

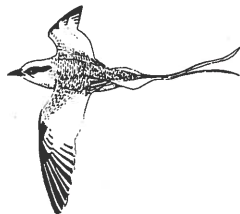
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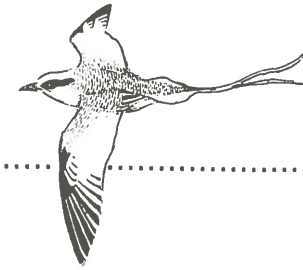


published 1993



full sightings report January-December 1992
Radde's Warbler and White-capped Bunting - UAE firsts
United Arab Emirates revisited by Mike Jennings
Dusky Warbler and Forest Wagtail reports
migration of Lesser Kestrel - survey of Siniyah Island
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Drawings: White-capped Bunting (3), Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse (9), Black-shouldered Kite (16), Chukar (19), White-breasted Waterhen (20), Oriental Pratincole (21), Great Knot (23), Black-bellied Sandgrouse (27), Alpine Swift (29), Buff-bellied Pipit (33), Dusky Warbler (38,51), Brahminy Mynah (40), Red Avadavat (42), Radde's Warbler (53) and Forest Wagtail (58) by Bill Morton.

Additional copies of this and Emirates Bird Reports 15-16 are available from Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, price Dhs.20.00 each (Dhs.30.00 or 6 pounds sterling, overseas including air mail post & package).

*Front cover: Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* at the Emirates golf club on 24th November 1992, a 1st for Arabia (photo, C.Richardson) (See page 21 for more details).*

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EDITORIAL

Another milestone is reached as this, the 17th edition of the *Emirates Bird Report* becomes annual. Incorporating the 1992 Bird Report, this greatly enlarged journal includes many more papers, notes and articles than ever before on all aspects of UAE ornithology, as well as a full checklist of all the interesting birds seen in 1992. For the first time colour plates are also included. Thanks must go to all those contributors who have helped to make this such a bumper edition. Articles, photos, and of course your bird records, are very welcome for the next edition.

It has been another exciting year in the Emirates for birders, who have managed to add a further 10 species to the UAE list, in addition to logging an amazing total of 312 species during the year. The sightings included over 35 vagrants, of which 4 are detailed in this report by their respective observers. Two articles on bird migration are of particular interest, with theories of northbound routes of Lesser Kestrel and Skuas being put forward by Simon Aspinall and John Bannon respectively. Migration routes through and around the Arabian Peninsula are still a mystery and we can only guess as to the effect weather and geographical features have on a bird's choice of route. Indeed, current assumptions of migration routes of many species may be well off the mark. There is already evidence of totally different spring and autumn routes of many (if not most) species as they cross the Arabian peninsula. For example, in the Emirates, regular spring migrants like Common Swift, most wheatears, Rock Thrush, Redstart, warblers, Semi-collared Flycatcher, shrikes and Pale Rock and Yellow-throated Sparrows are almost totally absent in autumn. Conversely Purple Heron, Garganey, most waders, marsh terns, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, Swallows, Tawny Pipit and Rose-coloured Starling are scarce in spring. More work has to be done and observations from all over the Peninsula and beyond should be correlated, enabling a fuller picture to emerge. An ornithological survey of Yemen in spring 1993 will likely provide exciting new information of migration in southern Arabia, while ongoing ringing studies in Oman and Saudi Arabia and a forthcoming book by Tom Nightingale and Mike Hill on the birds of Bahrain will surely add more pieces to the puzzle of migration.

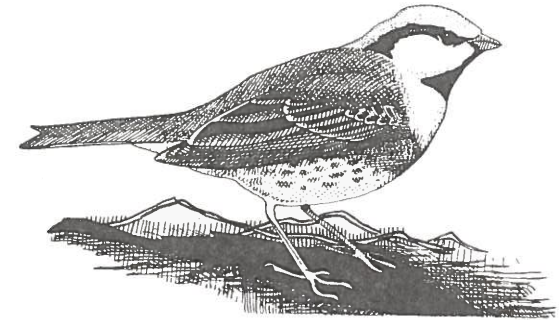
Articles, letters and news items for the 1993 *Emirates Bird report* are gladly welcomed and should be submitted by the end of January 1994. Please send these and all bird records to Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai (tel/fax 04 313378)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The *Emirates Bird Report* could not have been published without the very generous funding of sponsors and the encouragement of Peter Hellyer and the Emirates Natural History Group. I am grateful for their continued support.

WHITE-CAPPED BUNTINGS *Emberiza stewarti* IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES a new bird for Arabia

John K. Bannon &
Colin Richardson



In the late afternoon of 5th November 1992, CR and I arrived at the Emirates golf course, 25 km. south of Dubai, and prepared for our walk around a well-proven route which normally produced up to 30 species at this time of year. Little did we know what birding fireworks were in store for us.

We had only walked 100 metres from the car, when we flushed a small flock of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and Indian Silverbills *Euodice malabarica* feeding on some stands of exotic Fountain grass planted between the immaculately lawned fairways. A dry, rolling 'tiirrit' call, the flash of chestnut rumps and white outer tail feathers set our pulses racing, as 2 other birds flew off with the flock and landed 20 metres away. We were unfamiliar with the species, and each had a different plumage.

One bird, which we presumed to be the male had a very striking head pattern with a blackish line from the lore extending through the eye and curving down behind the ear coverts. It had a black chin and throat extending up the sides of the throat under the ear-coverts. What were we looking at? The even more distinctive cinnamon/chestnut band across the upper belly had to be a clincher for something...but what? Dead Sea Sparrow, Saxaul Sparrow and even a very odd non-yellow Cirl Bunting were mooted and dismissed. The other bird, presumed to be a female or immature resembled a female Ortolan, and we finally concluded we were looking at two buntings. We took notes and made a quick sketch of the male and raced back to the car to consult the bible, *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* (Hollom, et al 1988). Sure enough we had found a male and probably a female **White-capped Bunting** *Emberiza stewarti* although the sketches in *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* showed the head, ear coverts and breast of the male to be far too white, which in the field showed mid-grey.

They remained feeding in the area next morning when 20 slides were taken and the following detailed description was obtained using a 30X Optolyth. When we returned on 7th November, both birds had gone.

DESCRIPTION

Size, structure and jizz: Slightly smaller than accompanying House Sparrows which the male particularly resembled by its head markings. Feeding technique included pulling down individual stems

of long grass and removing the seeds. The female was like a well-marked Oortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* but much smaller. Both birds allowed close approach (5 metres) and only flew when panicked by House Sparrows. The call was only heard in flight when the striking chestnut back of the male and the chestnut rumps and white outer tail feathers of both were very striking.

Male

Head: Crown and nape dirty grey with indistinct streaking. Forehead somewhat paler in tone. Blackish line from the lores widening through the eye to, and curving downwards behind, the ear coverts. Ear coverts mid grey, paler than crown/nape.

Upperparts: Mantle, back and scapulars warm chestnut brown with parallel greyish brown lines of feathers. Rump warm chestnut (reminiscent of Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, but brighter).

Wings: Primaries dark brown, pale fringed; secondaries, mid brown. Tertiaries warm chestnut brown with broad buffish fringes; greater coverts mid brown centres with pale fringed edges; median coverts dark brown centres with distal portions tinged buff; lesser coverts also mid brown with pale buff tips, all contributing to give a triple wing bar effect.

Tail: Broad white-tipped outer feathers to dark brown tail. Uppertail coverts warm chestnut brown.

Underparts: Black chin and throat extending to the breast and under the ear coverts. Mid grey breast with darker streaking. Whiter immediately below the black throat patch giving a pale gorget effect. Rich cinnamon band extending across the upper belly, narrower at the centre and broader at the flanks. Lower belly and undertail coverts buff/grey.

Bare parts: Bill small and fine (for a seedeater), dark horn in colour. Eye appeared all dark. Legs pink/flesh.

Voice: Dry trilling 'tiirrit' call given in flight when flushed.

Female

Head: Crown and nape dirty grey with fine darker grey/brown streaking. Ear coverts all dark brown except for prominent off-white ear 'spot'. Distinctive creamy-white sub-moustachial stripe curving around and under the ear coverts. Mid-brown malar stripe. Indistinct greyish/white supercilium more prominent in front of the eye. Eye appeared all dark with a prominent pale eye ring, which with the sub-moustachial stripe was very like that of 1st-winter Oortolan Bunting.

Upperparts: Mantle dirty grey with dark brown parallel streaking. Scapulars dirty grey, streaked dark brown and chestnut brown. Back and rump warm chestnut. Uppertail coverts warm chestnut with buff fringes.

Wings: Primaries grey/brown pale fringed; secondaries mid brown pale fringed; tertiaries warm brown pale fringed. Greater coverts mid brown with narrow buff fringes. Median coverts dark brown with broad buff fringes.

Tail: Dark brown with prominent white outer tail feathers.

Underparts: Chin whitish, throat off white with fine grey streaking. Breast dirty white with grey streakings; flanks buffish streaked grey/chestnut. Belly and undertail coverts off-white with fainter grey streaking.

Bare parts and voice: As male.

SUMMARY

Although the 2 birds were quite different in plumage in most respects, the similarity in their sizes and structure led us to assume they were of the same species. During the period of our observation they fed and preened together and we have suggested that the female may have been a first winter bird.

Their arrival in late autumn occurred during a period of regular vagrant arrivals in the UAE, caused by a seasonal anticyclone building up from the Caspian Sea to Eastern Siberia, combining with low pressure over the Indian subcontinent. The effective easterly air flow, (which often extends into Western Europe at this time) is one of the reasons for so many vagrants being recorded in the UAE in November.

Their arrival coincided with the discovery of an **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* at the same site on 6th November, while 3 **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* and a **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* (2nd UAE record) were found in the Northern Emirates on the same day.

The grassed fairways, freshwater lakes, trees and scrub of the Emirates Golf Club are the 'Scillies' of the easternmost borders of the Western Palearctic. In addition to White-capped Bunting, 1st records for the UAE have included **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* in November 1989, **Black Bush Chat** *Cercotrichas podobe* in April 1992, **Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus* in August 1992, **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* in October 1992 and an **Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* in November 1992.

White-capped Bunting breeds in the mountains of Afghanistan and Turkestan (Harrison 1982), northern Baluchistan and the western Himalayas (Ali & Ripley 1983). It is a summer breeding visitor to the lower hill slopes of the northern mountain areas of Pakistan (Roberts 1992 and E. Hirschfeld *pers.comm.*) and southern Kazakhstan (Flint *et al* 1984). It is known to winter widely throughout the lower valleys of the mountain ranges of the northern Indian Subcontinent.

Roberts (1992) notes that its wintering range extends westward into Iran although Hollom *et al* (1988) list it only as a vagrant there. Very few records have come out of Iran in the last 13 years so its current status there is unknown. However only the 50 kilometre wide Straits of Hormuz separate Arabia from Iran so more welcome extralimital records like this can be expected in the Emirates in the future.

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NOTES AND NEWS

Colin Richardson

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Commenced in October 1991, with results due for publication in 1993 the Important Bird Areas (IBA's) project is seen as a method of showing everyone concerned, particularly those decision-makers in Arab countries, the importance of maintaining the diversity of our birdlife. At the latest count, the project coordinators BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation, ICBP) had received details of 117 sites throughout the Middle East worthy of IBA designation, including 20 from the UAE.

So far the following UAE sites have been submitted as IBA's:

SITE	CO-ORDINATES	REASONS FOR DESIGNATION
Safa Park, Dubai	25°11'N, 55°15'E	Old records of Corncrake and Sociable Plover (globally threatened species), Bittern and Great Snipe (regionally threatened species).
Khor Dubai, Dubai	25°12'N, 55°20'E	Exceptionally high numbers of Kentish Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plover and Greater Sand Plover (1% of Middle East population).
Fish farm, Dubai	25°12'N, 55°18'E	Important migrant refuelling site. Old records of Imperial Eagle (globally threatened), Indian Pond Heron and Lesser Spotted Eagle (regionally threatened), Striated Scops Owl, Menetries' Warbler and Hume's Lesser Whitethroat (restricted world range) Breeding Night Heron and Reed Warbler (UAE's only nest site)
Emirates golf club, Dubai	25°08'N, 55°10'E	Migrant trap, 1st UAE records include Oriental Pratincole, White-throated Bee-eater, Black Bush Chat, Radde's Warbler and White-capped Bunting. Exceptionally good cross-section of migrants also recorded.
Mushrif Park, Dubai	25°14'N, 55°25'E	Nesting Hoopoe, Rufous Bush Chat, Yellow-throated Sparrow and probably Bruce's Scops Owl. Important wooded area of <i>Prosopis cineraria</i> (Ghaf tree)
Garnavn Island, Abu Dhabi	24°56'N, 52°51'E	Important breeding colonies of Red-billed Tropicbird, Sooty Gull, Swift Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Bridled Tern and White-cheeked Tern.
Yasat Islands, Abu Dhabi	24°15'N, 52°00'E	Important breeding colonies of Socotra Cormorant, White-cheeked Tern and Bridled Tern.
Jazirat Ghasha, Abu Dhabi	24°25'N, 52°39'E	Important breeding colonies of Socotra Cormorant, Lesser Crested Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Bridled Tern and Saunders' Tern.
Umm Qaser, Abu Dhabi	24°20'N, 52°45'E	Large breeding colonies of Bridled Tern and Lesser Crested Tern.
Umm al Kirkum, Abu Dhabi	24°23'N, 52°46'E	Important breeding colonies of White-cheeked Tern and Lesser Crested Tern.

Jebel Hafit, Abu Dhabi	24°05'N, 55°45'E	Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Lappet-faced Vulture and Barbary Falcon (regionally threatened). Hooded Wheatear and Hume's Wheatear (restricted range).
Abu al Abyadh, Abu Dhabi	24°15'N, 53°50'E	Important Crab Plover breeding site.
Ras Ghanada, Abu Dhabi	24°50'N, 54°45'E	Prime desert habitat, ungrazed. Residents include Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Black-crowned Finch Lark. In winter Desert Wheatear and Desert Warbler. Possible breeding Lesser Short-toed Lark.
Ramtha tip, Sharjah	25°22'N, 55°27'E	Large colony of Black-winged Stilts. Significant numbers of non-breeding Western Reef Heron, Greater Flamingo and Saunders' Tern. Rarities include Ruddy Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, White-breasted Waterhen, Purple Gallinule, White-tailed Plover, Sabine's Gull, White-breasted Kingfisher and Pied Kingfisher.
Khor Kalba, Sharjah	25°00'N, 56°20'E	White-collared Kingfisher (threatened), Booted Warbler (only UAE nest site) and Indian Pond Heron (only regular winter site)
Garn Nazwa, Sharjah	24°59'N, 55°40'E	Important nest site of Long-legged Buzzard and Eagle Owl. Winter habitat of Red-tailed Wheatear and Eastern Pied Wheatear (restricted range species).
Sinayah Is., UAQ	25°38'N, 55°40'E	Important colony of Socotra Cormorant. Lesser Short-toed Lark may breed. Turtle nest site.
Hamraniyah fields, RAK	25°40'N, 55°55'E	White Stork, Black-winged Kite, Lesser Kestrel, and Sociable Plover (regionally threatened). Breeding species include Bruce's Scops Owl, European Bee-eater, Quail (?), European Roller, Starling, Spanish Sparrow and Corn Bunting.
Dibba, Musandam	25°38'N, 56°15'E	Mixture of habitats. Seabirds recorded include, Audubon's Shearwater, Socotra Cormorant, Sooty Gull and endemic terns. Sooty Falcon, Lesser Kestrel, Red-tailed Wheatear and Eastern Pied Wheatear seen on gravel plain.
Masafi-Tayibah area	25°20'N, 56°10'E	Typical mountain habitat. Eastern Pied Wheatear, Hume's Wheatear, Upcher's Warbler, Plain Leaf Warbler, Pale Rock Sparrow (all restricted range species).

It is intended to prepare submissions for a number of other sites including Khor al Beidah (major wintering site for Crab Plovers), Al Ghar/Al Wathba lakes (breeding Greater Flamingo) and parts of Baynunah (one of few regular winter sites for Houbara Bustard and only known breeding grounds in UAE of Bar-tailed Desert Lark).

ASIAN WATERFOWL CENSUS

There was no organised UAE waterfowl census in 1993. However selective counts were made at several sites and the results were submitted to the International Waterfowl Research Bureau for inclusion in their census report. A summary of the highlights at each site follows:

Khor Dubai: 620 Mallard, 267 Greater Flamingo and 31 Spoonbill on 7.1.93. (c.70 Broad-billed Sandpipers were seen here on 25.12.92).

Zabeel Water Treatment Plant: 8 Black-necked Grebe, 54 Great Cormorant,

17 Night Heron, 21 Great White Egret, 5 Little Egret and a Purple Heron on 7.1.93.

Ramtha Tip, Sharjah: 68 Shoveler, 3 Ferruginous Duck, 24 Whiskered Tern and 4 White-winged Black Tern on 8.1.93 (51 Black-necked Grebe were counted here on 27.12.92).

Khor al Beidah: 510 Crab Plover, 128 Oystercatcher, 1124 Lesser Sand Plover, 620 Bar-tailed Godwit, 95 Turnstone, 95 Terek Sandpiper, 21 Great Knot and 22 Gull-billed Tern, were the results of the best counts on 8.1.93 and 20.1.93.

Khor Kalba: 2 Little Egret, 1 Little Green Heron, 2 Indian Pond Heron, 8 Great Black-headed Gull, 4 Lesser Crested Tern and 5 White-collared Kingfisher.

Al Jazeerah Khor: 30 Great Cormorant, 16 Spoonbill, 200 Slender-billed Gulls, 6 swift tern and 50 Sandwich Terns were there on 2.1.93.

Bahrani & Futaisi Islands: 500 Socotra Cormorant, 8 Great Black-headed Gull, 10 Saunders' Little Tern and 3 Osprey on 7.1.93.

Full details of counts for the UAE and the whole of the Asian region will be published in the 1993 Asian Waterfowl Census later this year. A limited number of copies of the 1992 census report are still available from Colin Richardson.

PALLID SWIFTS AT DUBAI MUSEUM

Extensive structural renovation to the Dubai museum, formerly Dubai Fort, commenced in 1992 raising fears that the Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* colony, numbering several hundred breeding pairs would be lost. The birds which breed in the masonry holes in the walls, are present from November to early July and are a spectacular sight when hundreds of them wheel around the ramparts at dusk. The Municipality Historic Buildings section were made aware of the colony's importance and have agreed to protect the nest sites.

EAGLE OWL PELLETS ANALYSED

A selection of Desert Eagle Owl *Bubo (bubo) ascalaphus* pellets were collected by CR in May 1992 from a nest site near Dubai and sent to the Harrison Zoological Museum for analysis. It was found that the owls had been feeding mainly on Gerbils, small species of *Gerbillus* sp. and larger Sand Rats *Meriones* cf. *crassus*. The mandible of a small lizard was also present. It was not possible to identify the fragmented gerbils to species level. Each pellet's size averaged 70mm x 25mm x 25mm.

A number of pellets of similar size were recovered from an Eagle Owl nest site in the Harrat al Harrah reserve in northern Saudi Arabia in November 1990. They contained no *Gerbillis* remains (in spite of these mammal's abundance in the area). The additional species found in the pellet remains included *Jaculus jaculus* and a number of arachnids, including a scorpion (source OSME *Bulletin* 30).

RECORD NUMBER OF SPECIES RECORDED ON BIRDING TOURS

Birdwatching tour groups are now visiting the Emirates regularly and this has the distinct advantage of adding to our bird records. Tours normally last 2 weeks and take place between October and April, during the best birdwatching season. All sightings are carefully documented and are added to the UAE Central Record. While most groups manage to find over 150 species in the period a record 187 species were logged

between 27 March-8 April 1993 on a tour led by CR and Eckard Moeller. Of the rarities encountered the most interesting were a Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* at the fish farm on 28 March, 2 Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* at Ghalilah on 5 April, 11 Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* at Khor al Beidah on 6 April, a Bruce's Scops Owl *Otus brucei* in Wadi Sumayni on 1 April and 2 Cinereous Buntings *Emberiza cineracea* at Abulle (Omani Wilayat of Mahdah) on 30 March. The buntings are currently being considered by the Oman Bird Records Committee as a possible first record for Oman.

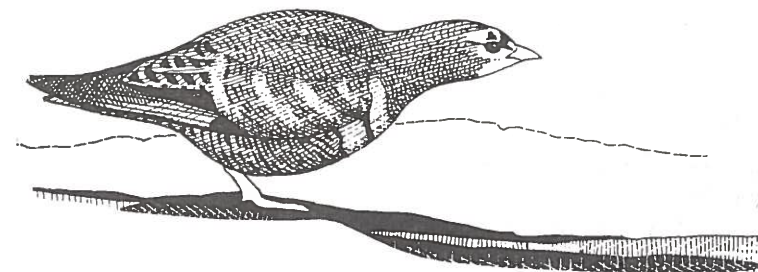
Full trip lists are available from Colin Richardson on request.

WORLD'S LARGEST-EVER BIRDWATCH

BirdLife International are planning a worldwide birdwatch weekend from 9-10 October 1993 in which over 50 countries including the UAE are taking part. Birders in the UAE may wish to contribute to the world count in their own way or take part in an organised World Birdwatch event. An event such as a bird race would benefit the count and be good fun too. Several teams of 2-4 people could take part in a 24 hour race competing with each other to find as many species as possible. If anyone wishes to organise such an event or has any other suggestions please contact Colin Richardson.

THE PROBLEM OF COUNTING LICHTENSTEIN'S SANDGROUSE *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

Eckhard Moeller



In spite of its wide-ranging distribution from Morocco in the west, to Pakistan in the East, there seems not much is known about Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*. The main reason for this lack of knowledge must be the inhospitality to the observer of this sandgrouse's habitat: wadi beds, rocky slopes, narrow rocky valleys or scree and boulders (Cramp 1985). Another reason is their habit of coming to drink only after sundown when it is almost completely dark - contrary to all other species of sandgrouse in the Western Palearctic.

Apparently Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse is not endangered throughout its range. Nevertheless it is important to count the numbers of the birds and to check the size of its local populations. As far as I know, the only place in the world where this sandgrouse is being counted

regularly for many years, is the famous drinking place near Eilat. But to my knowledge, the results of these counts have not been published yet in English.

After about a dozen observations at Eilat and recent experience near Ras al Khaimah, UAE, I would like to make the following proposals for a method of rough counting the number of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse at their drinking places: I have never heard a call from the birds before or when they arrive at the spot - contrary to all other sandgrouse species which you normally can hear over a long distance prior to their landing close to the water. The Lichtenstein's fall out of the sky like stones, suddenly they are there. In the very last fading light of the day you can see them as dark spots on the ground and, with some care, separate males and females, depending on the distance of the birds. Soon after their arriving you can hear their soft 'communication-calls'. Clearly, after many lonely hours on the mountains, they have a lot to tell each other. After their very short drinking, the birds start to leave. Normally it is completely dark now, and impossible to count the starting birds. But I have never noticed birds leaving without their characteristic loud call, a duck-like "ghaghaghaha..." or "krrerwerwerwer..." (Gallagher and Woodcock 1980) or "geg-geg-geg..." (Roberts 1991). This 'departure call' is combined with the loud wing-noise during take-off. When two birds fly off together, there is only one call, perhaps by the male.

Most of my observations were made during March and April. The birds arrive in pairs or small groups and seem to leave in twos, sometimes in small parties. To get a rough estimate of the numbers of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse at a drinking place I would suggest to count the number of 'departure calls' and double it: one call (combined with wing-noise) - two birds. This seems to bring a number of a 'drinking-population' that is apparently on the lower limit of its real size. This method should work at least in spring and summer.

On 4 March 1993, Colin Richardson and I were watching Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse at a large pool in the Wadi Bih near Ras al Khaimah, UAE. With this method we counted about 150 birds coming to drink. A few weeks earlier CR had estimated the number of birds there at about 80.

Any criticisms and suggestions of this method of counting Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse will be greatly appreciated, either to me or to Colin Richardson.

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Eckhard Moeller, Parkstr. 13, 4900, Herford, Germany.

1992 BIRD REPORT



An astonishing 312 species were reported in 1992. This does not include a small number of free-flying escapes which are listed separately at the end of the checklist.

