, Ras al Khaimah, Dubai and Jebel Ali from 19 April-1 May.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*
One at Ruwais 1 March, was only record for period.

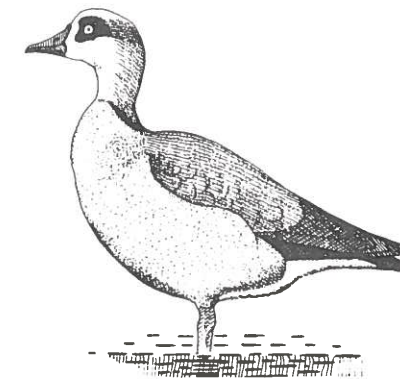
ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

Hawaiian Goose *Branta sandvicensis*
2 at fish farm laid eggs in April. No other details (per K.Hyland)

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*
Feral populations, and increasing: one was near Western road, Abu Dhabi 16 May and 5 were on Abu al Abyadh 29 June.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*
c.40 were counted on Sir Bani Yas Island 1 January and c.100 were there 1-3 May during island wildlife study.
Individuals near Zabeel road, Dubai 15 February & 15 March, were probably escapes.
Introduced on Abu al Abyadh, 2 seen 20 June.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*
c.100 estimated numbers on Sir Bani Yas Island 2 May.



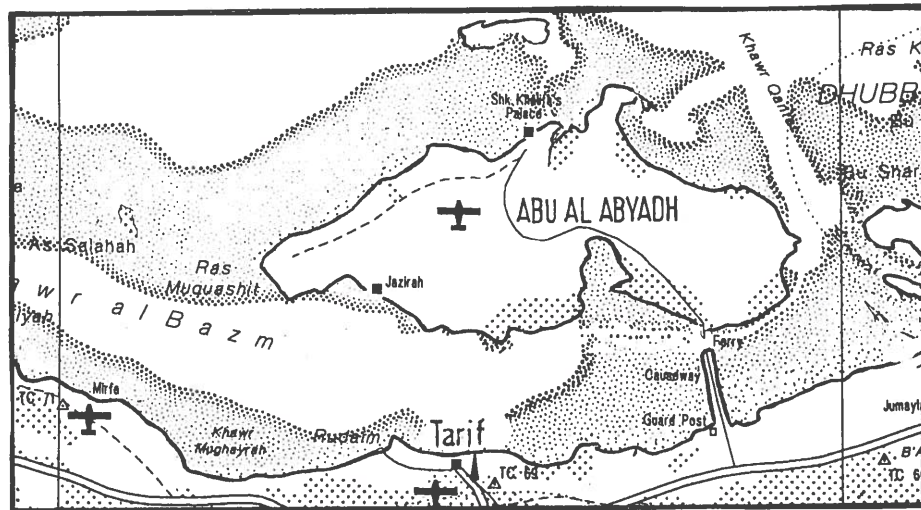
OTHER SPECIES RECORDED: Little Green Heron, Western Reef Heron, Egyptian Vulture, Sand Partridge, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Little Stint, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Curlew, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Turnstone, Slender-billed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Armenian Gull, Sandwich Tern, Rock Dove, Common Swift, White-collared Kingfisher, Kingfisher, Little Green Bee-eater, Black-crowned Finch Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Crested Lark, Sand Martin, White-cheeked Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, Song Thrush, Graceful Warbler, Chiffchaff, Arabian Babbler, Great Grey Shrike, Common Mynah, House Sparrow, House Bunting.

OBSERVERS AND GROUPS: J.K.Bannon; A.Bott; J.N.B.Brown; J.A.D.Chapman; T.Craig; D.Evans; L.Graham; R.Green; S.Green; C.Gross; J.Hart; P.Hellyer; E.Hirschfeld; J.M.Hollingworth; M.Jongbloed; R.Khan; C.Lehmann; C.Moore; R.Morris; C.Mueller; J.Neumann; M.Pitt; L.Reaney; C.Richardson; R.A.Richardson; G.Ricks; E.Rios; D.Robinson; J.Tafforeau; S.Turner; M.Verhage; U.Wernery; M.Wood; Emirates Natural History Group (ENHG).

THE BIRDS OF ABU AL ABYADH

R.P.Morris

Abu al Abyadh (24°15'N 53°50'E) is the largest of Abu Dhabi's offshore islands. It lies approximately 60 kms. south-west of Abu Dhabi island (ABBA square TB25). The island is a privately-owned nature reserve belonging to His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nayan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. It lies 7 km. offshore and is approximately 33 kms. from east to west and at its widest point 20 kms. from north to south. Abu al Abyadh is a low-lying island comprised of calcareous sands and sabkha flats. Parts of the coast are fringed by mangroves *Avicennia marina*.



Map of Abu al Abyadh - scale 1:500,000 (Reproduced from a map prepared by BP for the Centre for Documentation and Research/Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi)

BREEDING SPECIES

During the spring and summer of 1991 the island was surveyed to ascertain breeding species. Sixteen species were confirmed breeding, the highlight being the colony of **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola*. Four of the breeding species have been introduced to the island: **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, **Chukar** *Alectoris chukar*, **Black Francolin** *Francolinus francolinus* and **Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus*. Three other species, namely **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*, **Black-crowned Finch Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* and **Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes* may also breed but have not yet been confirmed.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

Small numbers breed in the larger stands of mangroves on the north and south coasts of the island. This was not previously a confirmed breeder.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

A common breeder around the island where suitable stands of mangrove provide breeding sites. Young were noted from mid July, becoming abundant in August. This was not previously a confirmed breeder.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

A handful of birds were introduced a few years ago. There are now up to 200 birds present on the island. Family parties were noted from May to July.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Small numbers were seen regularly around cultivated parts of the island. Young were noted in May.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

Commonly heard and occasionally seen in cultivated areas. Young were observed in July.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

Very common in cultivated parts of the island. Young were noted in May and July.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

A maximum of 600 adults were recorded at the colony in early July. The first fledged young was recorded on 28th July 1991. A minimum of 116 young were recorded in early August. A full and detailed account of the summer's events is currently in preparation.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Commonly noted around the coast of the island. Young were noted in May, particularly on the north coast.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*

A small colony of approximately 40 pairs was found on a small island just off the north coast. The birds still had unfledged young in early August. This was not formerly a confirmed breeder.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*

A small colony of approximately 25 pairs was found on the north coast in early May. Eggs were noted in late May and fledged young were seen in early July.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decacto*

An abundant breeder in the cultivated areas. This was not previously a confirmed breeder.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Small numbers noted in all agricultural areas in May and July. Juvenile birds noted in two places in early July. Turtle Doves are migrant breeders in the UAE that appear to breed opportunistically as new habitats are created. These are first breeding records for the island.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

An abundant resident breeder in the cultivated areas. Young were noted in May and July.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis*

A common breeding resident, only noted in the cultivated areas.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

A common breeding resident of the mangrove stands. Adults were observed feeding young in late May. Birds were frequently seen in agricultural areas in the summer presumably exploiting the abundant supplies of insects.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

An abundant resident breeder concentrated in the cultivated areas. Young were noted from May to August.

MIGRANTS

During the late spring, summer and early autumn I recorded over 100 species on Abu al Abyadh. The island has proved itself to be an important site for both migrant shorebirds and passerines.

In May there was a large fall of passerines which was primarily composed of several hundred Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilis*, Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* and Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* (of several sub-species). The most notable count was that of 70 Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra* on 7th May.

Other species recorded in this fall included Squacco Heron (1), Purple Heron (1-2), Spotted Crake (1), Red-throated (c.10) and Tawny Pipits (2), Isabelline (c.10) and Northern Wheatears (3), Redstart (c.30), Rufous Bush Chat (c.5), Rock Thrush (c.15), Nightingale (c.10), Barred (3), Booted (1), Olivaceous (2) and Great Reed Warbler (2), Lesser Grey (10), Red-backed (30) and Isabelline Shrikes (18), Golden Oriole (5), Oortolan (c.15) and Cinereous Bunting (1 male). A male Black-eared Wheatear (dark-throated form) was recorded in late April.