It was an exciting year for birdwatchers, and good for the record books too, with a further 10 species added to the UAE list. It was fitting that Das Island started the year with 4 **Dead Sea Sparrows** on 21st January, at least one of which remained until 3rd April. The island's resident birders Len Reaney and Mike Wood frequently complained about the quantity of birdlife, but rarely about the quality! On the 22nd January a **Wattled Starling** turned up at Zabeel in Dubai; a long-awaited record for the UAE in view of its nomadic tendencies from a range which includes Oman and Yemen. The exceptionally cold winter weather in central and southern Turkey did its bit again and pushed in 6 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, which reached landfall on Abu al Abyadh island on the 9th February. From the other direction (Saudi Arabia perhaps?) a **Black Bush Robin** arrived on 15th April at the Emirates golf course (a site featured 5 times for UAE firsts in 1992!). This bird was on the local birdline immediately and Bob Richardson managed to tick it off before it disappeared on 19th April. The slack summer months were brightened up by 2 new nesting species for the country. **Night Heron** and **Reed Warbler** both produced young between June and August at Dubai's fish farm, almost duplicating the previous year at Riyadh, where, in July both species were found nesting in Arabia for the first time (see page 59). A definite trend it seems.

Then **Wood pigeons** started arriving, as the UAE's first 2 flew over the Emirates golf course on 22nd August. Another was found on Das Island on 2nd December and stayed for 3 weeks. Unique weather patterns over central and eastern Asia combined with the main passage of a number of eastern migrant species, contributing to a 'silly season' for rarities from mid October. First to be found was a **Radde's Warbler** at the golf club on 19th October (note on page 53). By coincidence, the country's first **Dusky Warbler** occurred in Safa Park on the same date 2 years previously! A few days later at the golf course John Bannon and I had a real surprise on 5th November when we stumbled on 2 **White-capped Buntings**, astonishing vagrants from the Western Himalayan foothills. This species had been recorded wintering in eastern Iran, but this was its first known occurrence in Arabia (see article on page 3). A week later, on 12th November, a **White-breasted Waterhen** was the star at Ramtha tip, where it remained very elusive throughout the winter months. Only determination by one or two observers in later weeks brought the bird into the open again. Visiting Swedish '300 club' member Christian Cederroth used his tripod to locate it in the thick reeds and by chance nearly knocked it unconscious!

The next surprise was a very unseasonal pratincole at the Emirates golf course from 23-27th November which had some of us foxed. A combination of short, dark wings with some red on the underwing coverts, but no discernable white trailing edges did not fit any pratincoles in my experience. Photographs were quickly despatched to *Birding World*, whose Simon Harrap confirmed it as an **Oriental Pratincole**, minus its primaries! A first record for the UAE, Arabia and the Middle East. In the meantime a stream of rarities had passed through the Emirates, including a **Woodcock** on Das Island on 2nd October (6th Record) and a **Rustic Bunting** on the 27th (6th Record), 3 **Olive-backed Pipits** in various locations from 29th October-9th November, a **Forest Wagtail** in Abu Dhabi on 30th October (4th Record), a **Black-shouldered Kite** at Hamranyah 6th November-2nd December (2nd Record) and a **Purple Gallinule** at Ramtha from 24th November-2nd December (2nd Record).

Later, in December, Steve James produced a couple of goodies. On the 10th he had a number of us twitching (some to no avail!) a **Dusky Warbler** in Bateen wood (see page 53) and on the 20th he discovered a **Buff-bellied Pipit** at Al Wathba camel track. This latter species, only recently separated from the Water Pipit complex (of the race *japonicus*), is a known wanderer from its Siberian homeland and had been anticipated. Nevertheless this was a first known record on the Arabian Peninsula.

Abu al Abyadh, Abu Dhabi (TB25)
 Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Ajman (VA27)
 Al Ain (VB25)
 Al Bu Khoosh, Abu Dhabi (TA27)
 Al Dhafra airbase, Abu Dhabi (UB25)
 Al Ghar lake, Abu Dhabi (UB25)
 Al Habab, Dubai (VB27)
 Al Rifaa, Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi (UB25)
 Awir, Dubai (VA27)
 Bateen airbase, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Bateen Wood, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Baynunah, Abu Dhabi (SB24)
 Beidha dump, Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Bida Zayed, Abu Dhabi (TB24)
 Bu Asiba, Abu Dhabi (UB23)
 Bu Hasa, Abu Dhabi (TA24)
 Buraimi, Oman (VB25)
 Creek golf course, Dubai (VA27)
 Das Island (SB27)
 Dhabyah, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Dhadnah, East Coast (WA27)
 Daftah, RAK (WA27)
 Dibba, East Coast (WA28)
 Dubai (VA27)
 Eastern lagoon, Abu Dhabi (UA25)

Emirates golf course, Dubai (VA27)
 Falaj al Mualla, Umm al Quwain (VB27)
 Fossil valley (Sayh Huwayyah) (VB25)
 Fujeirah (WA27)
 Ghayathi, Abu Dhabi (SB24)
 Hatta, Dubai (WA26)
 Jazeerat Shuwayhat, Abu Dhabi (SA25)
 Jebel Ali, Dubai (VA27)
 Jebel Ali hotel, Dubai (VA26)
 Jebel Dhanna, Abu Dhabi (SB25)
 Khalidiyah spit, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Khasab, Musandam (WA29)
 Khatmat Malaha, East Coast (WA26)
 Khor al Beidah, Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Khor Dubai, Dubai (VA27)
 Khor Fakkan, East Coast (WA27)
 Khor Kalba, East Coast (WA27)
 Khor Khan, Sharjah (VA27)
 Liwa, Abu Dhabi (TB23)
 Mirfa, Abu Dhabi (TA25)
 Mussafah, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Mushref Pal.gardens, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Mushrif Park, Dubai (VA27)
 Qarnayn Island (SB26)
 Qarn Nazwa, Sharjah (VB26)
 Ramtha tip, Sharjah (VA27)
 Ras Ghanada, Abu Dhabi (UA25)

Remah, Abu Dhabi (VA25)
 Rugheilat Farm, Fujeirah (WA27)
 Ruwais, Abu Dhabi (SB25)
 Ruwayyah, Dubai (VA27)
 Safa Park, Dubai (VA27)
 Sharjah (VA27)
 Shuwaib, Abu Dhabi (VB26)
 Shuwayhat, Abu Dhabi (SA25)
 Sila, Abu Dhabi (RB25)
 Siniyah Island, Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Suweihan, Abu Dhabi (VA25)
 Tarif, Abu Dhabi (TB25)
 Tayibah, Fujeirah (WA27)
 Thumayriyah, Abu Dhabi (TA25)
 Umm al Kirkum (SB25)
 Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Umm Shaif, Abu Dhabi (TA27)
 Wadi Fay, Hatta (WA26)
 Wadi Hayl, Fujeirah (WA27)
 Wadi Khabb Shamsi, Musandam (WA28)
 Wadi Midfah, Umm al Quwain (VB28)
 Wadi Shawkat, Ras al Khaimah (WA27)
 Wadi Shih, East Coast (WA27)
 Wadi Sumayni, Mahdah, Oman (VB26)
 Western Road, Abu Dhabi (UA25)
 Zabeel Water treat. plant, Dubai (VA27)

CHECKLIST

This is a selective list of all interesting reports received in 1992. The taxonomic order follows that of Voous (1975).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Up to 11 were seen regularly at the Zabeel water treatment plant (fish farm) from Jan to mid Mar, then numbers decreased as pairs nested and others dispersed. A nest with 1 egg was found on 24 Apr, with 3 pairs present and at least 2 nests occupied on 6 May. Recently hatched young were seen regularly from early Jun, with latest single egg in nest found 10 Sep. Up to 16 birds were present from late July to the end of the year. Smaller numbers were seen at other sites including Safa park, including 7 on 27 Jan, and 1 fledgeling was found on 27 Apr. One was at Al Ghar lake from 12 Jan-19 Feb and 4 were at Ayn al Faydah on 29 Dec. New (possible nesting) site was located at Wadi Shih reservoir near Khor Fakkan and held up to 10 birds from mid Aug to the end of the year. 11 were reported at Ramtha tip from 6 Sep, increasing to 14 by 15 Oct.

AUTUMN: First winter migrant was at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon on 6 Oct. Typical numbers, 80 at Khor Dubai on 30 Nov increasing to 280 by 15 Dec.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis*
 c.120 were at Umm al Quwain on 24 Jan, though it was generally scarce near the coast from mid Feb to end Jun. Small numbers were off Das Island mid Feb-late Mar, with 40 there on 26 Feb. There was evidence of a large colony on Umm al Kirkum Is. when visited on 14 May (JADC). Became more common offshore from late July, with 1,000's visible on Siniyah Island colony 2 km from mainland on 16 Oct. A single adult at the fish farm 30 Jul-5 Aug was noteworthy.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

SPRING: Single birds were on Das Is. 2 Apr and at the fish farm and the Emirates golf course on 19 April.
AUTUMN: Individuals were at Ramtha tip on 1 Sep, the fish farm on 4 Oct and at Ramtha on 7 Dec.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Up to 11 were at the fish farm Jan-Feb then smaller numbers were seen from late March. Up to 13 held on at Ramtha tip from Jan to 27 Mar.
 One nest was discovered at the fish farm with four young 25 Aug and a second nest located nearby on 5 Sep with 2 young. 2 young from the first nest died on 5 Sep (CR).
NOTE: This is the first breeding record of this species in the UAE and believed to be only the second known nest site in Arabia (nesting was reported near Riyadh in July 1991).
AUTUMN: Good numbers remained at the fish farm, with up to 45 birds present from Oct-Dec. It was less common elsewhere with individuals recorded on passage from early Oct. A peak of 22 were at Ramtha on 12 Nov.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Up to 40 wintered at Al Ghar lake 5 Jan-19 Feb, with 10 remaining until 24 Mar. 3 were at Ruwais duck pond from 13-20 Feb (NARC) and 10 each overwintered at the fish farm and Ramtha tip, numbers declining from early Mar, until one still remained at the fish farm on 29 Mar. 26 wintered at Sharjah cricket lake, with 9 there on 27 Mar when last seen. One was still at Safa Park on 29 Mar.
AUTUMN: Early migrants were at Ramtha tip on 10 Sep and the Emirates golf course from 19 Oct. There was a winter influx from late Oct, with numbers increasing from late Nov: 18 at Ramtha tip on 27 Nov increased to 54 by the end of the year. Up to 6 were at the fish farm from mid Dec.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

4 were off Dibba on 21 August (CR/AF/TN). One flew over Das Island on 27 Aug and one was in the harbour area on 22 Oct (LR), first known records for Das Island.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

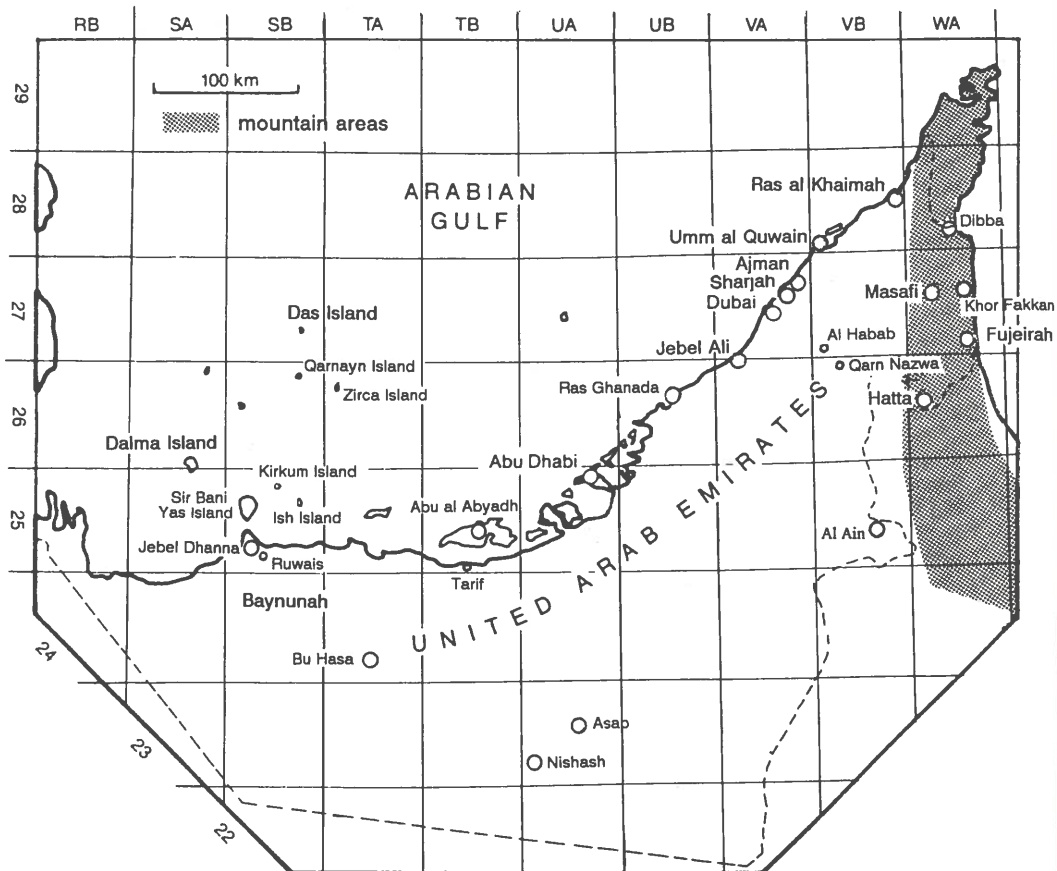
Off Das Island, 2 were seen on 2 June, 4 on 22 Sep, and 2 were there on 2 & 3 Oct (MW)

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Greatest numbers were at Khor Dubai: 363 there 19 January, declining to 5 by 29 March. Some remained at some sites until early May.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

On Das island, where it is rarely recorded one was seen 21 Jan-3 Mar and 29 Aug. Possibly nesting at the fish farm where one was seen March and April and up to 3 were there from mid August to the end of the year. One in the mangroves at Ras al Khaimah 2 Apr, probable nest site. Also reported other sites.



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

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

WINTER/SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf club 2-10 Jan and others were there 19-23 Mar, 5-8 Apr and on 26 Apr. Individuals were on Das Is. on 17 Jan and 5 Apr, in Abu Dhabi 19 Feb & 17 Apr and at the fish farm on 9 Apr & 19-21 April. Two adults were at Ramtha tip on 19 June.

AUTUMN: Singles were reported at Ramtha 21 Aug, 2 Nov, 18 & 27 Dec, on Das Island 30 Aug and at the fish farm on 2 Sep. A report of 2 at Khor Kalba on 5 Nov, requires confirmation to rule out Indian Pond Heron.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

WINTER/SPRING: One probable was at Dhayah mangroves on 7 Feb and up to 8 were at Khor Kalba 29 Feb-1 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to 3 were at Khor Kalba 5-17 Nov and one was there 26 Dec.

***Ardeola* sp.** 5 at Khor Kalba 2 Dec were not identified to species.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

WINTER/SPRING: A flock of 41 were seen in Abu Dhabi 27 Jan-15 Feb, with up to 22 reported there from Jan until last report of 2 on 17 Apr. Up to 17 were in Safa Park, until last sighting of one on 3 May. Several other reports were received of it in several locations, including up to 8 at Rugheilat farm 3 Jan-1 Apr, up to 26 at Sharjah ladies garden 11 Jan-1 Mar and up to 3 at the fish farm Jan to end of Mar. 5 were flying along Fujeirah beach on 1 Apr and 3 were at Umm al Quwain on 4 Apr. AUTUMN/WINTER: One was seen at the fish farm on 2 Oct, with 2 there irregularly from 18 Oct to the end of the year. 2 were in Abu Dhabi from 20 Oct increasing in numbers and peaking at 19 on 30 Dec. Ones and twos were at other sites from Nov.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

Common in groups of up to 10 at most Khors and inshore pools Jan-mid Apr. Up to 30 were at the Eastern lagoon most of the year although scarce (presumably nesting) May to early June. It was abundant at Ramtha tip from July, peaking at 93 on 21 Aug, with numbers remaining around 50 to the end of the year.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

WINTER/SPRING: Scarce early in year: Records include up to 4 on Das Island 14-29 Feb. 3 were at Ramtha on 1 May, and at least 3 were there from 30 Jul to the end of the year, peaking at 17 birds on 27 Nov.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Peak passage was noted Sep-Oct, with up to 29 at Das Is. 6-15 Sep and 17 on 12 Oct. Unusually high numbers reported at the fish farm, with a max. of 11 on 8 Oct, most remaining to the end of the year. (These are the greatest numbers on record). Up to 5 were present at other sites.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

WINTER/SPRING: 36 at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan, and 28 in Abu Dhabi's Eastern Lagoon on 4 Feb, were greatest numbers recorded, with very few from Apr-Aug.

AUTUMN/WINTER: First signs of passage were on 14 Sep when 3 birds were seen at the fish farm. Up to 9 were at the Eastern lagoon from 30 Sep and 13 were near Bateen airport lagoon on 16 Oct. There was a healthy increase in numbers from 11 Nov when 13 were at the fish farm and 25 were at Khor Dubai to the end of the year. A high 28 were at Ramtha on 26 Dec. Smaller numbers were at other sites.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

WINTER/SPRING: 52 were at Khor Dubai on 8 Jan and 72 were there 22 Mar, typical numbers at this site. Smaller numbers were at other sites.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Maximum of 38 were at Khor Dubai on 15 Sep, with 27 at the fish farm 8 Oct and 60 at Ramtha tip on 26 Dec.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

SPRING: Records include singles at Ramtha tip on 9 Feb and at the fish farm 19-21 Apr.

AUTUMN: Individuals were seen at the fish farm from 25 Jul and up to 5 were there 2-19 Sep and 6 flew over on 4 Oct. 2 were on Das Is. 30 Aug and up to 14 were there 6-8 Sep and 3 from 22-30 Sep. 3 were at Ramtha tip on 6 Sep.

Single birds were reported on passage at several other sites including Khor Kalba and the Eastern lagoon from Sep-Dec.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

SPRING: There were interesting sightings of one at Al Ain on 3 Apr and another, (though possibly the same bird) soaring over the plain near Mahdah on 6 Apr.

AUTUMN: There was an influx of birds from mid Sep, including 25 at Al Khazna (Abu Dhabi-Al Ain road) 19 Sep-3 Oct, 3 at Al Habab from 21 Sep-2 Oct, 2 at Al Wathba 22 Sep-16 Oct (which increased to 23 on 18 Oct) and a total of 22 at Hamraniyah (spread over 5 locations) 9-16 Oct. There were one or two single birds at other sites.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

WINTER/SPRING: 2 were at Ramtha tip 12 Jan and one was there from 23 Jan-9 Feb. Up to 2 were in Abu Dhabi 13-17 Feb, 15-22 Mar and on 17 Apr. Another was seen flying over Zabeel on 8 Mar, and it was later found at the nearby fish farm where it remained until 18 Mar.

AUTUMN: 2 were at the fish farm on 19 Sep and 2 at Ramtha tip from 21 Sep, increased to 4 from 1 Oct-12 Nov and 5 on 2 Nov. One was at Al Wathba pools on 9 Oct.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Amongst other interesting discoveries, one was near the Emirates golf course on 5 Feb and another was at Ramtha tip from mid-March to 30 July (CR *et al*).

NOTE: Possible genuine wild birds but as they are commonly in captivity the escape caveat cannot be discounted.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

WINTER/SPRING: Largest numbers were 15 at Al Jazeerah Khor on 5 Feb and 10 at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan, which increased to 20 on 22 Mar. 14 were at Khor al Beidah 1 Apr with smaller numbers at other sites and parties of up to 5 birds locally overwintered.

AUTUMN/WINTER: The one at Ramtha on 30 Jul increased to 6 by 16 Oct and 4 were on Das Is. 6-7 Oct. One was at Khor Dubai 11 Aug, with 23 there 17 Nov and up to 32 there from 9 Dec to end of the year. 22 were at the Eastern lagoon on 23 Dec.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Up to 300 were on the Eastern Lagoon 18 Jan-16 Mar, 245 at Ramtha lake on 20 March and 300 at Al Ghar lake 6 May-30 Jul, largest flocks noted.

647 were at Khor Dubai 22 Mar, 278 on 29 Jul, 623 on 15 Sep and 421 on 30 Nov - these are the lowest numbers reported at Khor Dubai for at least 8 years. The reasons for the decline are not known.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

WINTER: 4 were in Abu Dhabi on 8 Feb. AUTUMN/WINTER: 7, probably this species, flew over Das Island on 15 Oct (MW). One of *rubirostris* race was at Safa Park from 12 Dec to the end of the year.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Up to 4 at Ruwais 13-20 Feb (NARC) were probably feral. 4 seen regularly adjacent to Abu Dhabi's Western road appear to be resident. Hundreds introduced and free-flying

on Abu al Abyadh.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

3 on 17 Aug were a first record for Das Island (LR) and an 8th UAE record. 2 were at Ramtha from 2 Nov increasing to 3 from 24 Nov to end of the year (CR *et al*), 9th UAE record.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

WINTER/SPRING: 3 at Al Ghar Lake from 5 Jan increased steadily to 9 from 19 Feb-5 Mar. Up to 33 were at Ramtha lake 6 Jan-21 Feb and one was at Khor Dubai on 16 Jan. 2 were near Abu Dhabi airport on 6 Mar.

WINTER: Individuals overwintered at the Emirates golf course from 5 Dec, and at Ramtha tip from 18 Dec (2 there on 27 Dec) to end of year.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

WINTER: Small numbers wintering at Khor Dubai, with 17 counted on 25 Jan. Ones and twos were at Ramtha tip, fish farm and Al Ghar Lake from January to late March. A drake was on Das Is. on 26 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at Al Wathba pools on 28 Oct was first autumn record. 7 were in the Khor Dubai area from 30 Nov and one was at the Emirates golf course 3-17 Dec.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A pair were at the Emirates golf course from 3 Dec to the end of the year. Singles were at the fish farm on 12 Dec and at Ramtha tip on 26 Dec.

Teal *Anas crecca*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 45 wintered at the fish farm to early March, decreasing to 2 on 15 Apr, when last seen.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 9 were at Al Wathba prison ponds and one was at the fish farm 22 Sep. It was fairly common from 18 Oct, though no flocks over 50 seen. Smaller numbers were at other sites.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

WINTER/SPRING: 152 were counted at Khor Dubai on 3 Jan, greatest numbers recorded. A pair remained at the Emirates golf course until 15 Jan.

AUTUMN: First migrants recorded were 2 at Ramtha tip on 25 Sep. Locally very common - 750 counted at Khor Dubai 7 Dec and c.300 were found wintering at Ayn al Faidah (Al Ain) on 29 Dec.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

WINTER/SPRING: Largest wintering flock was at Khor Dubai, where 133 were counted on 25 Jan. c.25 were at Ramtha on 7 Feb.

AUTUMN: One was at Ramtha tip on 25 Sep, the first autumn migrant seen. Up to 58 were at Khor Dubai from 17 Nov.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

SPRING: One at Ruwais on 14 Feb (NARC), was first spring record. Up to 10 at Ramtha 20-27 Mar were largest flock and 4 at the fish farm on 1 May was last spring record.

AUTUMN: 3 at the fish farm on 5 Sep were first migrants seen, then fairly common until late October. Maximum of 11 were at Ramtha tip on 25 Sep and 25 were at Al Wathba on 18 Oct. One remained at the golf course until the end of the year.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

WINTER/SPRING: 33 at Al Ghar lake on 10 Jan increased to 62 by 19 Feb. 11 were at Khor Dubai on 10 Jan and up to 88 were at Ramtha tip 17 Jan-14 Feb. Then numbers declined to 5 by 27 Mar, when last recorded. AUTUMN: Up to 12 at Al Wathba 19-22 Sep increased to 30 on 18 Oct and 56 on 9 Nov. 11 were at Ramtha tip on 21 Sep, increasing to 35 by 27 Nov and 80 from 14 Dec to end of the year. Ones & twos were at the Emirates golf course and fish farm from 10 Oct.

An adult Black-shouldered Kite remained at Hamraniyah for 4 weeks from November to early December

**Pochard *Aythya ferina***

WINTER/SPRING: Small numbers wintered at Ramtha, peaking at 14 on 9 Feb. Up to 4 were at Al Ghar Lake 5 Jan-19 Feb and up to 10 were at the fish farm until 7 Mar, then numbers decreased steadily to one on 29 Mar.