During the summer and early autumn the focus was switched to the mudflats. 25 species of wader were recorded this autumn although nothing particularly unusual was seen. Odd passerines were also noted during July including Lesser Short-toed and Short-toed Lark, Masked Shrike (very unusual at this time of year), Upcher's Warbler, European Roller, Rose-coloured Starling and Rufous Bush Chat.

An adult Saker Falcon was noted in late July and a pair of European Cranes were also present on the island throughout the month although their origin is highly suspect.

DISCUSSION

Very little ornithological work has been carried out on Abu al Abyadh mainly because of the restricted access. The numbers and variety of species recorded in only a few months of this year have proved it to be an important ornithological site in the UAE. The extensive and mature mangroves fringing the island are probably some of the best stands in the country supporting the typical species. The enormous areas of mudflat surrounding the island appear to support large numbers of waders passing through and wintering in the Gulf.

R.P.Morris, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Dept. of Zoology, Oxford University, England.

BLACK DRONGO *Dicrurus macrocercus* RECORDS IN THE UAE

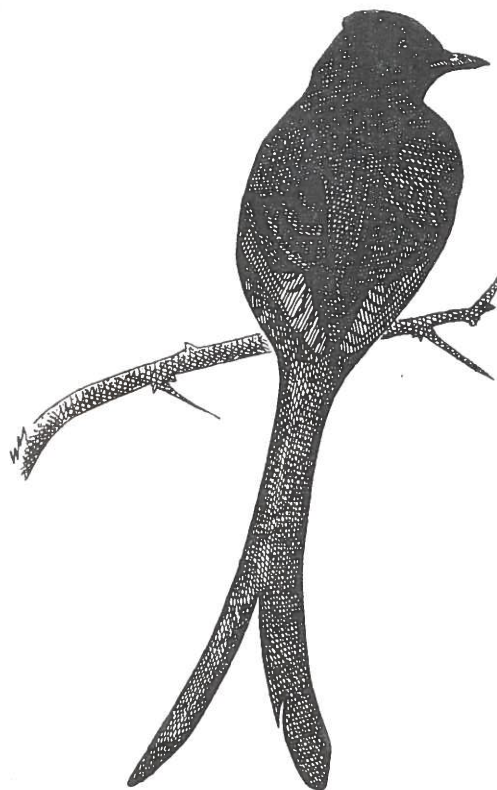
C.T.Richardson

The status of Black Drongo in the Middle East is not well documented seemingly with good reason, as there appear to be no records there. Hollom, Porter *et al* (1988) note it as a former breeder in SE Iran, but there is no mention of its migratory habits. Salim Ali in his *Handbook of the Birds of India* (1972) lists it as resident in West Pakistan and northern India, subject to some seasonal movements and altitudinal migration. The Farsi text of *The Birds of Iran* (1975) confirms its occurrence there. In Oman it is unrecorded in the wild and is not known in captivity (M.D.Gallagher *pers.comm*). There are no records, except the following, of it occurring naturally in the UAE or elsewhere in Arabia.

The first record occurred on 5th December 1986 when Mike West, other friends and I came across two during our regular Friday morning birding session in Safa Park (25°11'N, 55°15'E), Dubai. The birds were in good condition, particularly their long forked tails, and seemed at home flycatching from the top of a row of *Prosopis juliflora* trees. We assumed such attractive birds were simply escapes. We understood the species as being a rather sedentary resident of Africa and the Indian subcontinent. However, by 16th January 1987 both birds were gone.

On 16th November 1990 I found one perched on a wire overlooking an area of grassy fields at Hamraniyah (25°40'N 55°57'E) south of Ras al Khaimah. A later report confirmed there were actually two in the vicinity that day. It was unlikely these were escapees; the unsophisticated town of Ras al Khaimah does not have a thriving caged-bird market. Furthermore I have never found this species on sale in the local souqs of Dubai or Sharjah, or know of any kept by fanciers in a private aviary.