WINTER: One was at the fish farm and up to 3 were at Ramtha tip from 7 Dec.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

2 were at Ramtha tip on 19 Feb and one was there on 12 Nov, increasing to 3 from 27 Nov to the end of the year. One was seen at Ayn al Faydah on 29 Dec.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

3 were at Khor Dubai on 3 Jan, 2 at the Emirates golf course 4-22 Jan and 2 at Ramtha tip 23 Jan-11 Feb. One male was at the fish farm 7-16 Nov and another was at Ramtha on 7-18 Dec.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

WINTER/SPRING: In Abu Dhabi one was seen on 17 Jan, 3 on 17 Feb and up to 2 from 26 Mar-4 Apr (RAR). One was at Hamraniyah 5 Feb and 4 were at Al Wathba on 14 Feb (JMH).

AUTUMN/WINTER: Individuals were at Dhabiyah 25 Sep (SJ) and in Abu Dhabi 26 Sep (DR). Up to 3 were in Abu Dhabi 10-22 Dec (SJ/PH) and one was found at Ras al Khaimah on 16 Dec.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

One adult was at Hamraniyah 6 Nov-2 Dec (CR/JKB) - 2nd UAE record.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

WINTER/SPRING: One wintered 1991/2 in Khor Dubai area until last sighting on 9 April. Individuals were also recorded in Ras al Khaimah and Al Ain from late March to early April.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Singles were seen near Abu Dhabi airport 5 Jul and at Hamraniyah on 14 Aug, 11 Sep and 9 Oct, with 2 there on 2 Dec. 2 were in Abu Dhabi 11-30 Oct, while individuals also turned up at Rams on 28 Oct and Al Ain zoo on 16 Nov. 3 birds wintered at Khor Dubai from 30 Nov to end of year.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

2 were reported on Hatta road (Mahdah enclave) on 1 Feb (DH/RH). Unusual for Abu Dhabi island, one was seen in Bateen wood on 7 Mar (NARC). Numbers peaked around Jebel Hafit/Al Ain zoo area, with c.70 on 16 Nov and c.100 from 15-24 Dec.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Single birds of this scarce wintering species were seen at Jebel Mileiha on 28 Feb (JADC), in Wadi Bih on 5 Nov (DR/JMH) and around Jebel Hafit on 15 Dec.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus*

10 appeared at a rubbish dump at Al Hair, north of Al Ain on 20 Feb, making this the largest flock ever recorded in the UAE.

Other individuals were in Wadi Fay/Wadi Sumayni area 1 Feb (DH/RH) (reported as 'Griffon' though more likely to be this species), north of Mahdah (Oman) on 6 April.

NOTE: All the above reports are in Oman territory.

One was on Jebel Hafit 15 Dec.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

WINTER/SPRING: Singles were seen at Al Awir on 3 Jan, Wadi Khabb Shamsi 6 Feb and at Al Kharan on 3 Apr. 2 were in Abu Dhabi 18 Mar and 2 found themselves on Das Is. on 29 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Other individuals were seen at Hamraniyah on 16 Oct, the fish farm on 5 Nov, at Khor al Beidah 18 Nov, near Sharjah airport on 14 Dec and at Wadi Sharm (Mahdah) on 30 Dec.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

WINTER/SPRING: Groups of 6 were in the Khor Dubai area on 8 Jan and 13 at Khor al Beidah on 17 Jan. One male at Hamraniyah on 3 Apr was the last spring record.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Season's first birds were at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon on 8 Sep and at

Rams on 11 Sep. Up to 2 were at Al Habab fields (50 km inland) 21 Sep-5 Nov and other groups included 4 each at the fish farm on 16 Dec and the Eastern lagoon on 23 Dec.

Ones and twos were at Al Wathba, Al Jazeerah Khor, Al Riffa, Dhayah and Ramtha tip.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

SPRING: A female was reported at Al Wathba on 19 Mar (JADC) and 30 Mar (RQ).

AUTUMN: One female was seen at the Eastern lagoon on 18 Sep (IP) and a male was on Das Island on 24 Sep (MW). One possible was seen at Al Jazeerah Khor on 29 Oct (PS).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 6 were in Hamraniyah fields from 17 Jan-6 Feb. Males were on Abu al Abyadh on 23 Feb and near Haliba, in the southern desert on 31 Jan and 2 were at Liwa 31 Jan-1 Feb. Ones and twos were at Al Wathba and other sites regularly to late March. A female was on Das Is. on 26 Apr and 4 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: The season's first record was one at Al Habab on 12 Sep where ones & twos (including one adult male) were seen, until 3 including one adult male were found on 6 Dec. 3 were at Al Wathba on 22 Sep. Singles were at other sites to the end of the year.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

WINTER/SPRING: One was at Hamraniyah on 24 Jan and one adult male was at Al Ghar lake on 2 Apr (AF/TN).

AUTUMN/WINTER: One male (3rd winter) was at Al Habab 6-18 Aug, and one adult male and 2 females were there 2 Oct (CR et al). 2 were at Al Wathba 19-22 Sep (SJ/IP/DR) with one there 9 Oct and 20 Dec. A 'pair' were at Hamraniyah 2 Dec (CR/JKB et al).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

WINTER/SPRING: Singles overwintered at Bateen Wood, the fish farm and Hamraniyah. Passage evident from late Mar with singles on Das Island 22-23 Mar, at the fish farm on 23 Mar and at Mushrif park on 25 Mar and 9 Apr. Birds were seen at Al Jazeerah Khor on 3 Apr and on Das Is. on 19 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Ones and twos were recorded from 26 Sep to the end of the year at several sites.

(Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo (vulpinus)*

Singles were on Das island and in Abu Dhabi on 9 Oct, at Hamraniyah on 2 Dec and at the Eastern lagoon on 23 Dec.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

WINTER/SPRING: One adult with one young and one egg in nest was found near Liwa 2-3 Jan (G.Feulner), photos confirm. (Others were seen regularly in Liwa and Bu Hasa areas from late Nov-Dec 1991 by the NARC survey team). 2 were on Abu al Abyadh on 21 Feb and one was near Habshan on 9 Mar (NARC). One at the fish farm on 2 Mar was probably a migrant.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Singles were seen at Dhayah on 11 Sep and 3 Nov, Bu Hasa 27 Sep, Qarn Nazwa 13 Oct, Hamranyah on 16 Oct and the fish farm from 22-30 Nov. A displaying pair at Qarn Nazwa on 28 Nov (CR/JKB) was a potential breeding record. An adult was seen hunting at Ayn al Faydah on 29 Dec (CR/NSR).

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 2 wintered in the fish farm/Khor Dubai area, last reported 4 Apr. Up to 2 were at Hamranyah 24 Jan-20 Mar. 2 were seen between Hamranyah and Dhayah on 7 Feb and 3 were at Dhayah 30 Mar. Singles were at Al Ain zoo 14 Feb, at the Eastern lagoon 14-28 Mar and at Al Wathba 21 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at Ramtha tip from 30 July-1 Oct was unusually early, and caused some difficult ID problems due to its moult. Another was being chased by a Bonelli's Eagle near Daftah on 31 July. Recorded in ones & twos from 6 Nov at Hamranyah, Ramtha tip, Khor Dubai, the fish farm and around Al Ain zoo. 2 were at Khor Dubai from 7 Nov, increasing to 3 from 6 Dec.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

WINTER/SPRING: One was at Hamranyah on 17 Jan-6 Feb and 1 May and one rather late bird was near Khor Dubai on 23 May. AUTUMN/WINTER: 3 were at Das Island 19 Sep, and individuals were at Al Dhafra air base 13 Sep, Ramtha tip 27 Oct-2 Nov and on 27 Nov, at Khor Dubai on 30 Nov and at Hamranyah on 2 Dec.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Individuals were at Dhayah on 3 Nov (PS), Khor Kalba 18 Nov (SR) and at Al Ain on 15 Dec.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

An immature was seen c.40 km. NNE of Medinat Zayed on 11 Feb (NARC).

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

WINTER/SPRING: One pale phase bird was at

the fish farm 18 Jan-8 Feb and (probably the same bird) 14 Mar-9 Apr. One was at the Eastern lagoon from 14-18 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Another pale phased individual was recorded on most visits to the fish farm from 5 Nov to the end of the year. Individuals were at Rugheilat farm on 23 Oct and (possibly same bird) at Kalba 5 Nov, at Al Ain zoo on 16 Nov and at Hamranyah on 2 Dec.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

WINTER/SPRING: Singles were seen at Wadi Hayl on 1 Jan, Jebel Buhays, Tayibah and Daftah on 3 Jan, Wadi Khabb Shamsi 6 Feb, Jebel Mileiha on 4 Apr and Jebel Hafit on 1 Mar. 2 were near Al Ain zoo on 14 Feb. All were probably near nest sites. 16-19 birds, believed this species were seen soaring over Jebel Buhays on 13 Jun, awaits confirmation. One was at the fish farm 2 Feb.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Another was at the fish farm 4-5 Oct and an adult was defending territory at Wadi Daftah on 31 Jul. A pair were seen near Masafi village 30 Oct and 18 Dec, and an adult was seen hunting with a Long-legged Buzzard at Ayn al Faydah on 29 Dec.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Noteworthy reports: One was at Thumayriya (TA25), possibly resident, on 23 Jan. One flying over Tayibah plain (700 metres above sea level) in the centre of the Hajar mountains on 31 Mar was unusual. 5 were at the Eastern lagoons on 23 Dec (SJ).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

SPRING: Up to 4 were at Digdaga 1-6 Mar and 11 were there 20 Mar. Singles were on Halaylah Island 20 Mar, and one in Abu Dhabi on 26 Mar increased to 5 on 2 Apr. One was north of Dibba on 2 Apr, 10 were in Fossil valley (Oman) on 6 Apr and one was on beach dunes near Ras al Khaimah 10 Apr. 2 late birds on Das Is. 13-16 May, awaits confirmation.

AUTUMN/WINTER: At least one was at Hamranyah 6 Nov and 21 Dec and singles were in Abu Dhabi 16 Oct, Ain al Faydah 20 Nov and a male was at the Jebel Ali hotel on 2 Dec.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Up to 12 were hunting in a field at Hamranyah from 6 November to the end of the year. Winter visitors arrived in October at regular sites near Dubai.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

One (ssp. *pallidus*) on Abu al Abyadh on 18 Feb (RPM) was the 4th UAE record.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Singles were reported on Das Island 8-11 Sep, while 12 birds were seen in a variety of mainland locations from 15 Sep-1 Nov. Up to 3 were on Das from 20-25 Sep.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

Individuals were on Das Island, on 6 May and 7-17 Oct (MW/LR).

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

One was at Sahil, in the Western Desert on 17 Nov (DR). One large falcon possibly this species was at Hamranyah on 28 May (CR).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

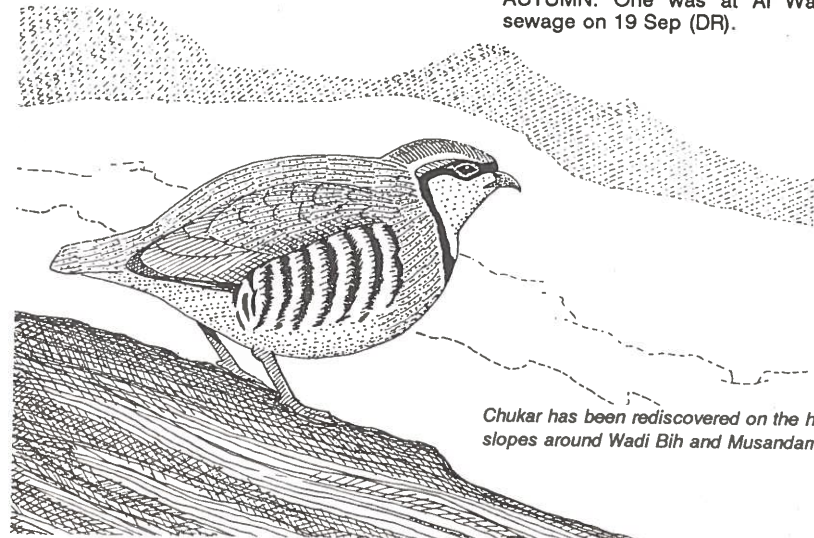
SPRING: An adult was on a pylon 3 km. north of Remah on 13 Mar (NARC).

AUTUMN: An adult was reported near the western side of the mountains on 1 Nov and another was at Khor al Beidah on 17 Nov (SR).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

WINTER/SPRING: Single birds, (all assumed wild) were noted near Khor Fakkan on 3 Jan, in Abu Dhabi 25 Feb, Suweihan 1 Mar and Khor Dubai 29 Mar. One was flying around the summit of Jebel Hafit on 5 Apr and one was on Das Island 23-25 Apr. Another, probably this species was near Rams on 10 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Singles were seen on Das Island 8 Sep and 10 Oct, in Abu Dhabi on 2 Nov, at the fish farm 6 Dec, at Dadnah 14 Dec and at Abulle (near Mahdah) on 29 Dec.●



Chukar has been rediscovered on the higher mountain slopes around Wadi Bih and Musandam

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Found to be numerous at 1,000 metre contour above Wad Bih on 1 Mar (MCJ). 5 were in Wadi Salalah, Musdandam on 11 Mar. 2 adults with 2 young were seen and several heard calling on 19 Jun at 1,000 metres above Wadi Bih (CR/JKB), and 30 were seen there 5 Nov (DR). All these records are in Oman territory.

One was seen on Dhabyah on 25 Jun (DR), probably introduced.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

Young were first seen in Dubai area on 26 March, early for this species. Most were with young from June to early August. 6 were seen at Bid 'al Awamir (Abu Dhabi-Al Ain road, VA25) on 6 Nov, a range extension for this expanding species.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

SPRING: One was at Al Wathba 5-6 Mar. At least 2 were in fields at Digdaga 1 Mar and calling at Hamranyah on 20 Mar-3 Apr and 14 Aug. One was found exhausted at the fish farm on 29 Mar and one was on Das Is. on 5 Apr.

AUTUMN: Singles were seen at Al Wathba on 24 Sep, Das Island 24 Sep and 15 Oct and on Khalidiyah spit, Abu Dhabi on 15 Oct.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* One was heard on 7 Dec (CC) and seen briefly in reeds at Ramtha tip 27 Dec (CR).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

SPRING: Individuals were on pools near Dubai cement works 11 Apr (JKB) and at the fish farm on 6 Apr, 19-20 Apr and 3 May (RAR/CR).

AUTUMN: One was at Al Wathba prison sewage on 19 Sep (DR).

Little Crake *Porzana parva*

A female at the Emirates golf course from 10-19 March (CR) was only the 2nd UAE record while a male at the fish farm 19-21 Apr (RAR/CR), was the 3rd UAE record.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

SPRING: One was seen in Bateen wood on 24 Apr (RAR) and another was on Das Is. on 29 Apr (MW)

White-breasted Waterhen*Amouornis phoenicurus*

One was found at Ramtha tip 12 Nov, which then overwintered until early 1993 (CR/CC/JH) - 1st UAE record.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

At least 4 were heard in the *phragmites* reeds at the fish farm throughout the year and up to 6 were seen 7-13 Nov. A migrant was at the Jebel Ali hotel grounds on 7 May. Small numbers were at other sites, also on passage. Pair with fully grown young were at Ruwais on 4 Nov 1991, and up to 4 were there to mid Feb. Also present and probably breeding at Ramtha and Dhayah.

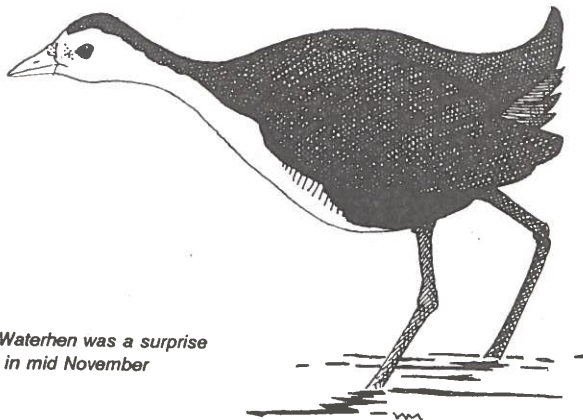
Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio*

A first year bird was at Ramtha tip 24 Nov-2 Dec (SR) - 2nd UAE record.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Up to 26 were at the fish farm until the end of Jan, declining to 4 by 23 Mar and one until 13 Jun. One was at the Emirates golf club until 13 Feb.

AUTUMN: Only 4 wintered at the fish farm from 11 Nov.



A White-breasted Waterhen was a surprise find at Ramtha tip in mid November

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*

One was seen at Liwa and one on Abu al Abyadh in early Jan (M.Verhage per RAR). 3-day old tracks were seen near Ghayathi 16 Feb and one was flushed at 24°49'N, 53°57'E, near Abu al Abyadh on 22 Feb (NARC).

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Maximum of c.200 were at Khor al Beidah 30 Mar otherwise flocks of 50-100 birds were at Khor Dubai and Khor al Beidah from late Jan to Mar. No counts available for autumn. Smaller numbers other sites, including East Coast.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

SPRING: Up to 550 were counted at Al Ghar lake in early Jan, eggs noted April to July, and c.1000, including young were counted there 14-30 Jul. (Colony abandoned in autumn probably due to a decrease in water supply from nearby sewage works).

25 were at a pond near Ain al Faydah 15 Mar (NARC), probable breeding site.

SUMMER/AUTUMN: c.50 were counted at Ramtha tip to mid summer, with at least one on nest on 1 May and young present on 19 Jun. Numbers increased to 134 from 30 Jul to 25 Sep, and further increased to 192 from 9-15 Oct, representing highest count at this site. Numbers dropped to less than 50 by end of the year.

Up to 127 were at Al Wathba prison sewage pools from 24 Sep, decreasing to 38 by end of Dec.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 20 were at Al Ghar lake 5 Jan-5 Mar, with up to 6 remaining from late May to 14 Jul. Up to 4 were at Khor Dubai 3-25 Jan. 2 were at Ramtha tip on 9 Jan and 27 Mar and one was there 7-21 Feb.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Passage was from mid-Sep with 2 at the Emirates golf course 13-14 Sep. One at Ramtha tip on 17 Sep had increased to 5 by 16 Oct. Up to 2 were at Khor Dubai from 9 Dec and up to 5 were reported at Al Wathba prison sewage ponds from 24 Sep to the end of Dec.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

365 were at Khor al Beidah on 23 Jan declining to 112 on 30 Mar and 6 from 1 May-31 Jul. 28 returned on 14 Aug, with counts of 341 on 9 Oct (including 25 immatures) and up to 405 from 17 Nov to the end of Dec.

Up to 89 were at Dhabbiyah 5 Apr-25 Jun which had increased to 101 from 11 Sep-16 Oct. 7 were seen at Das Island on 20 Oct.

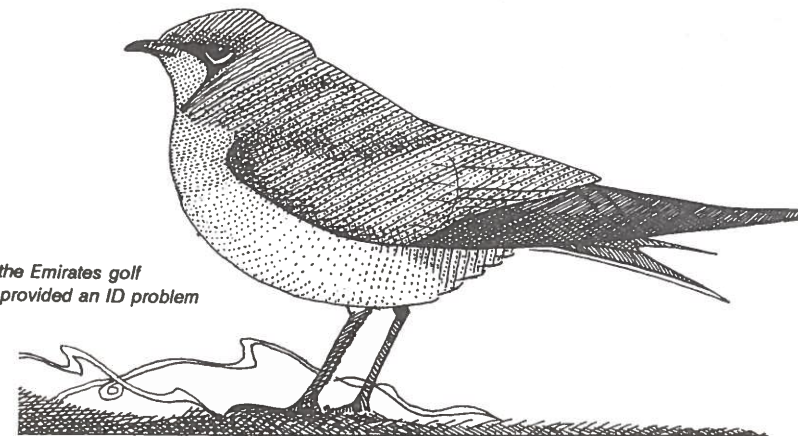
Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

SPRING: Evidence of several birds, including tracks and visual sightings in Western Desert, 17 Feb-15 Mar (NARC). Single birds were seen at Bateen wood 4-7 Mar (with 2 there on 26 Mar), at Khasab, Musandam 11-12 Mar (JADC) and on Das Is. 2-5 Apr (LR).

AUTUMN: One was sitting under a tree near the Jebel Ali Hotel on 18 Sep (CR/JKB), and individuals were on Das Is 24-27 Sep and 29-30 Nov (LR).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

5 remained at the Emirates golf club until 6 Jan. On 10 Jan only 3 remained alive, with one lying dead on the driving range (see note in EBR16: p6). Several sightings and tracks seen north of Suweihan road and between Shuwaihat and Baynunah from 3 Feb-12 Mar,



An Oriental Pratincole at the Emirates golf course in late November provided an ID problem

probable nesting areas. Up to 31 were on Khor Dubai south-east shoreline from 22 May to the end of June and up to 18 were at Ruwayyah pools 1 Jul-18 Aug.

Post-breeding dispersal commenced at the Emirates golf course with one on 17 May and another on 15 Jun. Numbers increased to 6 by late Jul, peaking at 16 on 7 Sep - last sighting was of 4 on 26 Oct.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

SPRING: Individuals were at Al Wathba on 30 Mar, Ramtha 1 Apr, Hamraniyah 1 Apr, Rams 1 Apr and on Das Is. on 23 Apr. Up to 2 were at Ramtha tip late May to mid Jun.

AUTUMN: Singles were seen Al Ghar lake 30 Jul, Hamraniyah 11 Sep, Al Wathba 19 Sep and Eastern lagoon 9 Oct. Up to 6 were at the Emirates golf course 3 Sep-14 Oct, one remaining until 29 Oct. 5 were at Al Wathba from 9-16 Oct.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

One remained at a small sewage pool near the Emirates golf course from 23-27 November (CR/SR/JKB et al) - 1st record for the UAE and Arabia. (Photos confirmed by Simon Harrap).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

SPRING: First migrant was seen at the Emirates golf course on 5 February. Small numbers were at various inland pools until the end of June. 15 were at Safa park's new boating pond on 28 Mar. Nest with one egg found at Ramtha tip on 4 Apr. Post-breeding dispersal evident in June, with 40 at Ramtha on the 19th and 40 at the Creek golf club on 27th.

AUTUMN: Passage numbers swelled to 80 at Ramtha on 30 Jul, with numbers decreasing everywhere by mid Sep. Rare after early Oct, with one still at Ramtha tip on 6 Dec.

1992 Bird Report

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
500 were at Khor Dubai on 25 January. Uncommon late Apr to mid Aug. 41 at the Emirates golf course 27 Nov.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
3490 counted at Khor Dubai on 25 January, and 500 at Al Ghar lake 12 Jan, represent good mid-winter numbers at these sites. Nest with 3 eggs (2-4 eggs normal) found at Umm al Quwain on 4 April. c.300 birds including young at Ramtha tip 19 Jun and c.2000 birds at Al Ghar lake on 14 Jul.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
WINTER/SPRING: 500 at Khor al Beidah on 23 Jan and 3500 counted at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan. c.400 were at Ajman inshore roost on 1 May.
AUTUMN: 170 at Khor al Beidah on 31 Jul and c.2000 at Khor Dubai on 30 Nov were noteworthy.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
WINTER/SPRING: c.500 were at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan during mid-winter count. c.200 at Khor al Beidah on 30 Mar and 24 at Khor Kalba on 12 Jun, were noteworthy numbers. AUTUMN: Most seen together were c.50 at Khor al Beidah on 31 Jul, up to 45 at Dhabyah most visits Sep-Dec, c.50 at Khor Dubai on 25 Dec, with smaller numbers at other times and at other sites.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*
SPRING: 6 males, 4 females were near Khor al Beidah on 28 Feb (JKB/RPM) and one was at Al Wathba on 29 Feb (RAR). 3 were at Al Wathba on 27 Mar (J.A.D.Chapman)

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*
2 were at the Abu Dhabi horse race track on 17 Dec and at Al Wathba 27 Dec (SJ/JMH).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
WINTER/SPRING: Up to 28 were at the Emirates golf club from Jan to early Apr, then numbers declined to c.10 by early May. Up to 9 were at Al Wathba 10 Jan-14 Feb, 15 were in Safa park on 28 Mar, 60 were at Khor Dubai 12 Apr and 9 were seen on passage at pools opposite Dubai cement works on 7 May. 14 at the golf course on 8 May, was the latest spring record.
Smaller numbers were at the Eastern lagoon, Al Ghar lake, Ain al Faydah, Ruwais, Abu al Abyadh, Ramtha and the fish farm.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at Shuwaihat on 31 Jul was earliest report. Return passage was from 24 Aug, when 6 were found at the Emirates golf course, though few other records until October.
Greatest flocks seen were 15 at Kalba on 5 Nov, up to 45 at Khor Dubai from 17 Nov to end of the year and up to 17 at the golf course from 23 Nov.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
c.1000 were counted at Khor Dubai on 25 January.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Hoplopterus indicus*
Reported on each visit to Digdaga/Hamraniyah fields, with a maximum of 23 there on 24 Jan. Breeding sites include Shuwaihat, 2 there on 4 Apr, calling heard at Al Habab on 4 Jun, 3 young at Al Ruwaibi farm near Awir on 2 Jun, one in Wadi Shauwkat on 5 June, 5 at Hayl dump, Fujeirah on 26 Jun and 2 agitated birds were at Ruwayyah on 1 Jul. One at Mushrif park on 25 Mar may have been from nearby Al Ruwaibi farm.
Greatest autumn flocks: up to 16 were at Ramtha tip from 21 Aug to Dec, and up to 43 birds were around the Hamraniyah fodder fields on each visit from 4 Sep to the end of the year.
Out of its normal range, 2 were seen at Abu Dhabi's Eastern lagoon on 18 Sep.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*
3 were at Hamraniyah 24 Jan-28 Feb (IA/JA/JKB/CR), the 5th UAE record.
3 returned to the same Hamraniyah location from 6 Nov to the end of the year, the 6th UAE record (JKB/CR)

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*
WINTER/SPRING: Up to two wintered at Ramtha tip 1 Jan-5 Feb and one was at Ruwais 18 Feb.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Individuals were seen at the Emirates golf course 7 & 27 Sep, with 2 there on 14 Oct. One was at the fish farm on 15 Oct and 2 were at Ramtha tip from 27 Nov-14 Dec.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
One was near Abu Dhabi airport until 31 Jan (PH) and one was in a field at Hamraniyah on 2 Dec (CR/JKB).
1991 RECORDS: Singles were at Ruwais 16 Nov and at Al Ain on 25 Dec (NARC)

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*
Up to 70 were at Khor al Beidah 30-31 Mar (AF/TN/CR). 21 were at Khor al Beidah on 18 Nov (JK/MS), 37 from 17-18 Dec and a peak of 90 were there on 26 Dec (AH/AN).
1991 RECORD: 4, probably this species were seen near Sila on 3 Nov 1991 (S.M.Baha El-Din per NARC)

Sanderling *Calidris alba*
WINTER/SPRING: 10 in Khor Dubai on 25 Jan was noteworthy. Up to 30 were at Dhabyah most visits, with 100 on 5 Apr, and 40 were flying along Fujeirah beach on 1 Apr. 20 were near Umm al Quwain breakwater on 4 Apr. c.100 were at Ajman roost on 1 May. Smaller numbers were noted at other coastal sites.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*
2 were seen at Al Wathba prison pools on 22 Sep (SJ), the 5th UAE record.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
1500 at Al Ghar lake 24 Mar, were healthy numbers.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
WINTER/SPRING: 6 were at Dibba on 3 Jan, with smaller numbers noted at other suitable sites to mid Feb. One at Ramtha tip on 1 May was the latest spring sighting.
AUTUMN/WINTER: One was at the fish farm on 20 Aug, increasing to a 'flock' of 5 on 14 Sep. Common from mid-Sep, becoming scarce everywhere from mid-Oct-Nov. Up to 3 were at Ramtha tip most visits in Dec, with 8 there on 26 Dec.

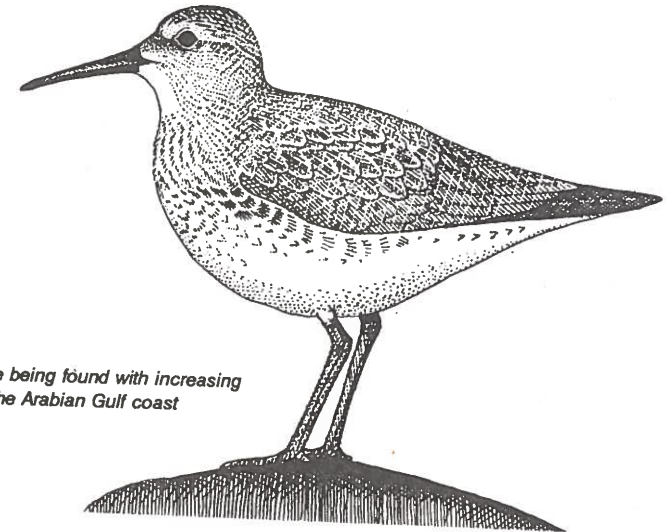
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
Scarce in winter, with 14 at creek golf club on 12 Jan and only 2 at Khor Dubai on 25 January (during Asian Waterfowl Census). Passage noted on 1 May with c.150 at Ramtha tip.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
4700 at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan, were very high numbers.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*
WINTER: 392 were counted at Khor Dubai on 10 Jan increasing to 570 on 25th.
AUTUMN/WINTER: 277 were at Khor Dubai on 15 Sep and c.200 there on 25 Dec. A peak of 31 birds were at Abu Dhabi's eastern lagoon on 30 Sep. Scarce elsewhere.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
WINTER/SPRING: Most were recorded at Al Ghar lake with up to 70 from Jan-mid-Feb and 200 on 5 Mar. Up to 30 were at Ramtha tip Jan-Apr. 48 were at Ramtha and c.20 were at Ajman on 1 May.
AUTUMN: 2 were at Al Ghar lake 30 Jul, with maximum flocks of up to 30 at Ramtha tip 12 Aug to end of Dec, 20 at the Emirates golf course 13 Sep and 60 at Al Wathba prison pools 24 Sep-9 Nov.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus*
WINTER/SPRING: Single birds were at the Emirates golf club on 4 Jan, at Ramtha tip 6 Jan and 19 & 28 Feb and at the fish farm 29 Feb.
AUTUMN: Individuals were seen at the fish farm on 20 Sep and at Ramtha tip on 27 Nov.



Great Knot are being found with increasing regularity on the Arabian Gulf coast

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

WINTER/SPRING: Of the extraordinary numbers of snipes of 4 species at the Emirates golf course from Jan-Apr, up to 20 of this species were counted in Jan, peaking at 24 on 6 Mar, with four still present on 30 Mar. AUTUMN/WINTER: First bird in autumn was at the fish farm on 8 Sep. Up to 8 were at Al Wathba prison pools from 19 Sep and up to 16 were at the Emirates golf course from 19 Oct to the end of December.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*

WINTER: One was on the green at Jebel Ali village and another was at the Emirates golf course on most visits from 2 Jan-13 Feb, with 2 there on 13 Jan. AUTUMN: One was seen at the golf course from 22-27 Sep.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

WINTER/SPRING: 3 arrived at the Emirates golf club on 4 Jan, with more recorded on each visit until a peak of 12 were present on 8 Apr. 2 remained there until last recorded on 26 Apr (CR *et al*). Singles were also reported at Jebel Ali village from 21 Jan-8 Apr (CR *et al*), at the Hatta Fort hotel on 6 Apr (DK *et al*) and opposite Dubai cement works pools 23 Feb-11 Apr (JKB).

AUTUMN/WINTER: 2 birds were found at Hamraniyah on 14 Aug and another on 2 Dec (CR). One arrived at the Emirates golf course on 3 Sep, with up to 2 there from 27 Sep, 3 from 19 Oct, 4 from 5 Dec increasing to 7 on 27 Dec (CR). One was in Mushref Palace gardens 23-14 Sep (DR/SJ).

(These recent regular reports suggests that all snipes should be looked at more closely in the future!).

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

One was found on Das Island on 2 Oct (MW), the 6th UAE record.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

WINTER/SPRING: An exceptional 102 were counted at Khor Dubai on 10 Jan. Otherwise fairly uncommon with only ones and twos reported at coastal mudflats and inshore roosts. One at Ajman roost on 31 Mar, was latest spring record.

AUTUMN: 18 were on the Eastern lagoon on 18 Sep, 220 counted at Khor Dubai on 30 Nov (CR) and c.100 there on 15 Dec, are exceptional numbers.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

WINTER: 1300 at Khor al Beidah on 23 Jan

and 1000 at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan were noteworthy numbers.

AUTUMN: 82 at Khor Dubai on 29 Jul increasing to 500 by 11 Aug, typical of autumn passage.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

SPRING: Recorded at Eastern Lagoon, Das Is, Khor al Beidah, Ras al Khaimah and Khor Dubai, maximum 15 together.

AUTUMN: Autumn passage greater, with 25 at Khor al Beidah on 31 Jul-9 Oct and a peak of 40 at the Eastern lagoon on 8 Sep. 6 were on extended passage stopover at the Emirates golf club 3 Aug-13 Sep.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Regular in most khors, occasionally at inland fields, scarce from May to mid July. One identified as *orientalis* by length of bill at Khor Dubai on 31 Oct (PS)

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

WINTER/SPRING: Ones & twos were at Ramtha tip Jan-1 May and one was in Abu Dhabi on 25 Feb.

AUTUMN: 2 were at Ramtha on 17 Sep, with singles at Al Wathba on 16 Oct and at Ramtha on 27 Dec.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Flocks include 350 at Khor al Beidah on 23 Jan and c.1000 at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

WINTER/SPRING: 2 were at Al Ghar lake 12 Jan-19 Feb, one was near Bateen airbase on 6 Mar, 3 on Eastern lagoon 18 Feb and up to 5 were there 31 Mar-25 Apr, with one remaining until 31 May. Singles were seen at Ramtha tip, Ruwais, pools opposite Dubai cement works and at Ajman roost from Jan-early May.

AUTUMN: 3 were seen at Ramtha tip on 6 Sep, 9 were at the Eastern lagoon 18 Sep and up to 3 were at Al Wathba prison pools 19-22 Sep. At least 16 other birds were reported from a number of locations including the Emirates golf course, Al Jazeera Khor and Khor al Beidah mid Sep-mid Dec.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

20 at Khor al Beidah on 23 Jan and 38 at Dhabyah on 11 Sep were the greatest flocks recorded.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

WINTER/SPRING: Records include, 7 at

Ramtha tip on 12 Jan, otherwise singles in Jan and Feb. Passage noted from early March, with 5 near Ain al Faydah on 15 Mar, 4 at Ramtha on 27 March and occasional records until late April.

AUTUMN: 2 at Bu Hasa 26 Jul and 3 at Ramtha tip on 30 Jul were first autumn records, with up to 5 at several sites until 11 Sep. Mostly single birds from October to the end of the year. 3 at Ramtha tip on 15 Oct and 3 at the fish farm on 5 Nov were noteworthy.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

WINTER/SPRING: One was at the fish farm on 3 Jan. 10 were near Ain al Faydah on 15 Mar, otherwise generally scarce (no Dubai records) until mid Apr when 2 were at the fish farm on 20th. No spring reports after 24 Apr.

AUTUMN: Single birds at freshwater sites from 10 Aug, becoming more common and widespread from 17 Sep, with 3 at several sites including the fish farm, Al Wathba, the Eastern lagoon from mid Sep and up to 10 at Ramtha tip from 28 Sep-15 Oct. Less common to the end of the year. 2 were at Ramtha on 27 Dec.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

WINTER/SPRING: 45 were at Khor Dubai on 25 Jan while c.50 were seen at Khor al Beidah on 31 Mar. An exceptional 400 were found amongst hundreds of other migrant waders at an inland pool near Ajman on 1 May.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

WINTER/SPRING: 82 were at Khor Dubai during mid-winter count on 25 Jan. Passage noted on 1 May with 38 at Sharjah (cricket stadium) lake and c.50 at Ajman pool. AUTUMN: 50 were at Dhabyah on 11 Sep.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

WINTER: Up to 6 were at Al Ghar lake from 1 Jan-7 Feb, unusual in mid winter. SPRING: One at the Creek golf course on 17 Mar was the first spring record. At least 40 were seen off the Ras al Khaimah coast on 1 May.

AUTUMN: First autumn records were 7 were at Al Ghar lake on 30 Jul and 2 at the Dubai Creek golf club on 1 Aug. Up to 5 were at the Emirates golf club 3-17 Sep, with one remaining until 22 Oct. Up to 4 were at Al Wathba prison pools 24 Sep-9 Oct, one remaining until 16 Oct and one was at Bu Hasa on 14 Oct. Single birds other sites.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

WINTER/SPRING: 5 were reported offshore Abu Dhabi 31 Jan and another was off the Corniche on 29 Feb. At least 3 were harassing terns off Sharjah on 9 Feb and 2 were seen off Halaylah island (near Dhayah) on 1 May. AUTUMN/WINTER: One was off Kalba on 30 Oct and up to 3 were there daily 5-18 Dec. One was off Dibba 3 Dec.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

WINTER: On 6 Jan, 3 were off Jumeirah beach and 2 were off Khor Khan, Sharjah. 4 were seen off the Ras al Khaimah coast on 20 Mar and another was there on 1 May. 2 were seen off Fujeirah beach on 1 Apr, 2 were off Khor Kalba on 2 Apr and 7 were off Jazirat Halaylah on 10 Apr. One was seen at Das Is. 2 Jun.

AUTUMN: Singles were seen at Das Island 29 Sep, 2 Oct and 4 Dec. 2 adults were at Kalba on 30 Oct and 5 were there 2-4 Dec.

Skua sp. Some skuas seen in January, late March and early April were not identified to species.

NOTE: These skua records represent only a fraction of the birds that must occur off our shores. Experienced volunteers are urged to keep a regular seawatch!

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*

WINTER/SPRING: About 60 per day each were around Al Bu Khoosh and Umm Shaif offshore oilfields (Abu Dhabi, square TA27) in January. Average 40 birds per day were around Das Island Jan-Feb, 30 per day in March and 50 per day in May. Otherwise on the mainland coast, ones & twos were seen in Jan and Feb, with 8 at Halaylah Island on 20 Mar and 27 on 10 Apr. Common on East Coast from late March.

AUTUMN: Single birds were off Gulf coast (and at Creek golf course) late July to mid Sep. Approx. 20 per day seen off Das Island Sep-Oct. Only reported East Coast (and Das Island) after October.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 20 were seen around Zakum oilfield installations 5-22 Jan and 32 were at Ras Gharab 10 Jan. Greatest flocks during period were of 28 at Halaylah island on 27 Feb and 21 at Dibba on 29 Feb. Regular on Das Island, peaking at 7 on 11 Mar. One at Fujeirah on 1 Apr was latest spring sighting. WINTER: Single birds were along Arabian Gulf coast from 2 Dec and in Khor Dubai from 10 Dec.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

WINTER: 19,200 were counted at Khor Dubai on 19 Jan during peak mid-winter count. A daily roost of over 7,000 were of pest-proportion at the Dubai Creek golf club in mid-Feb.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

WINTER-SUMMER: Noteworthy records: 332 were at Khor Dubai on 17 Jan, while 100 overwintered there on 20 Jun. 760 were at Al Jazeerah Khor on 24 Jan.

AUTUMN-WINTER: Up to 280 were at Ramtha lagoons 17 Sep-16 Oct and 724 were counted at Al Jazeerah Khor on 2 Dec.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

A noteworthy 4,400 were at Dhayah on 7 Feb and c.6,000 were at the Creek golf club on 4 Mar.

Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*

Records include 2 at Sharjah 17 Nov (SR). Singles were at the Eastern lagoon 23 Dec and at Al Wathba pools 27 Dec (JMH). 2 were at Ramtha tip 26 Dec (SJ).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

WINTER/SPRING: Common Jan, though mainly sheltered khors and creeks from Feb to early May. Absent in June.

AUTUMN: Becoming fairly common from late July, with 13 recorded at the fish farm on 23 Aug. Up to 65 were at Khor al Beidah roost 9-16 Oct.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

One at Jazirat Shuwayhat on 24 Jan was behaving as if nesting nearby. 39 at Khor Dubai on 3 Jan with 22 there on 26 Dec, were highest flocks recorded. There were smaller numbers other sites, including at Dhabyah and Eastern lagoon.

Small numbers were present throughout the year at Khor Dubai.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*

WINTER/SPRING: 12 were on Das Island on 6 Jan and 16 Feb. Ones & twos were reported from the East Coast and Musandam during Jan, with numbers increasing inside the Gulf from mid Mar. Small numbers were on Umm al Kirkum Is. on 14 May.

AUTUMN: Rarely recorded inshore from Apr to early Jul (offshore breeding period), but adults and young found on beaches from late Jul. Greatest flock, 63 at Halaylah Is on 11 Sep. Scarce Oct-Dec, mostly at Dibba and Kalba.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

WINTER/SPRING: Small numbers wintering on East Coast. Up to 12 on Das Island mid Jan (similar numbers in May in spite of nearby summer colony on Qarnayn Island). c.30 at Khor Kalba on 3 Jan and 1 Apr. Smaller numbers off Umm al Quwain mid to late Jan, and at Halaylah Is. in mid March.

Large number reported on scrapes at Umm al Kirkum Is. 14 May.

AUTUMN: 127 at Umm al Quwain beach roost on 31 Jul and c.100 at Halaylah Is. on 11 Sep. c.30 at Dibba 2-4 Dec and 3 at Kalba on 18 Dec, otherwise scarce in December.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Most regular tern inshore. c.1500 at Halaylah Is. on 20 Mar, greatest flock recorded. c.150 over-summering in Dubai area from late Jun to mid Aug.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

WINTER/SPRING: One was at the Creek golf club on 26 Jan. 24 were on the beach at Jazirat Halaylah on 10 Apr, all dark-billed with characteristics of *longipennis* race (JB/SA). Smaller numbers other sites late Mar to Apr. AUTUMN: Small numbers were reported on passage from 8 Sep, including 19 at the fish farm on 10 Sep, 19 in a mixed tern roost at Halaylah Is. on 11 Sep and 10 at Ramtha tip 21 Sep.

WINTER: One was seen on Sadiyat Island (Abu Dhabi) 27 Nov and 2 were at Dibba on 3 Dec.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*

Small numbers were at Khor Kalba on 3 Jan. SPRING: No East Coast records until one at Khor Kalba on 1 Apr. c.400 medium-sized terns at Al Jazeerah Khor roost 1 Apr. c.250 were at Jazirat Halaylah on 10 Apr and 12 were there on 1 May.

SUMMER: Large numbers reported on scrapes (no eggs) at Umm al Kirkum Island on 14 May. 76 nests, containing 110 eggs and 19 chicks, on Das Island 25 June 1991.

AUTUMN: c.350, including 3 very young birds were at Umm al Quwain beach on 31 Jul, probably bred nearby. c.500 were at Halaylah on 11 Sep. It was very common along coasts until November with 100 at Dhabyah on 12 Nov. 6 on Das Island 4 Dec and one 1st year bird at Kalba on 7 Dec.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

SPRING: c.50 were off Jazirat Halaylah on 10 Apr. Up to 20 most days on Das Is. from 9 May, increasing to 30 on 31 May.

AUTUMN: 5 were seen at dawn at Dibba on 21 Aug. 10 were seen at Das Island most days Sep-Oct.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

8 reported near Abu Dhabi 16 Mar (NARC).

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*

WINTER: c.20 were at the Eastern Lagoon and c.25 were offshore Abu Dhabi on 28 Jan, otherwise small numbers were present in Jan. SPRING: c.50 on Halaylah beach on 20 Mar was first indication of migrants.

SUMMER/AUTUMN: Scarce May-Jun while nesting, with post-breeding dispersal to inshore sites from Jul. 72 were at Ramtha tip on 30 Jul, increasing to 272 on 21 Sep, becoming uncommon from late Oct. 1200 were at Dhabyah on 12 Nov, exceptional numbers and confirmation requested.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Up to 2 were at the Creek golf club 1-12 Jan, 3 on 17 Mar, with 4 there on 13 May and up to 8 from 6 Jun-24 Jul.

SPRING-WINTER: Greatest numbers were at Ramtha tip where c.4 overwintered from 20 Mar, increasing to 14 by 21 Aug and 30 by 27 Nov, with high numbers remaining to mid Dec. c.70 reported there on 26 Dec, requires confirmation. Smaller numbers were at other sites including Safa Park and the fish farm.

White-winged Black Tern

Chlidonias leucopterus

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 4 were at Al Ghar lake 10 Jan to late May. One was at the Creek golf course from 6 Jan, increasing to 4 on 26

Jan and up to 7 were there on 24 Jul. 2 were at Ramtha tip 23 Jan-7 Feb with up to 5 there 5 Mar, 1 May and 19 Jun.

AUTUMN: Numbers increased steadily from 2 on 29 Aug to 16 on 25 Sep, remaining steady until decline in numbers in mid Dec. Smaller numbers at other sites.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse

Pterocles lichtensteinii

Recorded at Masafi, in Wadi Bih, on Ras al Jebel (Musandam), Huwaylat, Hatta, in Wadi Daftah and in Wadi Shawkah, maximum 7 together. Seen in all months, though no nests found.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse

Pterocles exustus

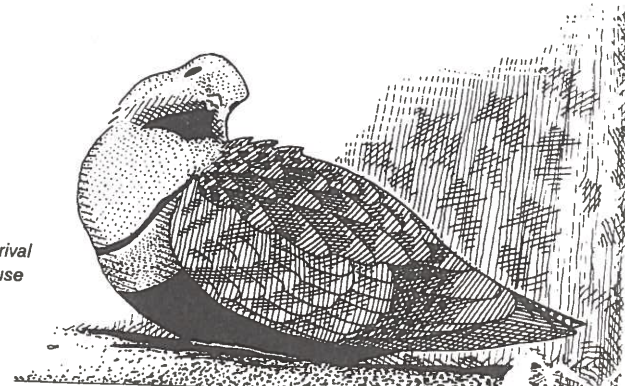
Small groups, maximum 9 together, seen over Khor Kalba on 2 Jan, 12 Jun and 2-4 Dec. 10 were at Ruwais pool 27 Jul and 15 at Mirfa 28 Jul (DR). Regular at Ras Ghanada including 13 on 28 Aug. Small numbers came to drink at pool near Emirates golf course from 13 Nov, peaking at 77 birds on 27 Nov. Up to 20 regular at Al Wathba with 125 there 16 Oct. (This species normally comes to drink early-mid morning).

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

3 males and 3 females were found on Abu al Abyadh on 9 Feb (R.P. Morris), 1st accepted record (subject to review of possible old 'escapee' records).

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

2 flew over the Emirates golf course on 22 Aug (AF/TN) and one was on Das Island 2-22 Dec (MW/LR) - 1st and 2nd UAE records.



Cold weather in Turkey forced the February arrival on Abu al Abyadh of 6 Black-bellied Sandgrouse

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

One found dead on the road near Ghiathy 14 Feb (NARC), would be a SW extension of range.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

SPRING: 2 very early birds were on Das Island 14-15 Mar, confirmation requested. 2 at Ras Ghanada on 2 Apr was first mainland record. Max. flock on passage, were 10 at the Emirates golf course on 19 Apr. Passage continued to mid May, and up to 3 remained on Das Is. until 26 May. 19 at Digdaga/Hamraniyah, pairing and courtship noted 10 Apr. SUMMER/AUTUMN: 3 were at Shuwaib on 1 Jul and one was at Al Habab on 27 Jul. 80 juveniles and 5 adults seen on wires at Hamraniyah on 14 Aug and 2 were there on 11 Sep. September passage thin and localised.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

At least 3 at Wigan 5-8 Feb (VB24), 7 at Bida Zayed (TB24) on 13 Mar and 6 at Ras Ghanada (UB26) on 28 Aug are extensions of its known range. 620 were counted in Abu Dhabi on 5 Nov (SJ).