Another bird was reported (*per J.Hart*) in the Jebel Ali hotel grounds (55°01'E 24°59'N) on 30th November 1990 and one was monitored from 1st January to 24th February 1991 (G.Ricks *pers.comm.*) in a grassy tree-scattered compound of the Jebel Ali village, 12 kilometres north-east of the hotel. Its plumage was in good condition, including the dark bluish gloss visible to the head. There was also some pale barring beneath the tail. The last report of the winter was of one at the hotel grounds again on 1st March. There is arid treeless scrub between the two sites and it is likely these reports refer to the same bird.



In the light of these reports the species should be considered a genuine vagrant to the UAE, particularly in view of the wintering records. It will be interesting to see if it is found in Oman or other neighbouring states in the future.

SUMMARY

A summary of UAE records of Black Drongo are as follows:

Two 5.12.86 - 17.01.87 Saffa Park, Dubai

Two 16.11.90 fodder fields near Ras al Khaimah

One 1.01.91 - 24.02.91 at Jebel Ali village

One 30.11.90, 22.02.91 and 1.03.91 in grounds of the Jebel Ali hotel

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Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai.

NOTES ON IDENTIFICATION OF NON-BREEDING INDIAN POND HERON *Ardeola grayii* IN THE UAE

C.T.Richardson & J.K.Bannon

The lack of well-substantiated field descriptions of Indian Pond Heron *A.grayii* has led us to submit this short report on how we were able to separate this species from immature and non-breeding adult Squacco Herons *A.ralloides* in the field.

The status of Indian Pond Heron in the region is defined by a number of authors. Cramp *et al* (1977) note it as mainly sedentary in Iran (the most westerly breeding grounds in the Western Palaearctic) while Ali & Ripley (1968) list its status on the Subcontinent as resident, shifting locally with drought and flood conditions. *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (1990) records it as an uncommon, localised winter visitor.

It is reported every year in the Emirates at a number of places (including sites on the Arabian Gulf coast), but most particularly adjacent to the mangroves at Khor Kalba on the East Coast. There are also a number of reports between April and September, when adults have been seen in breeding plumage. There are no Arabian breeding records. Its occurrence in the country is possibly more than extralimital and there may be a case for a status review based on a fresh look at old field descriptions. We hope this note will of some help to future observers.

On Friday 5th October 1991 we were birding at Khor Kalba when we sighted a number of dark *Ardeola* herons standing in a very loose group on the exposed mudflats. We counted 10 birds, all in similar non-breeding plumage. They were all standing motionless or feeding with painfully slow movements. As we approached to within about 50 metres of the nearest bird, several Curlews and Redshanks flew off, but these herons appeared unconcerned.

Our description below is based on field notes taken at the time, confirmed by our photographs and we consider them all to be Indian Pond Herons *A.grayii*.

Upperparts, Head and neck. Uniform dark earth brown mantle and wing coverts, lacking any rufous/buff tones. (non-breeding Squacco Heron is paler, with dominant buff wash) Boldly streaked crown, cheeks, neck, throat, upper belly and flanks. Streaks tending to form continuous lines (cf Bittern) and are unlike those of Squacco which are more broken. On head, dark brown streaking obvious from below lore, encompassing cheeks. (Squacco has paler cheeks and streaking is finer).