1991 RECORDS: Reported by NARC survey team regularly at Remah, Ruwais and Liwa late Oct-Dec 1991.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

Seen and heard in Zabeel area of Dubai throughout the year, with 5 seen on 6 May. Small numbers free-flying at Mushrif Park on 25 Mar and 26 Dec. Young seen and heard near breeding site at Zabeel, Dubai late March. Regular in Abu Dhabi, including 10 on 11 Feb.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

SPRING: One was heard calling for 1 hour above Wadi Bih on 1 Mar (MCJ/RPM) and 2 were heard in the same area on 5 Mar (RAR). One was heard in the morning of 6 Mar (CL) and at least 2 were calling on 20 Mar on the high plateau above entrance to Wadi Bih over 20 km from previous site (JKB/CR), adding evidence to their breeding status throughout the area.

Individuals were at the Emirates golf course 13-14 Feb and 30 Mar, at the fish farm on 19 Apr and 2 were in Bateen wood on 20 Apr.

AUTUMN: One was at the Emirates golf club 10 Sep. 2 (possible juvs) brown-phase were in a field at Hamraniyah on 6 Nov, unusually late.

Note: Most likely host species is *Scrub Warbler* which is an abundant resident of the

mountain plateaux.

Further details on the Cuckoos of Musandam can be read in *Phoenix* 9:4-5.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

One was sitting in a tree in Dubai College compound from 6-7 Jan (CR/JKB).

Bruce's Scops Owl *Otus brucei*

SPRING: One, possibly two were heard calling near the head of Wadi Bih on 29 Mar (MCJ/RPM) and on 5 Mar (RAR). One was at the fish farm 31 Mar (RAR) and one was seen at roost in a ghaf tree at Hamraniyah 1 May (CR/JB).

Scops sp. One not identified to species was flushed from a tree at Rugheilat farm on 21 Aug (CR/AF/TN). One was seen near Bateen wood on 18 Nov (PH).

Scops Owl *Otus scops*

SPRING: One was seen at roost in Mushrif Park on 9 Apr (S.Aspinall)
AUTUMN: One was caught on Das Island on 5 Nov (LR)

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

One flushed from palm grove near Wigan at night 9 Feb, and several pellets found (NARC), extension of known range (VB24). Reported at Qarn Nazwa on each visit, including 4 on 30 Apr. One was seen near Khasab 11 Mar (JADC) and 2 were in Fossil valley 1 May (DR *et al*)

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One dead bird was found on road at Digdaga on 27 Jan. Other single birds were in Wadi Bih on 1 Mar, at Khasab 12 Mar, at Qarn Nazwa on 9 Apr (2 on 18 Jun), at Masafi 14 May, at Idhn on 16 Oct and on Jebel Hafit on 20 Nov.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

WINTER/SPRING: One was on Das Island 9-12 Jan, last seen heading south towards Qarnayn Is. (LR) and another was found there on 2 Apr. One was flushed north of Suweihan road 27 Feb (NARC).

WINTER: One was seen at Khor Dubai on 3 Dec (CC).

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

16 birds were confirmed. SPRING: Singles were seen at Habshan (after dusk) 8 Mar, near Dubai Trade Centre on 27 Apr and 10-11 May, at the Emirates golf course on 30 Apr and 8/17 May, on Das Is. and Bateen wood on 1

May and at the Jebel Ali hotel 8 May. 2 were at the fish farm on 3 May. Up to 3 were in Jebel Ali industrial area approx. 6-20 May, although one died on 23 May when it hit a wire.

AUTUMN: Singles were on Das Island on 21 Sep and in Abu Dhabi on 19 Oct.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

SPRING: Individuals of this interesting species were in Bateen Wood 7 Mar (DR) and on 25 Apr (RAR), while one was seen near CR's garden most evenings 30 Apr-3 May (CR/JKB).

Nightjar sp. One nightjar sp. was at Al Habab on 28 Apr.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

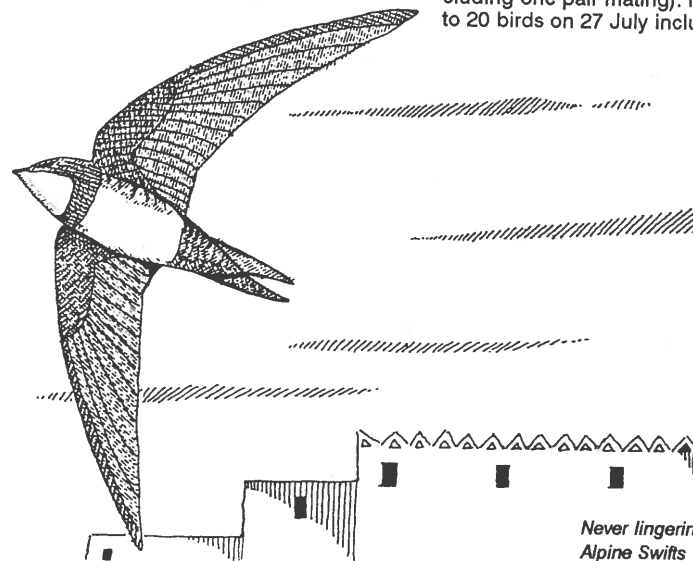
SPRING: First spring migrants seen on 1 Mar, last seen 13 May.
AUTUMN: Rare, only ones & twos in September.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Common from Jan-Jun. None after 7 July. One fledgeling was rescued from ground at Dubai museum on 30 Mar, during intense colony activity (c.200 pairs)

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

One was seen between Remah and Suweihan 13 Mar (NARC), 4th UAE record. Individuals were seen at Al Dhafra airbase (near Abu Dhabi) on 12 Sep (IP) and at Rashidiyah market (Dubai) on 13 Sep (ST), 5th and 6th UAE records.



Never lingering long, only three Alpine Swifts were seen in 1992

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

One was seen flying over Das Island 1-2 Mar (MW), 5th UAE record.

White-breasted Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis

One was at Ramtha tip from 30 Aug to the end of the year (JH *et al*), a 2nd UAE record.

White-collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*

Several seen on most visits to Khor Kalba; greatest numbers seen, 7 on 12 June.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Last spring record. one at the fish farm on 9 Apr, with first in autumn on 5 Sep.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

Widespread. Very common from late Aug, including up to 100 regularly counted in one field at Hamraniyah on 11 Sep-9 Oct. Individuals were seen on Das Island on 28 Apr, during passage of other bee-eaters, and again on 25 Sep (MW), noteworthy.

1991 RECORDS: One or two pairs present at Remah, plus 19 on one date late Oct-Dec 1991 (NARC), extension of range.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

SPRING: 6 were at Khor Kalba on 12 Mar, first spring record and 30 were there on 14 May. Brief passage noted from 26-31 Mar, including 17 at Tayibah on 31 Mar. 10 were on passage on Das Is. on 28 Apr.

New breeding records from Al Habab, where up to 12 birds were present from 21 May (including one pair mating). Numbers increased to 20 birds on 27 July including 11 juveniles.

AUTUMN: Earliest autumn passage, 3 at the fish farm on 29 Jul and 4 at Ramtha on 30 Jul. Numbers at fish farm peaked at 60 on 19 Aug, many remaining until 30 Sep. Very common in Dubai, Al Habab, East Coast cultivations and Hamraniyah throughout Aug and Sep, with peak of 50 at Al Habab on 6 Aug and 40 in Safa Park on 7 Sep. Fewer October and last records include 6 flying north over the Emirates golf course on 29 Oct.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

SPRING: Up to 18 daily on Das Island from 22-28 Mar and 7 from 23-29 Apr. Other sightings of flocks included 32 at Hatta on 6 Apr and 30 at Khorfakkan on 24 Apr. Records at Hamraniyah include 2 on 3 Apr, 97 on 10 Apr (including 30 at Digdaga, and c.50 at nearby Idhn), with 19 on 19 Jun, nesting in old wells near cultivations.

AUTUMN: 10 were at the fish farm on 19 Aug, first signs of passage which continued until late September, peaking at 55 at the fish farm on 24th. Fewer at other sites. One remained at the Emirates golf course until 17 Dec, the UAE's first December record of this species.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*

SPRING: Earliest individuals were at Jebel Dhanna 20 Apr and in Abu Dhabi 28 Apr. Up to 3 were on Das Is. 28-30 Apr, one remaining until 31 May. One was in the Dubai area 3 and 8 May. Up to 4 were at Bu Hasa over the period. At Digdaga where nesting is suspected, single birds were present on 19 Jun and 14 Aug.

AUTUMN: Healthy passage was reported from Sep to 23 Oct with ones & twos found at Al Habab, Das Island, Abu Dhabi, Hamraniyah and the Emirates golf course where up to 4 were together from 14 Sep-14 Oct. 4 were reported at Mirfa on 28 Sep.

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

One was on Das Island throughout Jan and others were there on 29 Apr and 18 Oct. One was disturbed from a tree hole in Hamraniyah on 3 Apr and the nest contained 3 eggs. 76 were counted in Hamraniyah area on 14 Aug, with 37 in one field on 11 Sep, and a peak of 100 were in the area on 9 Oct. 1991 **RECORD:** Individual seen at Liwa 29 Nov-1 Dec 1991 (NARC) apparent range extension.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

SPRING: First migrant noted on Das Island 24 Jan. Largest numbers reported, 16 at Jebel Dhanna on 21 Feb and at Hamraniyah, 14 on

17 Jan, 24 on 28 May and 29 on 14 Aug (including 18 in one tree). Passage mid Feb-Apr, with single stragglers to early May and single birds in late Jul at the Emirates golf course and the fish farm.

Breeding behaviour noted, with calling heard at Dibba (an extension of range) on 29 Feb, individuals seen carrying food at Al Habab on 21 Mar and 7 Apr and at Hamraniyah on 3 Apr. 2 were in a nest hole at Khatmat Malaha on 1 Apr.

AUTUMN: Passage from 5 Aug, peaking early-mid Sep, with 13 at the golf course on 3 Sep and 7 on Jebel Ali village green on 18 Sep. Groups of up to 4 overwintering (or resident) at the golf course, Safa Park, Mushrif Park, Al Habab and Hamraniyah.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

SPRING: Singles seen on the East Coast 29 Feb, at the Emirates golf course on 23 Mar & 30 Mar, at Zabeel on 23-24 Mar and 9 Apr, and near Dubai's Hyatt Regency hotel on 10 Apr. Up to 2 were on Das Is. 2-16 Apr.

AUTUMN: 10 birds were recorded from 5 Sep-18 Oct, mostly at the Emirates golf course and Abu Dhabi's Bateen wood, plus 2 in CR's garden 2 and 18 Oct. Late individuals were at the fish farm 27 Nov and 19 Dec.

Black-crowned Finch Lark

Eremopterix nigriceps

WINTER/SPRING: 10+ were at Bu Asiba (UB23) on 31 Jan, confirmed range extension. 10 were opposite Dubai cement factory 10 Jan and 18 were at Qarn Mulayh 31 Jan. Birds were singing on Jazirat Halaylah (WA28) 7 Feb, very early and also singing near Bateen airbase, AD island, 21 Apr, extensions of known range.

SUMMER-WINTER: Post-breeding numbers included 120 at Ruwayyah pools 1 Jul and up to 200 at the Emirates golf club 24 Jul-7 Aug. Difficult to find them anywhere from October except Madam Plain and Al Wathba where it is apparently regular in winter.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*

3 were seen at Shuwaihat (SB25) 24°01'N, 52°35'E on 13 Feb, then a flock of 17 were found with males in song east of Ghayathi road (SB24) on 15 Feb, **1st breeding record for the UAE.** Small numbers seen most days until 5 Mar (NARC). See *Emirates Bird Report* 16:3-4.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

2 were found at Jazirat Shuwayhat (SA25) on 24 Jan, noteworthy range extension, and at 15



Plate 1. Top left, adult male Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* at Jazirat Halaylah, 5th April 1993. (H.G.Hoess)
Plate 2. Above, Bruce's Scops Owl *Otus brucei* in Wadi Sumayni, Wilayat of Mahdah, 1st April 1993. (H.G.Hoess)
Plate 3. Left, an immature Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* at Ramtha tip, Sharjah, 6th April 1993. (H.G.Hoess)
Plates 4 & 5. Below left, Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* and juvenile (right) at Ruwayyah, 2nd June 1993. (C.Richardso

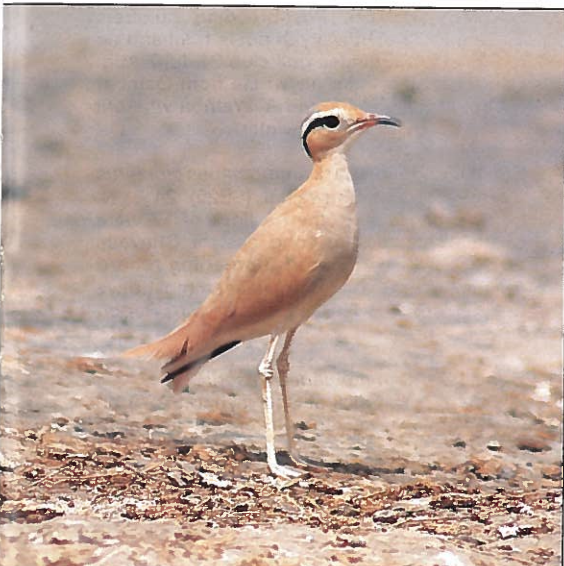




Plate 6. Top, Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* with features of eastern race *longipennis* at Umm al Quwain, 25th April 1993. (C.Richardson)
Plate 7. Above, immature White-cheeked Tern *S.repressa* (left) and Common Tern *S.hirundo* at Umm al Quwain on 11th June 1993, showing noticeable size difference. (C.Richardson)
Plate 8. Below, adult Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi* at Umm al Quwain, 25th April 1993. (C.Richardson)
Plate 9. Main picture right, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* at nest hole at Hamranyah, 19th April 1991. (J.A.D. Chapman)





Plate 10. Above, Pintail Snipes *Gallinago stenura* at the Emirates golf course, Dubai, 29th January 1992. (C.Richardson)

Plate 11. Below left, Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* at Al Jazeerah Khor, 5th April 1993. (H.G.Hoess)

Plate 12. Below right, Black Bush Chat *Cercotrichas podobe* at the Emirates golf course, 19th April 1992, its first appearance in the United Arab Emirates. (C.Richardson)

Plate 13. Bottom, a pair of White-capped Buntings *Emberiza stewarti* at the Emirates golf course, 6th November 1992, the first record for the UAE and Arabia. (C.Richardson). See article on page 3.



km west of Jebel Dhanna where a small population appears to be resident.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

Up to 8 recorded at sites including Emirates golf course, Jebel Mileiha dunes, Al Habab plain, Khor al Beidah, Ras Ghanada and southern desert areas, with 12 seen at Al Ghar lake on 1 Jul (DR). 4 adults and 3 juvs. seen near Khor Dubai 23 May. Individuals were on Das Island 24 Sep, 10-11 Oct and on 15 Nov.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

One was at Al Wathba from 30 Dec (1991) until 24 Jan, then numbers increased to 5 on 29 Feb (several observers).

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

SPRING: Large numbers were present at Al Wathba from 10 Jan-2 Apr, peaking at 250-450 (reports vary) from late Feb-mid Mar. One very 'rufous morph' was there on 28 Mar. Up to 17 were on Das Island 13-19 Jan with smaller numbers from mid Feb to Mar at other sites including Abu al Abyadh. Up to 3 remained there late until 30 May, reportedly nest prospecting; details awaited. One was at Halaylah Is. 7 Feb and 10 were there 20 Mar. AUTUMN/WINTER: Good passage, flocks seen at Al Habab 12 Sep-13 Oct, peaking at 50 on 21 Sep. Numbers at Al Wathba from 22 Sep, peaking at 110 on 3 Nov, with 23 still there on 20 Dec. Other flocks included 35 at the Emirates golf club on 22 Sep and 20 on Madam plain on 23 Oct. Smaller numbers at other sites mid-Sep to early Nov.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

SPRING: One was at Jebel Ali village 22 Jan and a flock of 130 were at Khor al Beidah 23 Jan. Seen at Al Wathba from 10 Jan-27 Mar with up to 50 there all Feb and 5 were at Ras Ghanada on 2 Apr. Up to 7 were on Das Is. 16 Feb-2 Apr. c.80 were 40 km. NNE of Medinat Zayed 11 Feb and 93 were at Baynunah on 16 Feb. Smaller numbers other sites. AUTUMN/WINTER: 3 were on Das Island 1-3 Oct, one from 21-22 Nov and 4 were there 6-18 Dec.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

One was on Das Island 6/7 Jan and 23 Apr. Birds were near Bateen airbase, AD Island from 24 Apr, with 2 adults and 4 young noted on 3 July.

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

SPRING: One was found on Das Island 16 Feb, where it remained until 11 Mar (LR/MW),

3rd UAE record. 2 were seen on Abu al Abyadh on 18-20 Feb (RPM/JKB/NARC), **4th UAE record.** 2 were at Al Wathba camel race track on 19-27 Mar (RAR/JADC/LG), **5th UAE record.** One seen at Dubai's Creek golf course 13 May, under review.

WINTER: One was at Ramtha tip on 7 Dec (CC), **6th UAE record.**

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

WINTER/SPRING: 50 overwintered at Al Wathba to mid Feb with 8 remaining to 5 Mar. Up to 40 were at Al Wathba until 29 Feb, with 2 found there 27 Mar. Up to 10 overwintered at Jebel Ali village green until 29 Jan and 2 were at the EGC until 6 Jan. At least 10 were at Al Habab until 19 Feb, one remaining until 21 Mar. Smaller numbers were at other sites. 2 unusually late birds were on Das Island on 24 Apr, require confirmation.

AUTUMN: One rather early migrant was on Das Island 21-22 Sep, confirmation sought. First winter arrivals were 4 at Al Habab on 3 Nov, with greatest number of 19 seen at Al Wathba on 7 Dec. Small wintering flocks (max.5 birds) were at Hamraniyah, Beidah dump, Das Island and Safa Park.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

WINTER/SPRING: 50 at Eastern Lagoon on 12 Jan, 60 at Al Ghar lake on 8 Feb and 24 Mar, and 62 at Al Wathba on 27 Mar (same flock?) were noteworthy records. First signs of passage elsewhere was of 2 at the EGC on 23 Mar.

Otherwise generally scarce, with very few reports of more than one or two birds until late May. One was at the EGC on 23 Jun.

AUTUMN: Common from 21 Aug-9 Oct, maximum of 50 at the Emirates golf club 17 Sep and 50 at Al Wathba on 11 Dec, where most overwintered.

Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta*

One was flying around Dubai Trade Centre 25 Jan and nest building noted at Dubai airport on 8 Feb (PA). Also in Dubai, one was at the Al Mulla Plaza on 16 Oct (CR). Noteworthy additions to distribution and range extension for this species.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

SPRING: One was near Zabeel on 22 Feb (JKB) and 2 were seen on Das Is. 16 Apr (LR/MW).

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 25 were at Al Ghar lake most days Jan-Feb and 21 at nearby Al

Wathba on 27 Mar. Ones and twos at other sites in January, with a trickle of passage in mid Feb and from 3 Mar to late May, seldom more than 10 per day seen. Single birds noted from late June to early August.

AUTUMN: Passage started 16 Aug, peaking in Sep, when c.1,500 came to evening roost at Ramtha reedbeds 17-25 Sep. 500 were at Al Wathba fodder fields on 19 Sep, with up to 200 there late Sep to 16 Oct and up to 80 from late Oct-mid Dec, including one of red-bellied *tytleri* race on 3 Nov:

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

SPRING: One was at Mirfa 21 Feb (JADC) and up to 12 were found over Hamraniyah fields from 28 Feb-6 Mar (JKB/RPM/MCJ/RAR). One was found at the fish farm 22 Mar (CR) and another was at Al Wathba on 24 Mar (DR).

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

SPRING: 12 were seen at Mirfa on 21 Feb, otherwise ones and twos were at several sites from 20 Jan to late Mar. 4 were on Das Island 24 Mar and c.10 were seen at Mileiha on 4 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to 20 were at Al Wathba 19-22 Sep and a single bird was at Abu Dhabi race course on 24 Sep.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 4 were wintering at Safa Park until 15 Feb and one was on Das Island 21-23 Mar. Up to 3 were at Al Wathba until 2 Apr and at least one was at Al Habab on 27 Mar (probably overwintered) with 3 still there 7 Apr. One on Das Is. 19 Apr was latest spring record.

AUTUMN: First passage, singles were at the EGC 7 Sep (and 23 Nov) and Al Habab 2 Oct. Up to 6 wintered at Hamraniyah from 9 Oct. Up to 3 were seen at Al Wathba from 16 Oct to the end of the year. 2 wintered at Jebel Ali village, first noted 1 Nov, up to 5 were at Safa Park from 15 Nov and 3 were at Al Habab from 20 Nov. One was beside the road near Ramtha tip in mid Dec.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

WINTER/SPRING: In January up to 10 were at the EGC, Al Wathba, Das Is, Hamraniyah and Al Habab with 12 at Safa Park 27 Jan and 25 at Al Wathba 5 Mar. Otherwise less than 3 at most sites Feb-Mar. c.60 were found at Jazirat Halaylah on 20 Feb with one still there 1 May. AUTUMN: First records, one on Das Island 6-7 Sep and 3 at the Emirates golf course 10 Sep. Common from late Oct-early Dec. c.65 were counted at Al Wathba on 9 Nov.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

One was in song at Masafi 27 Jan and at least 4 were singing in the same area on 10 Apr (JKB/EH/SA). One was in song on 1,000m plateau above Wadi Bih 20 Mar (JKB/CR), probable nest site (WA28) and one was in song at Masafi 30 Oct.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Singles were seen at the Ras al Khaimah hotel 29 Oct (PS), at the Emirates golf course 6-8 Nov (JKB/CR) and at Al Wathba on 9 Nov (SJ): **6th-8th UAE records.**

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

WINTER: One was found at Jebel Dhanna on 24 Jan.

SPRING: First record was one at Asab on 3 Mar. At least 20 were at Safa park on 28-29 Mar and 18 were at Jebel Ali village on 8 Apr, with one remaining there until 7 May. Up to 6 were on Das Is. 23 Apr-10 May, 2 remaining until 20 May. Also reported at other sites.

AUTUMN: One at Bateen wood on 9 Sep, was the first autumn sighting. The last was on 30 Oct. Ones and twos reported in Dec at Al Habab and Abu Dhabi, awaiting confirmation.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

WINTER/SPRING: c.40 were counted at Hamraniyah 17 Jan, and 40 were at Al Habab 19 Feb, with 2 remaining to 27 Mar. 6 were on the Western Road, Abu Dhabi 25 Feb and up to 6 were at Jebel Ali village to end of Feb. Smaller numbers were at other sites and on Das Island from Jan-22 Mar.

AUTUMN: 3 were at Jebel Ali village 20 Nov. Up to 5 together were at Safa Park 15 Nov, at Al Habab 20 Nov-8 Dec and Al Wathba sewage lakes 11 Dec. One was at Mushref Palace gardens 17-29 Dec.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

WINTER: 7 were at Al Habab 3 Jan and up to 6 were at the Creek golf club 26 Jan and 4 Mar, increasing to 10 on 17 Mar. Smaller numbers were wintering in Abu Dhabi, Mirfa and Al Wathba fields.

SPRING: On passage from mid March, with 13 at EGC 23 Mar, c.100 at Al Wathba 28 Mar, c.30 at Al Habab 7 Apr and 20 in Digdaga area 10 Apr. Up to 4 were on Das Is. 24-30 Apr. 2 were still at the Creek golf club 15 May. AUTUMN: 25 counted at Al Wathba 28 Oct-9 Nov had increased to 36 in December. Other records included 2 at Das Island 8-13 Oct, 3 at Al Habab 5 Nov-6 Dec and 3 at Safa Park 15 Nov-1 Dec.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

WINTER: 60+ were at Ruwais 12-20 Feb. At least 20 were wintering in Al Habab fields until 27 Mar, with one heard 6 Apr. 22 were at Al Wathba 19 Mar and up to 10 were at the Creek golf club until 17 Mar. Smaller numbers were reported at other sites to late March.