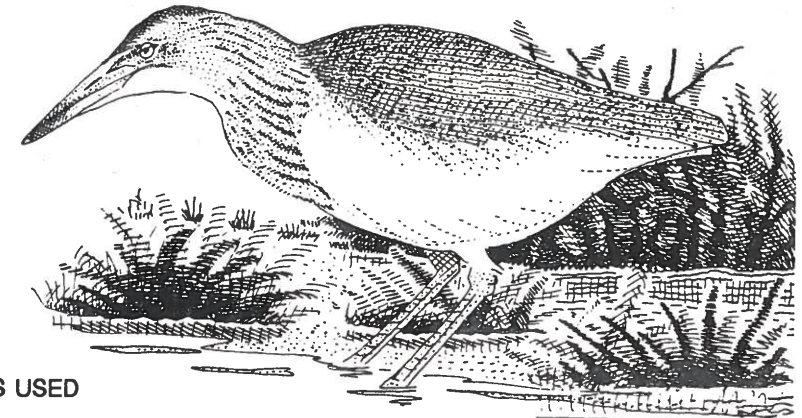
Only chin was unstreaked, and whitish in colour.

Bare Parts. Bill: dark upper mandible, paler towards centre. Light yellow lower mandible, tip suffused darker. Legs dull yellow.

(non-breeding Squacco Herons have green-yellow bills with clearly defined black tip. Legs yellow-green)

Behaviour. Feeding out in the open on tidal mudflats, over 30 metres from mangrove cover, allowing us close approach. Slow deliberate feeding action often motionless for several minutes. (Squacco Heron is usually more active, generally shy and likes to hunt near cover).

Wings. In flight one bird showed creamy-buff scapular shafts on upper wings.



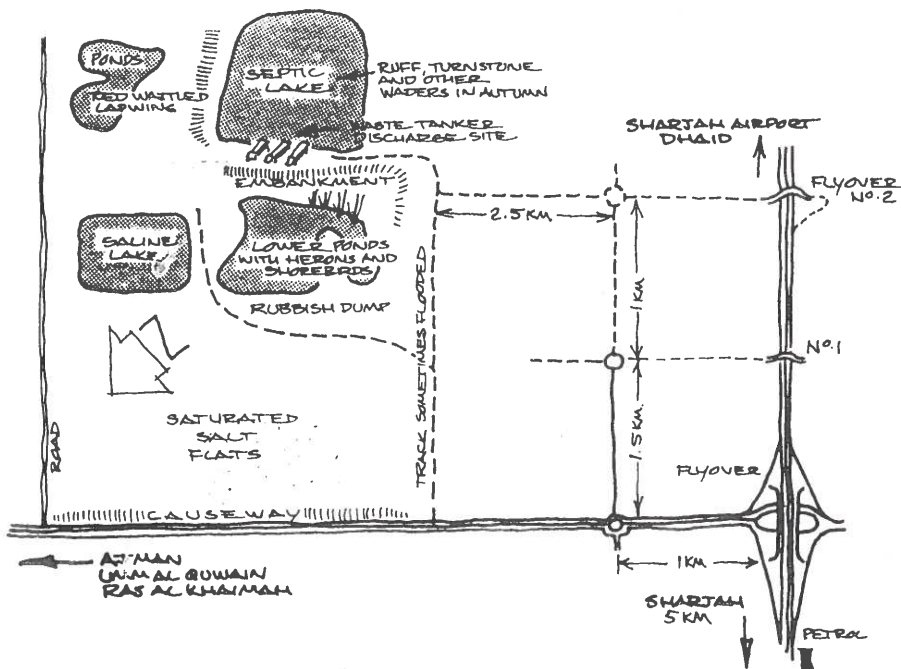
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BIRDING SITES.....RAMTHA TIP, SHARJAH



Whatever dire impact Man is having on our fragile desert environment during the recurring economic boom in the Gulf States, the end result, surprisingly perhaps, is often in favour of the birds. Major birding sites in the Emirates include golf courses, sewage works, fodder fields and dams; all man-made and having the excellent side-effect of providing food and shelter for migrants and often attracting new nesting species.

Just such a site is at Ramtha (55°27'E 25°22'N) on the Sharjah/Ajman border 5 kilometres from the Arabian Gulf coast. A vast area of sewage lagoons, probably over 200 hectares (and increasing!) where most of Sharjah's septic waste is dumped. Convoys of sludge tankers discharge their load into a large shallow reservoir from where it seeps (occasionally cascading) down through a series of lakes full of cable drums, old cars and assorted scrap until it ponds on the saturated salt flats (subkha) to the north-west of the site. At this point good views can be obtained in the late afternoon from the causeway where the main road to Ras al Khaimah borders the site.

In December 1987 Peter Antrobus was poring over aerial photographs at his office in search of wetlands and Ramtha tip stood out as a mysterious collection of ponds. On the ground its excellent potential was clear, among the first species recorded being **Black-winged Stilt**, **Tufted Duck**, **Kingfisher** and **Orphean Warbler**. Heavy rains which followed in February and March 1988 raised the water table, attracting a range of wetland species including **Little Grebe** (first nested 1990), **Greater Flamingo**, **White-tailed Plover** and the more common **Temminck's Stint**, **Ruff**, **Wood**, **Green** and **Marsh Sandpipers**.

Its use as a dump site will probably continue, while there is a shortage of capacity in Sharjah's sewage plant - good news for the birders. The water level at the lagoons has varied over the years, when the dykes are sometimes breached or redammed, but nature quickly adapts. The once-submerged trees have died and now serve as perching posts for **Cattle Egret**, **Squacco Heron**, **Kingfisher**, **Little Green Bee-eater**, **Swallows** and **shrikes**. **Phragmites** and other reeds have been fast to colonise, attracting **Clamorous Reed Warbler**, **Water Rail**, **Baillon's** and **Spotted Crake**. Two pairs of **Moorhen** bred in 1991 (a unique sight was watching 10 birds scurry into the reeds from the nearby marsh in August 1991). Also making good use of the reeds is **Little Bittern**, a regular visitor in late spring, while regular reports of **Streaked Weaver** and **Red Avadavat** suggest that the reed beds are attracting feral colonists too.

Two species which have adapted well at Ramtha are **Black-winged Stilt** and **Red-wattled Lapwing**. They have shown good breeding success here, with numbers increasing annually. **Black-winged Stilt** first nested on the newly-formed islets; about 50 adults were counted and 9 juveniles in late May 1989, only a 2nd UAE breeding record for the species. 1991 counts often exceeded 100 birds in late summer. As many as 5 pairs of **Red-wattled Lapwing** may have nested in the lagoons in 1991.

Such a sprawling site has attracted its fair share of rarities too, with **Red-crested Pochard**, **Ruddy Shelduck**, **Greylag Goose**, **Black Kite**, **Namaqua Dove**, **Pied Kingfisher** (1989-90 & 1990-91) and **Eastern Pied Wheatear** already recorded. An exceptional find in June 1991 was an adult **Sabine's Gull**, the first occurrence of this species in Arabia.

This is truly a site worth visiting at all times of the year, where the birds are easy to observe and surprises often occur.

A selective list of other species found there are as follows:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Black-necked Grebe | Saker Falcon | Saunders' Little Tern | Whinchat |
| Great Cormorant | Spotted Crake | Whiskered Tern | Stonechat |
| Night Heron | Water Rail | White-winged Black Tern | Isabelline Wheatear |
| Little Green Heron | Baillon's Crake | Turtle Dove | Pied Wheatear |
| Western Reef Heron | Coot | Common Swift | Black-eared Wheatear |
| Little Egret | Avocet | Pallid Swift | Song Thrush |
| Great White Egret | Collared Pratincole | Blue-cheeked Bee-eater | Marsh Warbler |
| Grey Heron | Little Ringed Plover | European Bee-eater | Reed Warbler |
| Purple Heron | Pacific Golden Plover | Indian Roller | Clamorous Reed Warbler |
| Glossy Ibis | Sanderling | Hoopoe | Black-crowned Finch Lark |
| Spoonbill | Broad-billed Sandpiper | Sand Martin | Willow Warbler |
| Shelduck | Common Snipe | House Martin | Spotted Flycatcher |
| Wigeon | Black-tailed Godwit | Tawny Pipit | Isabelline Shrike |
| Teal | Whimbrel | Tree Pipit | Great Grey Shrike |
| Mallard | Spotted Redshank | Red-throated Pipit | Woodchat Shrike |
| Garganey | Greenshank | Water Pipit | Brown-necked Raven |
| Shoveler | Terek Sandpiper | Yellow Wagtail | Starling |
| Pochard | Turnstone | Citrine Wagtail | Pied Mynah |
| Marsh Harrier | Red-necked Phalarope | Grey Wagtail | Masked Weaver |
| Pallid Harrier | Sooty Gull | Nightingale | Indian Silverbill |
| Sparrowhawk | Great Black-headed Gull | Bluethroat | |
| Steppe Buzzard | Gull-billed Tern | Black Redstart | |
| Steppe Eagle | Caspian Tern | Redstart | |
| Imperial Eagle | Osprey | | |
| Kestrel | White-cheeked Tern | | |