AUTUMN: 3 in Mushref Palace gardens on 31 Oct was first autumn record. Up to 20 were at Al Habab from 5 Nov to end of December. One was at the EGC 6 Nov-5 Dec, 12 at Al Wathba 9 Nov and at least 7 were at Al Wathba prison sewage 11 Dec. Up to 58 were at Al Wathba until the end of Dec, with smaller numbers at other sites.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus japonicus*

One showing characteristics of ssp. *japonicus* was at Al Wathba fodder fields on 20 Dec (SJ): **1st UAE record.**

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*

One was seen in Bateen wood on 30 Oct (SJ), **4th UAE record.** See report on page 58.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

SPRING: First sightings: one was at Al Wathba on 8 Feb and at Abu al Abyadh on 20 Feb, 2 were on Das Island 21-23 Feb and 13 were at the Creek golf club 4 Mar. Up to 110 were found Safa Park 28-29 Mar. Localised until mid May, stragglers on Das Is. until 26 May and one remained at Creek golf club until 24 Jul.

AUTUMN: Small numbers were seen from 28 Aug, increasing in Sep, when 23 were at the Emirates golf club 7-10 Sep and 14 at the Creek golf club on 9 Sep. Up to 28 were at Al Wathba 22 Sep-9 Oct. One semi-albino (white

tail) was with flock of 10 at the EGC on 6 Oct. 7 at Creek golf club 22 Oct, was last evidence of passage. Individuals were in Safa Park 4 Dec and at Ramtha tip 18-26 Dec.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

WINTER: 5 were at the Creek golf club 1 Jan, decreasing to one by 17 Mar. One was at Ruwais 14 Feb and 3 were at Abu al Abyadh 20 Feb. Up to 4 were at Ramtha 7 Feb-27 Mar and one was at Digdaga 6 Mar.

AUTUMN: Early records include singles at the EGC 7 Aug and at the fish farm 20 Aug. Main passage was early Sep with 3 at the EGC and 4 at Al Habab on 3 Sep. 7 were at Ramtha on 15 Oct, with up to 3 there to end of year. Up to 2 were at other sites including Al Wathba prison pools and Mushref Palace gardens from Oct-Dec.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

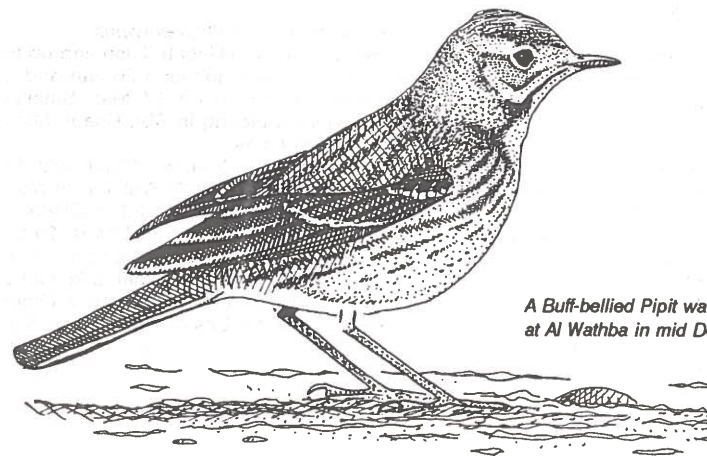
SPRING: 4 were at Al Wathba on 8 Feb, first spring record. 5 were at Safa Park 28 Mar. Last spring sightings were of one at Khutwa near Mahdah on 5 Apr and 4 on Das Island on 25 Apr (MW). Otherwise ones & twos were at several sites Feb-Mar.

AUTUMN: One at Hamraniyah 11 Sep, was first autumn record.

WINTER: One was in Abu Dhabi on 10 Jan and 2 were in Wadi Fay 30 Dec.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Personata sub-species noted as follows: 2 at Al Habab 3 Jan, one at Safa Park 17 Feb and one at Dhaid roost 26 Nov. One *dukhunensis* race seen at Al Habab 26 Dec. A large flock of c.700 came to roost at Dhaid police station on 26 Nov.



A Buff-bellied Pipit was pinned down at Al Wathba in mid December by Steve James

White-cheeked Bulbul*Pycnonotus leucogenys*

One was on Das Island 20-22 March, a first record for the island. 6 at Shuwaihat peninsula (SA25), was an extension of range.

Yellow-vented Bulbul*Pycnonotus xanthopygus*

At least 2 pairs resident in Bateen wood area, Abu Dhabi, only Gulf coast records.

1991 RECORD: Up to 13 birds at Remah (VA25) 6-25 Dec (NARC), extension of range.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

4 resident in Bateen wood area, seen Sep-Dec.

Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*

2-3 were at Medinat (Bida) Zayed guest house from 11-13 Mar (RAR/NARC)

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes*

SPRING: Singles were near Dubai Zoo and in Bateen wood 28 Mar, one probable at Hamraniyah 3 Apr and one at Ramtha tip 4 Apr. Main passage was from 10 Apr with 2 at the fish farm 15 Apr. One at Digdaga 28 May was late and probably breeding.

AUTUMN: 2 were at Hamraniyah 14 Aug, and one was seen most days 10 Aug-13 Oct on Das Island. Up to 6 seen most days in Sep in Bateen wood.

Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*

One was at the Emirates golf course 15-19 Apr (CR *et al*), the 1st UAE record.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

SPRING: Singles were at the Emirates golf course on 11 Apr (JKB), in CR's garden 23 Apr (CR), in Bateen wood late Apr-3 May (RAR) and one possible was in Jebel Ali hotel grounds 7 May (CR).

AUTUMN: One was in Bateen wood 14 Oct (DR) and one was there 29 Oct-13 Nov (SJ)

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

SPRING: Singles were on Das Island 13/14 Mar, 3-10 Apr and 1/11 May, in CR's garden 29 Mar and 7-13 Apr, Emirates golf course 30 Mar and at Hatta Fort on 6 Apr, becoming common with up to 4 at the fish farm 21-26 Apr, 4 at the EGC 30 Apr and 5 in the Jebel Ali hotel 7 May. Last seen 17 May.

AUTUMN: Ones and twos 4 Sep-10 Oct, plus 3 in Abu Dhabi 15 Sep.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 3 birds were at

several sites including Bateen wood, Emirates golf club, fish farm and Ramtha tip until 27 Mar. One was on Das Is. 2-5 Apr.

AUTUMN: First migrant was found on Das Island on 15 Oct, then one was at the fish farm 1 Nov. 4 were at Al Wathba prison sewage lagoons on 11 Dec.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*

At least 16 birds reported, with a healthy passage evident late Mar-early May.

SPRING: Single males at the Emirates golf course 30 Mar, Wadi Hayl 1 Apr, Dhayah on 3 Apr, Das Island 4-5th and 9-14th Apr and Jebel Ali Village and Zabeel garden 8 Apr. 6 were at Ras Ghanada on 2 Apr.

Females were at the EGC 19 Apr and in CR's garden 20 Apr. A male was in CR's garden 5/6 May.

Eversmann's Redstart*Phoenicurus erythronotus*

One was near Masafi 17-20 Nov (JK/MS) and a male was at Ain al Faydah on 20 Nov (DR/JMH).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

Small numbers in shaded gardens and wadis. WINTER/SPRING: 9 were in Mushrif Park, Dubai 16 Jan. A male at the Emirates golf club on 15 Mar was last spring sighting.

WINTER: One at the EGC on 6 Nov was first winter sighting.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

SPRING: A male (of nominate race) was in CR's garden 29 Feb, first spring sighting. *Samamisticus* race common from 6-29 Mar, with general passage of other race/s to 20 May. Up to 20 at Emirates golf club 8-19 Apr and 13 at the Jebel Ali hotel 7 May. One remained on Das Is. to 29 May.

AUTUMN: Scarce in autumn, with single birds on Das Island 17-20 Sep and 9-19 Oct, and in Bateen wood 24 Sep at the Emirates golf course 14-21 Oct and 1 & 13 Nov. A female *samamisticus* was near Masafi 23-26 Nov and another was there 5 Dec.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

SPRING: Singles were at the fish farm 9 Apr, on Das Is. 5-9 Apr and 19-21 Apr and near CR's garden on 3 May.

AUTUMN: Individuals were at Bu Hasa 27 Sep, Mirfa 28 Sep, the Emirates golf course on 6 Oct and at Digdaga 30 Oct.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Mostly overwintering pairs were found at the

Emirates golf club, Al Habab, Al Wathba and Hamraniyah until late March.

SPRING: Some passage, at Zabeel and fish farm 9 Feb, with 2 (including one of *variegata* form) at fish farm 26 Mar, 2 at Ras Ghanada 2 Apr and one at Al Habab 9 Apr.

AUTUMN: One was on Das Island 6 Sep. Small numbers wintering from late Oct.

Mostly showing features of *maura*, less common *rubicola* also seen.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

WINTER: Small wintering numbers, including 5 at the Emirates golf club 6 Jan-13 Feb, up to 8 were on Das Island 16 Feb-26 Mar, c.25 in Baynunah 13 Feb and 25 at Al Wathba 5 Mar. SPRING: Passage evident mid March when c.60 were found in the Musandam region 11-12 Mar, 31 on Jazirat Halaylah and 6 found on plateau above Wadi Bih on 20 Mar. Only small numbers until last (mainland) individual was seen at the EGC 26 Apr. One was on Das Is. 5-11 May.

AUTUMN: 3 were at Hamraniyah on 14 Aug, starting autumn passage. Common from Sep, with up to 5 present at several sites until mid Dec. 10 were at Al Wathba fields on 16 Oct.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

SPRING: One was at Al Wathba on 8 Feb, 2 in southern desert on 3 Mar and a male at Emirates golf club on 6 Mar were first spring records. Peak passage noted from 14-28 Mar, with 21 at Al Wathba 28 Mar. None reported after 7 April.

AUTUMN: One at Al Habab on 6 Aug was first autumn record. Main passage was from 12 Sep, with ones & twos until 23 Oct. One was near Mahdah on 30 Dec.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

SPRING: Up to 3 were on Das Island from 16 Feb and 2 males at Al Habab on 19 Feb were first spring migrants, with continuous passage in waves. 25 were in Wadi Bih on 6 Mar, 22 at Al Wathba on 28 Mar and 16 were in Zabeel area on 6 Apr. Exceptional passage in Khasab area (Musandam) when c.200 birds were counted from 11-12 Mar (JADC). Single females were seen 12 Apr at fish farm and 19 Apr at EGC. One of 'vitata' form was found at fish farm on 14 Mar.

AUTUMN: As usual it was scarce; an early migrant was at the Emirates golf club on 7 Sep. Ones and twos were seen mid Sep-mid Nov. Up to 6 were on Das Island 6-19 Oct.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

SPRING: Single black-throated *melanoleuca*

males were seen at fish farm 14 Feb and 26 Mar. 4 were at Al Wathba 28 Mar. Other males included singles on Das Island 9-23 Mar & 2-3 Apr, Bateen wood 13 Mar, above Wadi Bih 20 Mar and at fish farm 22 & 27 Mar. Females seen on Musandam summit (1,400m) 2 Apr, Al Habab 7 Apr, fish farm 9 Apr and Jazirat Halaylah 10 Apr. One was on Das Is. 2-3 Apr. No autumn records.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

WINTER/SPRING: 35 were recorded in Liwa area 30 Jan-1 Feb. Otherwise thinly spread winter visitor, not recorded after 6 Apr when a male & female were seen in fossil valley.

AUTUMN: One was at Bu Hasa on 27 Jul, a very early record! Small numbers as usual from Sep, while 8 were at Al Wathba 19 Sep, most occurred from 30 Oct. Up to 10 were at Al Wathba from 9 Oct to end of the year, with 6 in Al Habab field 20 Nov.

1991 RECORD: 51 birds counted in Shuwaihat area on 13th November 1991 (NARC).

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna*

WINTER/SPRING: Singles at Abu Dhabi airport 6 Mar and at Khasab 11-12 Mar were last spring records.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at Al Wathba on 9 Oct, one on Das Island 10-22 Oct and 3 at Qarn Nazwa 13 Oct, were first records, with further passage noted on Das Island 21-27 Nov. Common in December, mostly in mountain foothills and certain lowland habitats.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

WINTER: Up to 3 were at Qarn Nazwa until 28 Feb. Singles were also found near Dibba on 3 Jan, near Masafi 24 Jan, Idhn 24 Jan and near Dhayah on 7 Feb. 2 were at Jebel Buhays on 31 Jan.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at Qarn Nazwa on 3 Sep was the earliest autumn record, with up to 3 there 2 Oct-28 Dec and 4 on 13 Oct. Single birds were at Idhn on 11 Sep and near Khatt 9 Oct. 3 were near Dibba on 30 Oct. One was reported near Ramtha tip 4 Dec.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

SPRING: 6 were in the Jebel Dhanna area on 6 Feb (RPM) and 5 individuals were seen in Ruwais/Ghiathy area 13-19 Feb (NARC). See article in *Emirates Bird Report* 16:32-34

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

Males were 10km down Rawdah-Mahdah road 6 Feb and 5km down the road on 23 Oct. One at Mirfa 4 Mar awaits confirmation, and a

male was found on Das Island 6-8 Mar. One male was at Teebat (UAE-Musandam border) 13 Mar. Resident on Jebel Hafit; reported March and April, and 4 males were found on 29 Dec.

1991 RECORD: One female was seen in Liwa area 20 Nov. 1991 (NARC).

Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*
One adult and 2 juvs. were at nest hole 1,000m above Wadi Bih on 20 Mar. Several adults with young seen in April. c.20 were on the Ras al Jebel, Musandam on 19 Jun.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*
SPRING: First spring record was on 18 Feb in Dubai, then one or two were found from March to April, peaking from 4-10 Apr. 11 were in Musandam area 11-12 Mar. Further light passage 8-10 May in Dubai area, while on Das Island 2 remained until 16 May with a straggler still present on 31st.
AUTUMN: Individuals were on Das Island 10th and 18-19 Oct and at Huwaylat on 30 Oct.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
SPRING: Records include singles seen on Das Is. 17-18 Feb and near Dubai dry docks on 17 Feb. 2 were in Wadi Bih 5 Mar, one on Das Island 6/7 & 16-18 Mar, and up to 2 were on Jebel Hafit 3-5 Apr.
AUTUMN: The earliest record was in Abu Dhabi on 15 Sep. Other sightings to the end of the year included individuals in Wadi Shih (Khorfakkan) and Das Island.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*
One was seen on Abu al Abyadh on 23 Feb (RPM), year's only report.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
SPRING: 11 at the EGC on 19 Mar was noteworthy, and last seen there 30 Mar. A very late migrant was reported on Das Is. 4-26 Apr.
AUTUMN: An early migrant was on Das Island on 19 Sep, with the next not appearing there until 5 Nov.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*
One in Safa Park on 27 Jan (CR), was 1st mainland record since 1990 and only third in 10 years.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis*
Nest-building activity was noted from 7 Mar-3 Apr, with 2 young seen in Mushrif Park 9 Apr. One on Das Island 19 Sep is believed to be the first record for the island.

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*
A pair were nest-building near Idhn on 24 Jan, and a nest with young was found in Wadi Bih 1 Mar. 2 adults and 4 juvs. were in a Masafi wadi on 31 Mar. At least 6 were seen at 1,500m on Ras al Jebel, 19 Jun.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*
One on Das Island 2-14 Apr (MW), was the year's only record.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*
One at the Emirates golf course on 6 Apr (AF/TN) was the year's only record.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*
One remained at the fish farm until at least 30 Jan (CR), 4th UAE record (see *Emirates Bird Report* 16).

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
SPRING: 2 were on Das Island 14-15 Mar and 3 were there 5-7 May, with the latest one there on 24-28 May. 2 were at the Emirates golf club 17 May.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*
SPRING: Individuals from 8 Apr, becoming very common from 7 May. 50 were at the golf course 8 May. Most passage was over by 22 May, with one still at the golf course (singing) on 10 Jun.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 13 Feb.

At least one was heard singing in the *Phragmites* at the fish farm on 17 Feb then heard regularly until 18 Mar. One or more were seen on each visit until singing was heard again on 26 Apr. 3 birds including young were found on 13 June. More young were seen and heard from 4 Aug. Birds remained at the site until 5 Oct (CR). Apparently 2 broods raised and 1st breeding record for the UAE. See note on page 59.
AUTUMN: Single birds seen in Bateen wood 4 Sep and 11 Oct, only migrants seen.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*
Individuals were seen on passage at several sites until early March. Singing at fish farm from 7 March, though no other proof of nesting found there this year.
AUTUMN: Post-breeding dispersal of moulting birds was noted from 25 Aug.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
SPRING: Single birds seen in CR's garden on 17 Apr, at the fish farm 20 Apr, Jebel Ali 7 May and the fish farm on 8 May.
AUTUMN: Ones and twos were in Abu Dhabi 1-10 Sep. Other individuals were in Safa Park 7 Sep, Emirates golf course 26 Oct and the fish farm on 1 Nov.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*
SPRING: Passage first noted 21 Mar at the fish farm, peaking 27 Mar. Small numbers until late May other sites.
AUTUMN: Return passage was from 21 Aug, with many in song, then common to late Sep. Post-breeding family parties in Bateen wood with up to 20 present most days Sep-Oct. At least 10 were there in Nov and Dec, apparently overwintering (or resident).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*
SPRING: At least 10 were at Khor Kalba 12 Mar-12 Jun.
AUTUMN: Singles were seen in Bateen wood 15 Sep, 2 Oct, 30 Oct and 10 Dec. One was at Khor Kalba on 4 Dec.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*
SPRING: One was at Bida Zayed on 13 Mar. General passage was from 22 Mar-12 May. At least 12 were in fossil valley 6 Apr.
AUTUMN: Small numbers were seen early Aug-Sep. Up to 2 were on Das Island 1 Aug-7 Sep and one was in Abu Dhabi 5-9 Oct.

Menetries' Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*
Overwintering locally, at Zabeel, Emirates golf course and Mushrif Park.
SPRING: One was at Ruwais sewage plant on 13 Feb then healthy passage from early Mar, becoming less common from 1-13 Apr.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Ones and twos from 24 Sep to the end of the year.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
Very common in Western Desert in winter, localised in north.
SPRING: Recorded on passage on Das Island 7-25 March, peaking at 10 on 14 Mar. On mainland, passage from late March. 4 in Dubai area 11-12 Apr was last spring record.
AUTUMN: 2 were at Abu Dhabi race course on 24 Sep, first autumn record.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*
WINTER/SPRING: Wintering singles in several sites in Northern Emirates 7-17 Jan (total 7 birds). Individuals were at Das Island 29 Jan,

Ramtha tip on 9 Feb and at Ruwais on 13 Feb. General light passage was noted from March to early Apr, with 2 at the Emirates golf club 6 Mar, and the last on Das Island on 25 Apr.
WINTER: Individuals were at Masafi on 5 Dec and at the golf course 10/17 Dec.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*
SPRING: Singles were at Mushrif park 9 Apr and in CR's garden 20-24 Apr. 2 were at Bateen wood 24 Apr, the Emirates golf course 30 Apr, with one there 8 May.
AUTUMN: 2 were seen in Bateen wood area 3 Nov and one was found dead in Abu Dhabi on 10 Oct.
1991 RECORD: One was in a wood at Shuwaihat 3 Nov (NARC).

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
WINTER/SPRING: 4 were in Mushrif park 16 Jan, otherwise ones and twos from 11 Mar, increasing to a maximum of 5 together from 6-19 Apr. Up to 6 were on Das Is. until 20 May, one remaining until 27 May.
AUTUMN: Singles were seen on Das Island 17-22 Sep, with 6 on 27 Sep. Small numbers Oct-Nov. Local in winter, mostly in south. Nominate race not recorded; most appeared to have features of *blythi* subspecies.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*
c.10 in Mushrif Park on 16 Jan, otherwise small numbers in ghaf and *Acacia* (and on Das Island) until 2 Apr.
AUTUMN: Small numbers on passage on Das Island from 21 Sep. 2 were at Khatt on 9 Oct, first mainland 'winter' record, common thereafter. Up to 21 were in Bateen wood area 6 Nov to the end of the year.

Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*
Individuals were at the fish farm 21 & 31 Mar and in Zabeel area on 8 Apr (CR/JKB)

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
SPRING: Up to 4 were on Das Island from 3-23 Mar and 6 were there from 23-30 Apr, increasing to 20 on 10 May. One straggler remained there until 28 May. Smaller numbers were seen at other sites with one late bird at the Emirates golf club on 8 May.
AUTUMN: Ones and twos were reported Sep-Oct. 3 were in Bateen wood 11 Oct.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
One was at Bu Hasa on 27 Sep (DR).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

SPRING: Passage recorded 21 Mar-11 Apr, maximum of 5 together. One was on Das Island until 3 May.

AUTUMN: Up to 4 were in Bateen wood 11-14 Oct and from 29 Oct-6 Nov. One was found wintering in the wood on 11 Dec.

Yellow-browed Warbler*Phylloscopus inornatus*

One overwintered (from late Oct) on Das Island and remained until 16 Apr (LR/MW). One was found dead on the Island on 9 Nov (LR).

1991 RECORD: Singles, possibly same bird, were at Remah guest house 8-16 Dec (NARC).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

One was found at the Emirates golf course on 19 Nov (CR), the 1st UAE record. See page 53.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

One in Bateen wood 10 Dec-20 Dec (SJ), was the 2nd UAE record. See note on page 51.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

SPRING: One was at the fish farm on 29 Mar. AUTUMN: One was on Khalidiya spit 1 Sep (JMH) and 2 were in Bateen wood 26-29 Sep (SJ).

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*

Records of wintering birds at Masafi wadi, Wadi Sharm (Oman), Jebel Buhays, Dhayah, Wadi Bih until last record of 2 at Masafi 12 Mar.

WINTER ARRIVALS: First winter records include 2 at Wadi Hayl 6 Nov, one in Masafi wadi 5 Dec and one at Marbad 18 Dec, then 2 each at Abulle on 29 Dec and Huwaylat on

31 Dec. One was in a wadi 5km down Mahdah road 31 Dec.

Also recorded in other dry wadis with *Acacia*. 1991 RECORDS: Present at Remah 5-30 Dec, max of 4 together.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

SPRING: Peak spring passage 23-29 Mar. Last spring record, 2 on Das Is. until 30 Apr.

AUTUMN: First autumn record was on Das Island 15 Sep and at Bu Hasa 27 Sep. One was in Dubai on 10 Oct, then it was common to end of the year.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

SPRING: Passage commenced on Das Island from 12 Mar, (on mainland from 29 Mar), continuing with up to 10 present until 20 May, one straggler still there until 29 May.

AUTUMN: Ones and twos in Sep. Common on Das Island in Oct, including 8 there mid month. As usual scarce elsewhere.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

SPRING: First spring record, one at the golf course 19 Apr, last spring record 22 May, peak passage 7/8 May.

AUTUMN: First records, one on Das Island 12-13 Aug, one in Zabeel 1 Sep. Last autumn sighting was 21 Oct.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

SPRING: One was seen at the fish farm on 8 Feb (RG/SG) and 2 were at Mirfa 21 Feb (JADC). Unusually late, one male was on Das Is. on 2 Apr and others were seen on 3 & 29 May (LR/MW).

AUTUMN: One was in Bateen wood 10 Oct (SJ), Das Island 11 Oct, with 2 there 13-15 Oct and one on 13 Nov (LR/MW). A female was in CR's garden 24-26 Nov (CR/JKB).

Semi-collared Flycatcher*Ficedula semitorquata*

SPRING: First record, one at Mushrif park 25 Mar, with a total of 18 birds recorded in Dubai until 11 Apr and a further 3 from 7-8 Apr in Jebel Ali area, Up to 3 were in Bateen wood 26-28 Mar. A male was on Das Is. 3-4 Apr and a female was there on 11 Apr.

Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps*

One at Ramtha tip 17 Sep was noteworthy. Otherwise fairly regular mostly dry inland areas with bushes in Northern Emirates.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*

A few in the gardens around Wigan guest house 5-8 Feb, were a SW extension of range.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Total 26 birds reported.

SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 30 Apr-4 May, peaking at 10 there 8 May, decreasing to 2 on 22 May when last seen. Also reported Jebel Ali hotel grounds and Jebel Ali village on 7 May and 2 were at Das Is. 13-14 May.

AUTUMN: One was on Das Island 30 Aug, otherwise 12 reported 3-27 Sep during main passage. 2 were on Das Island and one was at Bu Hasa on 9 Oct and the last was seen on Abu Dhabi's ladies beach 15 Oct.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

Estimated 175 birds recorded.

WINTER/SPRING: Common winter visitor and spring migrant until late Apr, with one at the fish farm 6 May and 2 at the golf course on 8 May last records. Heavy passage on Das Is. in early May, with up to 20 birds present 2-6 May, with a straggler present until 30th.

AUTUMN: One at Safa park 7 Sep was first autumn record. Up to 9 were at the golf course on most visits 26 Oct-10 Dec.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

37 birds recorded.

SPRING: 2 early birds were on Das Island from 21 Mar and 2 males were at the Emirates golf course on 19 Apr. Main passage was from 5-8 May with one remaining on Das Is. until 30 May.

AUTUMN: Individuals were at Bateen wood 11 & 23 Sep and 18 Oct, on Das Island 24 Sep-3 Oct and at the golf course 17 Sep, 10 & 14 Oct and 14 Nov. One female was near Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi 10-18 Dec.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

SPRING: Individuals were seen at Khor Fakkan 24 Apr, at Hamraniyah 1 May and at the fish farm 6 May. Up to 6 were on Das Is. 2-8 May with the last one seen 23-26 May. AUTUMN: Singles were at the Emirates golf course 7 Sep and on Das Island 1-15 Oct.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

5 recently fledged young were found at the Emirates golf course 1 Mar; the pair nested again approx. 8 Apr with 2 young seen on 30 Apr and 3 more young were found on 23 Jun, indicating 3 spring broods.

SPRING: Singles were on passage on Das Is. 23 Apr-3 May, with 3 there 4-6 May and one 14-25 May. *Pallidirostris* race recorded on passage 7 Mar at fish farm.

AUTUMN: Singles on passage 13 Aug at Das Island, 24 Aug at golf course, 8 Sep fish farm, 19 Sep at golf course and at Al Wathba 11 Dec. Most migrants showing features of *pallidirostris* sub-species.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

47 birds recorded.

SPRING: One was at Ruwais 18 Feb, one on Das Island 18-20 and 27 Feb, at Zabeel 22 Feb then on passage everywhere until 10 Apr, with one on Das Is. on 26 Apr.

5, including one in song were near Khasab 11 Mar.

AUTUMN: One at Ras al Khaimah on 28 Oct, was only autumn record.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*

27 birds recorded.

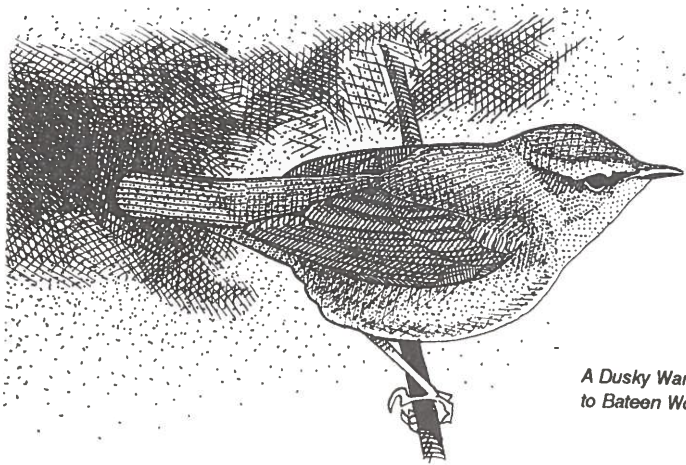
SPRING: Records include one in CR's garden 26/27 Mar and 15-28 Apr, 3 at Emirates golf course 30 Mar, 4 on 8 Apr and one still there 26 Apr and 8 May. 2 were at Ras Ghanada on 2 Apr, one in fossil valley 6 Apr, 3 at Jebel Ali 8-11 Apr, 2 at Dubai Hyatt mini-golf course 9-12 Apr, one on Das Island 11-21 Apr and one in Dubai 8 Apr and 7 May.

AUTUMN: One was on Abu Dhabi's ladies' beach 30 Aug and singles were on Das 26-27 Sep and 8-18 Oct. One was in Mushref palace gardens 6-7 Oct and from 30 Oct to end of the year.

1991 RECORD: One near Liwa hotel 27 Nov-4 Dec, probably overwintered locally.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

One on Das Island from late Oct to 10 Mar, was noteworthy.



A Dusky Warbler was an elusive visitor to Bateen Wood for a week in December

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*

One nest with 4 young found near Bida Zayed (TB24) 21 Feb (NARC). 75 at Falaj al Mualla 31 Jul, was one of largest flocks recorded in Northern Emirates.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

WINTER/SPRING: Largest flocks; up to 60 were seen in Sharjah 11 Jan-23 Feb, up to 20 wintered in Abu Dhabi Jan to early March, 35 entered Ruwais reed bed to roost 15 Feb and 20 were on Abu al Abyadh 20 Feb.
AUTUMN: Up to 5 juveniles were seen at Ramtha 3/6th & 25 Sep, were early migrants (from local nest sites?). 30 were at Hamraniyah 6 Nov.

Pied Mynah *Sturnus contra*

Pairs seen regularly at Eastern lagoon, fish farm and Ramtha tip throughout the year. 8 were together at the fish farm 13 Jun and 17 were there 23 Aug.

Brahminy Mynah *Sturnus pagodarum*

3 were at Sharjah ladies garden 7 Feb and one was at the fish farm 9 Mar, 8 May and 29 Jul.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*

SPRING: One was at Hamraniyah 5-6 Feb (JMH)/DR) and 8, including one male in song were seen there 1 Mar (MCJ). An adult was on Das Is. 28 May (LR).
AUTUMN: One was on Das Island 6 Aug, increasing to 5 by 18 Aug, last seen 23 Aug (LR). 2 were at the fish farm on 26 Aug.



Brahminy Mynah is still proving elusive, but what is its true status?

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cineracea*

A male was seen in the Zabeel area 21 Jan (CR), a 1st UAE record.

Note: There are no records of this species being sold in local pet shops and in spite of a search by the observer on subsequent days it was not seen again. However the possibility of it being an escape cannot be ruled out.

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*

c.300 at Hamraniyah 16 Oct, indicates large population in Ras al Khaimah area. Singles seen at Mussafah (UB25) and at Abu Dhabi falcon hospital (VA25) on 5 Jul, were range extensions.

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus*

Recorded in all months at the fish farm, including 40 on 18 Jan, probably nesting nearby. Noted on all visits to Hamraniyah fields, including colony of 27+ birds with some entering nest holes with food on 1 May. c.200 were there on 16 Oct.
12 at Al Ain camel market 30 Dec, suggests healthy population in Al Ain.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

46 were at Hamraniyah 1 May and at least 2 males were seen 19 Jun.

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*

Up to 4 (3 males, 1 female) were on Das Island 21 Jan-21 Mar, one remaining until 3 Apr (LR/MW), the 1st UAE record.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachyactyla*

SPRING: One near Tarif on 8 Mar, was earliest spring record. c.500 were in Wadi Salalah, near Khasab 12 Mar. c.20, probably this species at Masafi 12 Mar, c.100 there 31 Mar-10 Apr and c.250 were in Hamraniyah area 1-10 Apr and up to 2 were on Das Is. 9-25 Apr. c.100 singing and calling on Jebel Faiyah 4 Apr. Smaller numbers at Emirates golf course, Al Wathba late Mar-early Apr. 20 seen flying over Masafi wadi on 31 Jul, possibly nesting nearby?

Yellow-throated Sparrow*Petronia xanthocollis*

SPRING: A male at Masafi on 31 Mar, was first spring record. Seen at Wadi Hayl, Mileiha, fossil valley, Al Habab, Khatmat plain, Mahdah area, Hatta Fort Hotel, Mushrif Park, Hamraniyah and Wadi Midfah all near suitable nest areas. Up to 6 most days on passage on Das Is. 3 Apr-28 Apr, with one on 28 May. 6 were at Jebel Ali village 19 Apr and 4 were at the fish farm 20 Apr.

SUMMER: 3 ads. and 1 young noted at Shuwaib (VB26) 1 Jul. Heard singing at Hamraniyah 14 Aug, latest autumn record.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

Small numbers, probably recently introduced, singing in reeds at fish farm from 8 May-10 Aug. Numbers also seen at Ramtha tip on 17 Sep.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

A female on Das Is. 17-20 Feb (IS/LR/MW), was the 5th UAE record.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

2 on Das Island 20 Jan (LR), were the 12th UAE record.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

One at Bu Hasa on 15 Jan (DR), was the year's only record for this rare winter visitor.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githageneus*

SPRING: Up to 8 were in Wadi Bih 1-6 Mar (MCJ/RPM/RAR) and at least 2 were at Jebel Faiyah on 4 Apr (CR).

AUTUMN: Heard calling near Al Ain zoo on 16 Nov (NJ).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 22 May and 3 Jun (CR).

AUTUMN: Up to 4 were on Das Island 7-11 Sep (LR). Singles were at Mushref Palace gardens 26 Sep, Das Island 11 Oct (MW) and in Bateen wood 31 Oct (SJ).

White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti*

A male and female were found at the Emirates golf club 5/6 Nov (CR/JKB), the 1st UAE (and Arabian) record.

Full details on page 3.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*

One of race *semenowi* was at the Dubai Hyatt mini golf on 9 Apr. (SA), the 8th UAE record.

Oriolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

SPRING: At least 110 birds were seen in various locations from 7-28 Apr, including c.13 at the Emirates golf course 8 Apr and 12 on Das Is. 16-20 Apr.

AUTUMN: In autumn one was on Das Island 9 Oct and one was at the golf course 14 Oct.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

A male in breeding plumage was found on Das Island on 27 Oct (LR), the 6th UAE record.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

One was on Das Island on 15 Jun (LR), the 5th UAE record.

Black-headed Bunting*Emberiza melanocephala*

SPRING: 2 males were at Hamraniyah 10 Apr and one was on Das Is. 26 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to 6 were on Das Island 25 Aug-8 Sep and 3 were at the Emirates golf course 10-14 Sep. Individuals were in Abu Dhabi on 10 Sep and at Dhayah 11 Sep and 2 were at the fish farm 24 Sep.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

WINTER/SPRING: 10 were at Al Habab 3 Jan and 3 were there 31 Jan. One was on Das Island 4 Jan. Up to 6 were at Hamraniyah 17 Jan-1 Mar, with birds in song on several occasions. 2 were at Ramtha 23 Jan and one was at Safa Park 28 Jan-1 Feb. 2 were at Jebel Dhanna 23 Jan-21 Feb and 2 were at Al Wathba from 8 Feb with up to 30 there from 5-19 Mar. One was at Ruwais 14 Feb and 4 were 15km. north of Remah on 13 Mar.

AUTUMN: 3 were at Ruwais 28 Sep and one was at Al Wathba on 3 Nov.

SPECIES ALSO RECORDED IN 1992

Sand Partridge, Common Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Palm Dove, Red-vented Bulbul, House Sparrow, House Bunting and Indian Silverbill.

ESCAPES

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

One was seen on Das Is. on 29 May, no other sightings there (?) (MW)

Common Crane *Grus grus*

2 remained on Abu al Abyadh throughout the year.

Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*

Nests reported at Ramtha tip in May (ST)

White-winged Whydah *Euplectes albonatus*

One of this East African species was seen in Jumeirah beach park on 28 Oct-10 Nov (EF)

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

One, probably an escape was seen in Abu Dhabi on 13 Sep. See also main list.

Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa*

One was in Bateen area, Abu Dhabi on 28 Feb.

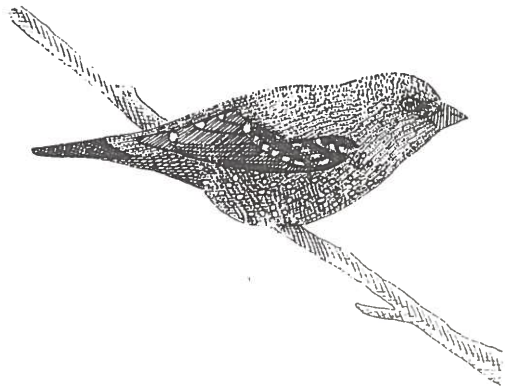
ESCAPES ALSO REPORTED

Budgerigar, Orange Bishop, Purple Grenadier, Waxbill sp.

OBSERVERS AND GROUPS

Peter Adhemar, Elizabeth Andrews, Ian & Jill Andrews, Simon Aspinall, S.M.Al-Awadi, John K.Bannon, Christian Cederroth, J.A.D. (Adrian) Chapman, Sherif Baha El-Din, Gary Feulner, Erik Flack, Jim Footitt, Annika Forsten, Lynda Graham, Roy & Simon Green, Axel Halley, Jim Hart, Peter Hellyer, Jenny Hollingworth, D.& R. Humphrey, Steve James, Nigel Jarrett, Michael Jennings, Pav Johnsson, Dr.R. Khan, Jarmo Komi, Carolyn Lehmann, Ken Mackie, David Milner, Rob P. Morris, National Avian Research Centre (NARC), Natur Studienreisen tour group (NSR), Andreas Noeske, Tapani Numminen, Ian Phillip, Rob Quested, Len Reaney, Bob (RA) Richardson, Colin Richardson, K.Riddle, Dave Robinson, Stefan Rodebrand, Par Sandberg, Markku Santamaa, Ian Sherman, Ulrich Wernery, Mike Wood.

Compiled: June 1993



BIRDING IN THE EMIRATES, THEN AND NOW: 1969 - 1992

M.C. Jennings

A gap of more than 20 years separates my birding experience in the UAE. I first visited the UAE during the period 1969-71; the next time was in 1992. There had been tremendous changes to the environment in the meantime and these environmental changes, plus other factors, have combined to present a significant number of changes to the avifauna today.

During the period 1969 to 1971 I paid a number of short visits to the Trucial States, as the United Arab Emirates were then known. At the time I was living in Bahrain attached to the British Forces Headquarters there. I needed to visit Army and RAF establishments in Sharjah and also, that relic of the British Raj, the Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS), who then had their camp in the desert between Sharjah and Ajman. During those visits I took every opportunity to bird in the Sharjah and Ajman areas and whenever possible I arranged "liaison visits" to military detachments up-country such as Al Ain, Wadi Ham, Ras al Khaimah, etc.

To set the scene, in late 1969 the only tarmac road in the whole of the Emirates was a two-way track between Sharjah and Dubai. There was only a desert track to Abu Dhabi and virtually no industrial, commercial or urban development anywhere. Sharjah town was mostly a single street of about 300 metres, along the sea front. This alley was partly covered over with palm fronds for shade. On visits to the TOS the officers there waxed lyrical about the two days dune trek necessary to get to their outpost at Al Ain.

Common resident birds around the Sharjah area at that time were **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*, **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis*, **Purple Sunbird** *Nectarinia asiatica*, **Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis* and **Palm Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*. They are still present but the shy-by-nature Brown-necked Raven seems to have been lost as a breeding bird to Sharjah, probably on account of loss of nesting habitat through the sprawl of urbanisation as well as constant disturbance. I also found **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* between Sharjah and Ajman which would seem an unlikely sighting nowadays. On the other hand several species have been gained to the local avifauna in the intervening years. On one trip I was fortunate enough to be able to take part in 'Exercise Tayur-Watch' in January 1970. This was a British Army sponsored bird-watching jaunt in the Masafi area, made possible because the GOC at the time was interested in birds. This expedition was attended by, among others, Mike Gallagher, Bill (WAC) Griffiths, Terry Rogers and the late Chris Griffiths. Some of the results of the Tayur Watch expedition were range extensions for **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis*, **Yellow-throated Sparrow** *Petronia xanthocollis* and **Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta* which were found in the Masafi hills for the first time.

During my visits to the lower Gulf I also made the lifelong friendship of Effie Warr who was living at the time in Sharjah with her husband John, who worked in oil exploration. We first met in April 1970 on Sharjah creek and during the next year and a bit my visits to Sharjah were enhanced by their company

on field trips and their hospitality. At the time Sharjah creek was an undisturbed, unlitteed inlet. On my recent visit it appears to have been filled in and mostly covered in concrete and buildings. I especially enjoyed my first trip to RAK with Effie and John, where there seemed to be so many exciting resident birds, compared to the very few on Bahrain. These included **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis*, **Red-wattled Lapwing** *Hoplopterus indicus* and **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus*. I had Trumpeter Finch again in RAK in March 1992, yet there appears to be very few records in the years between.

I was able to visit Al Ain (or Buraimi as most people called it then) on business by helicopter on 20 October 1971. Common resident birds then (as now) were **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*, **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* and Palm Dove but also seen were 12 **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* and 10 Brown-necked Ravens. At the time Buraimi was a collection of burustis (palm frond huts), a few mud brick houses and some dramatic forts. No one seemed to worry about the border between Oman and the UAE.

My next visit to the UAE was not until February-March 1992 as part of ABBA Survey No.11. Whilst most of my 2 weeks was spent in Oman with Colin Richardson I had several days in the Emirates and was lucky enough to get to most of my old haunts, including Al Ain, Khor Fakkan, Dibba, Ras al Khaimah and Masafi with Colin, John Bannon or Rob Morris. In the 20 intervening years not only had the whole aspect of the UAE changed but the birds had too.

One could go to considerable length to describe the changes and development of the UAE but I will confine myself to a few points. I was first struck by the enormous boulevards surrounding the main towns of the UAE and the hectares of irrigated lawns which had been completely unknown in earlier times. In the late 1960's and early 1970's hardly anything in Dubai rose above 2 or 3 stories and the famous windtowers were still functioning and visible above roof level. Although there is still a gap between Dubai and Sharjah I failed to find any desert between Ajman and Sharjah and neither could I locate the previous British Troops camp at Sharjah or the old TOS camp; everywhere was so unrecognisable. Nowadays one is marshalled along superb motorways, through built-up areas, I was quite disorientated. There was of course no tree-lined dual carriageway to Al Ain and no embryo forests by that road. Similarly the roads to Dhaid, Masafi, Khor Fakkan and Ras al Khaimah were only rough tracks, although by 1971 the Royal Engineers had started to build, very slowly, a road up Wadi Ham which included 3 small bridges. The Batinah, or UAE east coast was, in 1970, still in pristine condition, tiny fishing villages lined the coast with palm-frond houses, dug-out boats on shore, unpolluted beaches and an unbroken stretch of acacia between the coast and the hills. I recall that a good deal of the drive between Khor Fakkan and Dibba in 1971 had to be along the beach as there were no tracks through those rocky coastal hills. At the time the coastal villages were absolutely infested by **House Crows** *Corvus splendens*. Numbers were much reduced in 1992.

One of the most noticeable changes to bird life in the UAE in the period since the early 1970's is the number of introduced species which can be found. The **Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* was probably the first

introduced species to become established in the UAE. It is now very numerous in Dubai yet I did not see it in Sharjah during 1969-71. It is plentiful throughout Arabia and takes part in local migrations which are still poorly understood. Undoubtedly a good proportion of the UAE population originates from escaped and liberated cagebirds but it is just possible that wild birds of this oriental species could have got to the southern Gulf naturally. A second parakeet, the **Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria*, a likely escapee, also occurs now in Dubai. Perhaps this population is the embryo of a statewide population. **Budgerigars** *Melopsittacus undulatus* and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** *Cacatua galerita* have also been recorded. Other common and breeding exotic species which I saw in 1992 but not in 1970 included **Common Mynah** *Acridotheres tristis*, **Bank Mynah** *A.gingineanus* and **Pied Mynah** *Sturnus contra*, **Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer* and **White-cheeked Bulbul** *P.leucogenys*. I did not see any of the various weavers that have now been recorded.

Naturally-occurring birds in the Sharjah-Dubai area which were not present in 1969-71, or are now much more common, are **Indian Silverbill** *Eudice malabarica* which was previously a rather scarce and local resident in the hills and gravel plains; **Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus* restricted previously to a few inland garden areas, such as Tawi Awir (Al Awir) and the Batinah coast, and Indian Roller, which in those days, was very scarce around Sharjah-Dubai and could only be counted on at RAK and the mountain palm groves.

Species that have got to the Emirates in recent years by natural means have been (Eurasian) **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*, now abundant but not seen by me in the UAE during 1969-71 and **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* which arrived in 1988. The most recent arrival (a few weeks after I left) has been the **Black Bush Chat** *Cercotrichas podobe* which has greatly extended its range in central Arabia in the last 20 years and may now do so in the UAE. By the rate some species are extending their range in Arabia, making use of the prolific vegetation provided by the numerous irrigation schemes other birds will inevitably follow. The **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* for example, has extended its breeding range 1000 km. south-east across Saudi Arabia in the last 5 years. Perhaps it will be in the UAE in another 5 years?

In late 1970 I visited the experimental farm at Digdaga in Ras al Khaimah, where there was a new herd of Fresian cows. This was regarded at the time as a somewhat eccentric enterprise. Since then the Digdaga farms have been developed and irrigated and now has the most dramatic new habitat for birds anywhere in the UAE. In March 1992 I found ghaaf trees (*Prosopis cineraria*) set in a parkland of knee-high fodder grasses and crops, where 20 years earlier there had only been dusty plains. In recent years this exciting, almost temperate area, has added several new breeding species to the UAE list, mostly species associated with more northern climates including **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus*, **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*, **Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* and **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*. Other new breeding species may follow, including **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* and **Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*, both of which I heard singing in early March 1992.

Nowadays we take for granted good bird reference and identification

books but in 1969 there were no field guides that covered this corner of Arabia and there were still many question-marks about the proper identification, status and race of many birds. Viewed from today's perspective, some rather quaint and naive identifications were made in those early days. For example in late February 1992 Colin Richardson and I had 10 **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgus tracheliotus* near Al Ain. (This was incidentally the largest group ever recorded in the UAE). It seems incredible now, but Lappet-faced Vultures were not generally accepted as occurring anywhere in Arabia in 1969. All large vultures were simply assumed to be **Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus*. Reports of vultures nesting in trees (which were obviously Lappet-faced Vultures) were generally regarded as tree-nesting Griffons. It is my opinion now, that Griffon Vultures never nest in trees, but in 1969 all accredited reference books said they did and so no-one questioned tree-nesting Griffons. (*Birds of the Western Palearctic*; Vol.2 has unfortunately repeated this Griffon myth, so we are set for another generation of confusion). I only saw one large vulture in the UAE during 1969-71 and that was 3one of the 'Griffons' reported on 'Tayur Watch'. Effie actually got a picture of a Lappet-faced in 1970, which although obvious now, was not properly identified until the 1980's. With the status of the Lappet-faced Vulture being clarified all previous Griffon records in the UAE, including those of 'Tayur Watch' are suspect, and probably ought to be discarded.

A similar story of confusion surrounds the identification of large grey and black-backed gulls in the late 1960's and early 1970's. During those years we blissfully observed large grey-backed gulls as **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* and the black-backed ones as **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L.fuscus*. Taxonomic opinion shifts and identification improvements in the last 20 years have created a situation that almost leaves gull identification the preserve of a tiny band of specialists. The current summary of these birds seems to be along the following lines: **Herring Gull** *L. argentatus*, of north-west Europe does not seem to occur in the Gulf. The grey-backed birds which are found in the Gulf are now mostly *L.cachinnans*, the **Yellow-legged Gull** of central Asia, or *L.armenicus* the **Armenian Gull**, of eastern Turkey, Iran and the Armenian region of the former USSR. Both are sometimes treated as distinct species or lumped as races of *argentatus*. Similarly the nominate race of *Larus fuscus*, the **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, which breeds in Scandinavia, never occurs in the Gulf. The dark-backed ones in the Gulf are *L.(f.)taimyrensis* and rarely *L.(f.)barabensis* of eastern Siberia and *L.heuglini*, **Heuglins's Gull**. The former two are generally treated as races of *fuscus*. The latter is sometimes given specific status but confusingly some authorities lump it as a race of *L. argentatus*. Ignorance can be bliss.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to Colin Richardson for his hospitality in Dubai, and company in the field which made my 1992 trip possible and very enjoyable. I am also grateful to Rob Morris and John Bannon for their company and guidance around the UAE. A belated thanks to Effie and John Warr for their hospitality and company in 1970.

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SPRING MIGRATION OF LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

Simon Aspinall

In late March and April 1993 record numbers of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* were seen in the eastern United Arab Emirates. On 28 March over 55 were seen between Al Ain and Hatta (SA/RD), with the two largest flocks of 15+ and 35+ near Shuwaib and 10 km. south of Al Madam respectively. Twos and threes were also seen 23 km. south of Al Dhaid and 15 km. west of Masafi, with similar numbers this far north on the following day. On 2 April some 97 birds were found feeding over fields at Hamraniyah (JB), with 88 still present there on 4 April (CR *et al*). This may well have included many of the birds recorded moving north (feeding en route) a few days earlier. Two more birds were seen just to the north-east of Al Ain on 2 April (BT/PO).