BREEDING BEHAVIOUR OF ISABELLINE SHRIKE *Lanius isabellinus* IN THE UAE

C.T.Richardson

On the 16th May 1991 I came across a 'pair' of Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus* beside the alfalfa fields at Digdaga (25°38'N, 55°55'E) near Ras al Khaimah in the far north of the Emirates. These birds are normally aggressive away from their breeding grounds, not tolerating any of their own kind in their feeding territory. In this case the male, an exceptionally well marked *phoenicuroides* appeared to be courting the female. Perched a few metres away the male shivered its closed wings and flew to the female sitting on a low branch. They were only inches apart and seemed quite happy to sit there together for several minutes before the female flew off, with the male in quiet pursuit.

Isabelline Shrikes are the most common and familiar migrant shrikes in the Emirates. That is not to say they are well-known, for the variety of forms and plumage often confuse, and the subtle differences between sub-species *isabellinus*, *speculigerus* and *phoenicuroides* are often difficult to tell apart in autumn and winter.

The autumn influx from Iran and Central Soviet Asia commences in the first week of September and 10 or more birds are usually reported at sites around Dubai from October to March. Records show that many females and first-winter birds overwinter in the Northern Emirates although there are few records in the south of the country at this time.

Northbound passage is fairly heavy from March to mid April and by the end of April passage is all but over. There have been less than five May records per year from 1988-91 (though only one record each in 1988 and 1990) and it is worth looking more closely at all of these now.

In 1989 spring passage continued very late for the species with several sightings reported up to 26 May. On 30 June an immature was found in Saffa Park, Dubai (J.Hart *pers comm*). This was the first hint of unusual activity and unfortunately no other details of this event are known.

Isabelline Shrikes sometimes sing on spring passage (although this can not be taken in itself as an indication of breeding). Song is also heard from several other non-breeding species including Nightingale, Bluethroat, and several warblers. However in February 1990 a solitary male shrike was found singing in the same place in Saffa Park on nearly every visit between 8 February and 11 March. It was not seen again after that date, and it was assumed the bird had moved on.

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This note was put together after checking all available records. I am grateful to Jim Hart and John Bannon in particular whose breeding reports are detailed above and to Bob Richardson who provided additional information from the Emirates Natural History Group bird records.

A SELECTION OF ARABIC BIRD NAMES

translated by Assad Fares

Arabic names project

Compiling a list of Arabic names of our bird species is an ongoing project of both the Ornithological Society of the Middle East and the Emirates Natural History Group. The names below represent, as far as can be determined, the classical arabic names of some of our species. Anyone who has any advice on these or who knows of alternative names used by the Beduin or others should please write to the ENHG, P.O. Box 2380, Abu Dhabi.

In addition the *Emirates Bird Report* is compiling a list of literal names, a direct Arabic/English translation, and a column is left free for anyone who is fluent in both languages to translate and insert accordingly. Your contributions will be welcomed at P.O. Box 2825, Dubai. - Ed.

COMMON NAME	ARABIC NAME	LITERAL TRANSLATION
Little Grebe	Algatas Alsageer	viz. 'small diver'
Socotra Cormorant	Grab Albahr Alkabeer	
Night Heron	Grab Allayl	
Grey Heron	Malik Alhazeen Alramadi	
Greater Flamingo	Alnaham Alkabeer	
Teal	Aihazaf Alshaae	
Mallard	Albat Albaree	
Egyptian Vulture	Alrukhma	
Lappet-faced Vulture	Alnisr zu Alezen	
Marsh Harrier	Aldara	
Sparrowhawk	Albashiq	
Buzzard	Oqaib Alsuhool	
Spotted Eagle	Aloqab Alasfaa Alsageer	
Bonelli's Eagle	Oqab Bonely	
Osprey	Aloqab Alnasari	
Kestrel	Alowsak	
Lanner Falcon	Saker Algazal	
Saker Falcon	Alsaker Alhor	
Peregrine Falcon	Alshaheen	
Grey Francolin	Aldraj Alramadi	
Moorhen	Dajaj Alma	
Houbara Bustard	Alhobara Alsharkia	
Black-winged Stilt	Alkarsoo	
Crab Plover	Zakzak Alsaratin	
Stone Curlew	Alkarawan Alsahrawi	
Cream-coloured Courser	Aljaleel	
Kentish Plover.	Alziqzaq Aleskandrani	
Red-wattled Lapwing	Alziqzaq Alhindi	
Little Stint	Aldrajja Alsageera	
Dunlin	Aldrajja Alshaea	
Curlew	Karawan Alma	
Common Sandpiper	Taitawi Alrami Alshaae	
Black-headed Gull	Alnawras Alahmar Alqadmayn	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Alnawras Alsageer Alaswad Aldahr	
Yellow-legged Gull	Alnawras Alasfar Alqadam	
Swift Tern	Alkharshana Alnaem	
Lesser Crested Tern	Abu Qushushi	
White-cheeked Tern	Alkhataf Abu Batin	
Bridled Tern	Alkharshana Almultahi	

Arabic names/continued

COMMON NAME	ARABIC NAME	LITERAL TRANSLATION
Saunders' Little Tern	Alkharshana Alsageer	
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	Alqata Almokhtat	
Collared Dove	Alfakhita	
Palm Dove	Alhamam Aldibsi	
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Albarakeet Alakhdar	
Eagle Owl	Booha	
Pallid Swift	Alsamama Alshaheb	
White-collared Kingfisher	Alqawand	
Little Green Bee-eater	Werwar Akhdar Sageer	
Indian Roller	Alshoqraq Alhindi	
Hoopoe	Hodhod	
Wryneck	Allewaa	
Crested Lark	Alqabra Almutawaja	
Swallow	Alsononoo	
Tawny Pipit	Aljushna Alsafraa	
White Wagtail	Althoera Albaydaa	
White-cheeked Bulbul	Albulbul Aliraqi	
Nightingale	Alandaleeb Alafreeqi	
Bluethroat	Alhazar	
Black Redstart	Alhumairaa Alaswad	
Isabelline Wheatear	Alablaq Alramli	
Blue Rock Thrush	Semna Alsukhoor Alzarkaa	
Song Thrush	Alsemna Almotriba	
Graceful Warbler	Alhazija Alrashiq	
Clamorous Reed Warbler	Hazijat Sakhiba	
Desert Lesser Whitethroat	Hazijat Alsahraa Alkaseera	
Chiffchaff	Saksak Alsharq	
Spotted Flycatcher	Khatif Aldobab Almobaqaa	
Arabian Babbler	Aithorthara Alarabia	
Purple Sunbird	Aakel Alraheen Alorjowani	
Isabelline Shrike	Alnahs Alamgar	
Great Grey Shrike	Alsard Alromadi Alkabeer	
House Crow	Gorab Almanazil	
Common Mynah	Gorab Almynah	
House Sparrow	Alasfoor Almanzili	
Indian Silverbill	Alasfoor Alhindi Alfidhi Almenqar	

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Saed al Awadi translated the original Arabic script into Roman script.