A spring migration route (for many species) had been suspected along the western side of the Hajar mountains (Figure 1.) and these observations confirm its existence. Apart from other raptors such as eagles and harrisers which move northward west of the mountains in spring, other soaring species including White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and bee-eaters *Merops sp.* are regularly encountered in the agricultural area around Digdaga/Hamraniyah. Many of these species will have overwintered in southern Arabia or Africa and stop here to 'refuel' prior to crossing the Gulf. Passage along the slope break between the plains and the mountains automatically takes the birds through suitable feeding areas; as well as their benefiting from convectional and obstructional up-currents. It is no coincidence that the suite of bird species recorded in the Digdaga/Hamraniyah area included such a large number of insectivores. Other than the species already mentioned the most noteworthy is the granivorous/insectivorous Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* which is often present here in large numbers in spring. For example 500+ were counted in one field at Hamraniyah in March 1993.

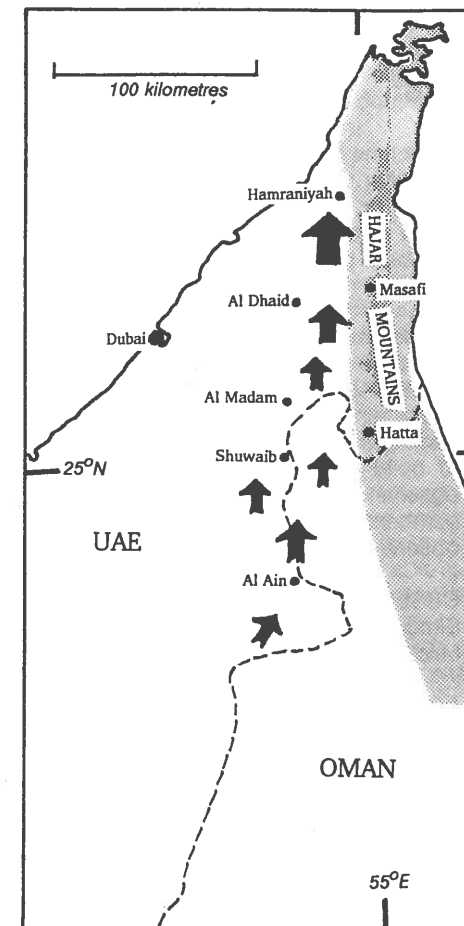


Figure 1. Lesser Kestrel spring migration along the western edge of the Hajar Mountains.

Lesser Kestrel breeds across Europe and much of Asia and winters in tropical Africa and India. It is currently regarded as globally threatened largely due to loss of breeding habitat and pesticide poisoning (but see also later reference to trapping in Bahrain). As a largely insectivorous species it prefers open savannah and plains, such as that around Al Madam, both on migration and in its winter quarters. 'Low intensity' agricultural/pastoral land in the absence of pesticides is particularly favoured for breeding but also used extensively by migrant birds. Lesser Kestrels seen in Arabia will belong to the population wintering in Africa, although some (perhaps many) probably remain in Arabia. The breeding area of these birds is not known precisely and as yet neither their spring nor autumn migration route through Arabia has been determined. Similarly the various arrival and departure points around Arabia have yet to be located. It is evident however that in spring in the UAE at least, migration is largely along a narrow corridor along the western flank of the Hajar mountains. Furthermore it seems that the point of entry into the UAE for Lesser Kestrel and many of the other species already mentioned is at Al Ain, clearly suggesting that the mountains had been followed north through Oman. A single flock of 1000 Pale Rock Sparrows in a field at Al Oha, near Al Ain on 16 March 1993 (CR//DM) lends support to this theory.

In spring peak numbers of Lesser Kestrel are present for an extremely short time in late-March/early April, with only ever very small numbers before and after this. Slightly later records (of 3-6 birds) are annual at at developed oases or oil installations in the western desert of Abu Dhabi, and perhaps relate to birds drifting away from a presently theoretical (!) flyway for larger numbers through the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Alternatively oasis-hopping may now be a viable method for desert crossings. An onward passage through Bahrain occurs in April, where an estimated 500-1,000 are trapped and caged each year in spring (E.Hirschfeld *pers.comm.*). The return autumn movement may be further to the west or on a broader front as records in the UAE are fewer than in spring (and winter) and more scattered in both space and time but again include the Digdaga area which is clearly a traditional stopover (and winter) site (with regular observer coverage). In order to build a fuller picture of Lesser Kestrel movements in Arabia anyone observing large numbers or witnessing a regular passage of even small numbers of this species anywhere in the peninsula is asked to submit their observations to SA or CR (P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, UAE).

OBSERVERS

Simon Aspinall, John K.Bannon, Rona Dennis, Patrick Osborne, Dominic Mitchell, Colin Richardson and Barbara Tigar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful for additional information provided by UAE bird guru Colin Richardson.

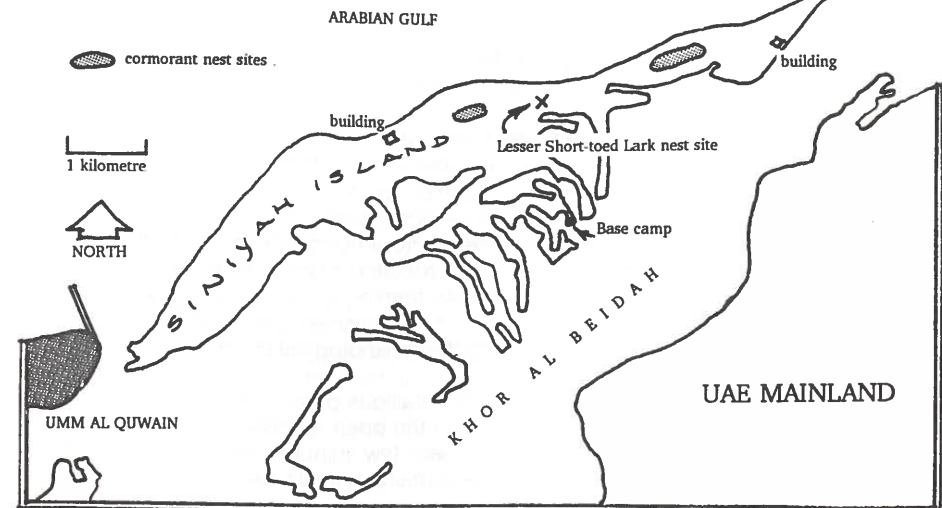
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A BRIEF SURVEY OF SINIYAH ISLAND, UMM AL QUWAIN, 19-20 MAY 1993

Colin Richardson



Siniyah island, showing the sites.

I was able to visit Siniyah Island, off the coast of Umm al Quwain, for a 24 hour period from 19-20 May 1993 during the making of a film of the island's flora and fauna. It was an ideal opportunity to survey the island for evidence of breeding birds.

The island, (approximately 25°39'N, 55°40'E) is about 11 km long and on average only 800 metres wide, although it is totally fragmented with narrow lagoons and mangrove-lined fingers of land, which extend the width up to 3 km on the inland side. A natural breakwater to the huge complex of shallows known as Khor al Beidah, Siniyah Island would have formed part of the mainland coastline if nature had not separated it from the Umm al Quwain peninsula many thousands of years ago.

An estimated 50,000 pairs of **Socotra Cormorants** *Palacrocorax nigrogularis* nest on the island in autumn and the seething mass is often visible from the mainland. I had visited the island several times during the breeding season and had always been struck by the size and activity of the colony. A visit in December 1991 revealed that the colony had relocated 3 km further north due to human disturbance at their old site, thankfully showing the adaptability of the species. Although there were no birds on the island during this visit I did find evidence of a previously unrecorded breeding site near the centre of the island. There were skeletons of young and old scrapes scattered over a 3 hectare area, and the recent activity (estimated at less than 3 years old) had left the vegetation bare. A few days later, on 11 June, I watched a flock of 78,000 birds over the sea nearby and hoped the colony would reform again on the island in 1993.

Meanwhile, after arriving and setting up base on one of the narrow spits of land on the southern side of the island, I walked northward adjacent to the mangroves. The trees were fairly old but not so mature as those on the country's East Coast, where **White-collared Kingfisher** *Halcyon chloris* is resident. I had hoped to find a 'lost' colony here at Umm al Quwain, but this was not to be. However, the trees echoed with the calls of **Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* and migrant **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*. **Little Green Heron** *Butorides striatus* was common too,

obviously finding the mangrove habitat to its liking. I disturbed several pairs of **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis*, though I could find no nest sites. There appeared to be a number of pair bonds between white-phase and dark-phase individuals, a curious phenomenon only referred to by Hancock & Kushlan (1984) in their *The Herons Handbook*. They conclude that Western Reef Heron and **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* are conspecific, and during studies in Kenya found that the (dark) sub-species *schistacea* (Western Reef) was pairing with typical (white) *garzetta* (Little Egret). There seems to be room for error in separating this complex group.

The commonest land birds nesting were **Black-crowned Finch Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* and **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*, their song could be heard everywhere. **Palm Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* and **Graceful Warbler** *Prinia gracilis* were also present in smaller numbers, presumed nesting nearby, while House Sparrow was totally absent (almost a relief!). Before dusk, back at camp, I watched good numbers of **Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* arriving from the mainland at Khor al Beidah, where there are few trees or other roosting places. As the tide rose I was pleased to see 5 **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* feeding on a remaining mudflat about 200 metres away. The largest wintering flock, sometimes over 500 birds, regularly winters on Khor al Beidah, further endorsing the ornithological importance of the island and khors in this area.

At sunset we were invaded by huge battalions of sandflies which just rose up from the ground, making us dread our night in the open exposed to this menace. But they were soon gone and we enjoyed the last few minutes before pitch darkness watching Little Green Herons feeding in the remaining shallows.

The next day I started early and made my way across a series of channels and bays towards the north-west sea coast. I found no evidence of tern colonies (although it was likely that Saunders' and White-cheeked nested on one or more of the lagoon's other islands and shoals) and soon decided to head back to avoid being cut off from base camp by the tide. While crossing a large area of salt flats, sparsely covered with *Haloepelis* scrub a distinctive 'drrrp' call stopped me in my tracks. The sound came from a small brown bird in flight which then landed and hid behind a piece of salt bush 50 metres away. When it showed itself I saw it was a **Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens* carrying food in its bill, presumably for recently-hatched young. I spent half-an-hour here but found only two birds, both carrying food. They were very shy as they realised they were my focus of interest. I am sure there were several pairs present confirming a report of similar behaviour in late April 1973 (F.E.Warr *pers comm.*). It is doubtful if the island had been visited by birdwatchers in spring in the intervening years.

Before being picked up by boat a few hours later, we agreed the trip had been well worthwhile, all having enjoyed this rare chance to visit the island in spring.

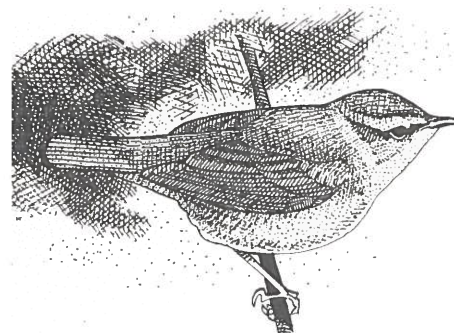
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would particularly like to thank Mike Shepley for organising the trip and offer compliments to Christian, Sina, Cheryl and Marijcke for preparing a magnificent paella under difficult (and dark!) conditions during our evening on the island.

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DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus* IN BATEEN WOOD, ABU DHABI.

S.L. James

The 10th December 1992 dawned like many days in the Emirates, hot and sunny, with a light breeze. I set out to work my local patch of Bateen Wood with some enthusiasm, as I had been away from Abu Dhabi, and this was my first visit for 10 days.

Walking slowly around the wood produced a few migrants, including an uncommon Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*. Rejuvenated by this find, I set out to check the remaining woodland with more care. As I was walking through an area of long grass, interspersed with reeds, in the centre of the wood, I heard a short, loud "chek-chek" call from a patch of grass about 10 metres in front of me. I remained motionless and the call was repeated "chek-chek....chek-chek", with several seconds between the pair of calls. The calls were coming from just above ground level and I could see movement in the grass, but as yet no bird was in view. This carried on for well over a minute, the calls being loud staccato quality. Suddenly I saw a dark "*Phylloscopus*" flit into the open and land on a bramble twig, just above the ground. As it turned its head, I realised I was watching a Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*.

I knew this was a major rarity in the UAE so I spent a long time following the bird and listening to its distinctive calls. Most of the time it was feeding within half a metre of the ground and several times on the ground itself. Occasionally it would work its way up a nearby bush and on a later occasion I saw it fly-catching from near the top of the bush. I followed the bird for c.30 minutes, as it moved around its feeding territory, but it gave mainly fleeting views, as for long periods it was hidden in the undergrowth or low down in bushes. However it could always be located by its loud persistent call. It did however come into the open several times, sometimes coming very close to me and viewed down to a range of 3-4 metres. Providing one kept still, the bird was very confiding and totally unconcerned by my presence. I took the following description:

DESCRIPTION

General appearance: Size of Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*; generally brown body tones; the whole of the upperparts appearing dark brown, without any green tint.

Behaviour and jizz: The overall impression was of a small, dark, skulking *Phylloscopus* with few field marks. At close range, the distinctive head pattern was obvious and the bird's constant calling and tail- and wing-flicking were diagnostic.

Head: The head was small and rounded, like Chiffchaff, but with a broad, pale supercilium, bordered by a dark (black?) eyestripe. The

supercilium was paler in front of the eye, becoming more buffy behind the eye, where it was long and prominent. The ear coverts were paler than the rest of the upperparts, with small dark-brown blotches.

Underparts: Underparts were mainly light buff, especially on the sides of breast and flanks. The lower belly was dirty grey as was the throat. The undertail coverts were pale buff.

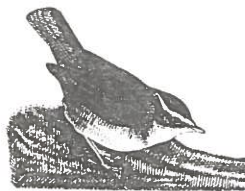
Bare parts: The bill was small and thin, like Chiffchaff and it appeared to be all dark. However, when very close views were obtained it could be seen that the lower mandible was horn coloured for two-thirds of its length. The legs and feet were brown.

The next day (11th) when I returned to the site accompanied by three other observers, the wood was silent and the bird could not be found. I visited the wood on two further occasions (12th & 15th) but without success. However on 16th December (unknown to me at the time) Rob Queded saw and heard the bird in the same place. On 17th I was again birding in Bateen Wood and more as an afterthought rather than a genuine hope, I went to check where the Dusky Warbler had been. About 50 metres from the site I heard the distinctive "chek-chek" call and within seconds found the bird inhabiting low bushes adjacent to the original place. I followed the bird for several minutes and enjoyed prolonged views of the bird feeding out in the open. Despite further visits it was not seen again.

I find the "absence" of the bird for five days puzzling. Although it was secretive in habits, its distinctive call was loud and easy to locate. I feel sure that had the bird been present in the intervening dates I would have found it. Perhaps it had moved to nearby Palace Gardens (out of bounds) c.200 metres away.

Dusky Warbler is a long-distance migrant from Siberia, south to Mongolia, Manchuria and Sakhalin; and from Inner Mongolia west to the eastern Himalayas (BWP VI). It has a long history of autumn vagrancy to many countries of Western Europe and a more limited vagrancy pattern east of its known breeding range. So it is not surprising to find it as a vagrant to the UAE, probably as a result of westward displacement in anticyclonic conditions. There has been one previous record for the UAE, on 19th October 1990, in Saffa Park, Dubai.

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RADDE'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus schwarzi* AT THE EMIRATES GOLF COURSE

A First Record for Arabia

Colin Richardson

It was the nearest thing to Dubai's 'silly' season, the months of October and November when almost anything can turn up in the United Arab Emirates and with spectacular regularity at the superbly landscaped Emirates Golf Club. It was still 32°C half-an-hour before sunset on 19th October 1992 when I was making my way through a most interesting section of scrub between 2 busy fairways. My attention was drawn to a quiet 'tuc'..'tuc' coming from a low thorn bush about 10 yards away. The call seemed to me at first to be that of an Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*. It was still worth investigating as they had not been common this autumn in Dubai and besides it seemed to be behaving rather oddly for this species.

The bird was skulking in a young *Prosopis cineraria* bush about 1 ft. from the ground and I could just see the head and upper body. From the head shape it had to be a *phylloscopus*, but the face pattern was striking. A broad off-white (creamy?) supercilium stretched from above the eye to the edge of the nape. Could this really be a *Radde's Warbler Phylloscopus schwarzi*? The distinctive head markings were almost diagnostic, but I knew that there could be confusion with Dusky Warbler *P.fuscatus* so separated from my field guide a good description must be obtained to be sure of the identification. As I began to see more of its body it called again and flicked its wings. It flew to a nearby bush and was easy to follow during the next 10 minutes when I was able to note down the following description:

DESCRIPTION

Size, structure and general appearance: A typical *phylloscopus* warbler in shape, appearing smaller and darker than a Chiffchaff, though chubby with a shortish tail. The whole upperside including cap, nape, wings, back and tail were a dark, warm olive brown, with no white to be seen anywhere.

Jizz: It was hiding at first, low down in a thorn bush but did not appear to mind being watched from close range (down to 10 ft.). Each time it 'ticked' it moved or flicked its wings slightly. The face pattern was reminiscent of a miniature Moustached or Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* or *schoenobaenus* although the size and shape were more like that of a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Each time it broke cover it flew 10 ft. to the nearest bush and was easy to follow with binoculars.

Head: The crown and nape were medium warm brown (similar in shade to Reed Warbler *A.scirpaceous*) and what could be seen of the throat was pale. The face pattern was very distinctive. A broad pale off-white supercilium ran from above the eye to a point almost at the nape. The ear coverts (cheeks) appeared blotchy, streaked brown and cream along the horizontal lines of the feathering. The neck was very short emphasising the bird's chubby appearance.

Upperparts, wings and tail: The mantle, wings and upper tail feathers were uniform medium-dark warm brown matching the nape. The colouring was much darker than Chiffchaff *P.collybita*, but more like an *Acrocephalus* warbler. The tail appeared quite short.

Underparts: As the bird perched slightly above me at one stage, I could see the very buffy (orangy) flanks and undertail coverts. There appeared to be a pale buff or yellowish tinge to the belly although at no stage did I manage to see the bird face-on.

Bare parts: The legs were pale fleshy-coloured while the bill was noted as rather strong for a *phylloscopus* genus.

Voice: The most distinctive and probably diagnostic feature of this bird was its voice. It uttered a quiet 'tuc'..'tuc.tuc' at regular intervals, stopping only when it realised I was watching it intently. However it soon carried on, occasionally uttering 'tuctuc' in a way

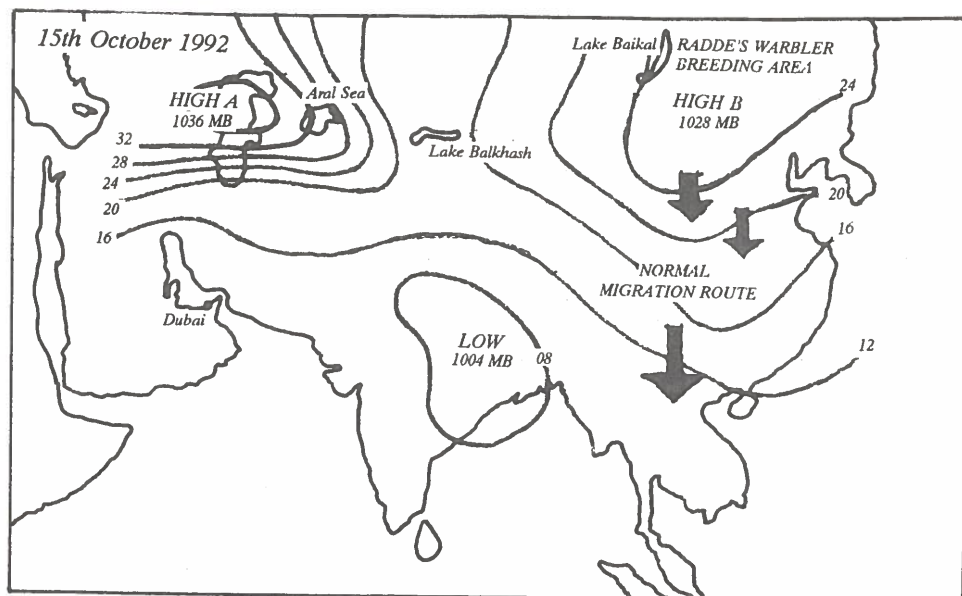


Figure 1. Weather pattern on 15th October 1992 over Central Asia.

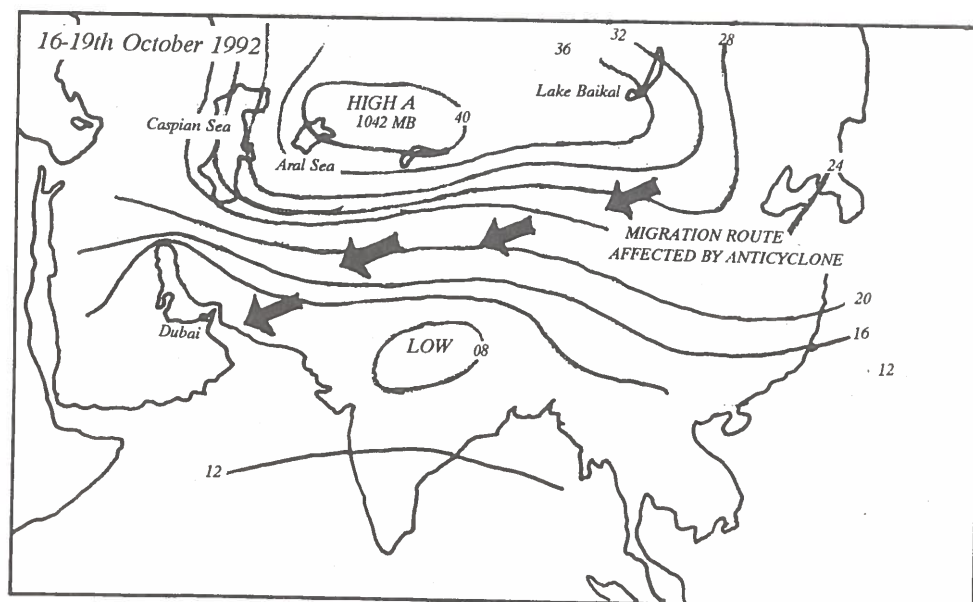


Figure 2. Weather pattern 16-19th October 1992 over Central Asia, showing probable route of wind-affected Siberian migrants.

Source: Steve Western, Dubai Airport Meteorological Office.

not dissimilar to the short call of Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis*. However the call could also be well compared to the short tick of Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart or Olivaceous Warbler, although this bird's voice was very quiet, seeming further away than it actually was.

Radde's Warbler breeds in southern Siberia, Mongolia, northern Manchuria and Tibet (Lewington *et al* 1991/Parmeter & Byers 1991) wintering in south-east Asia (Harrison 1982). Small numbers occur in Hong Kong from October (Viney & Phillipps 1988). Vagrants have been recorded in several countries in the Western Palaearctic between September and November and the species appears to be easily affected by adverse weather conditions prevailing over central Asia at the time of its autumn migration.

The following summary of the weather pattern during the 5 days preceding this record was supplied by Steve Western of Dubai's Meteorological Office. The correlation between the unique weather situation which developed in Central Asia during this period and the bird's occurrence in Dubai is interesting and quite remarkable.

GENERAL WEATHER SYNOPSIS FOR THE PERIOD 15-19 OCTOBER 1992

Steve Western

An anticyclone HIGH A was centred over the northern Caspian Sea. Another anticyclone HIGH B was over Eastern Siberia at approximately 45°N, 110°E. There was a col, or region of slack air to the south of Lake Balkhash. There was a belt of strong easterly winds across the southern Caspian Sea (Figure 1). Over the period 16-17th the HIGH intensified and moved generally north-east. HIGH A moved to the north of Lake Balkhash and the central pressure increased from 1036 mbs to 1042 mbs. HIGH B moved north to roughly 55°N, 100°E, but more importantly a ridge of high pressure extended eastwards across the Hindu Kush and the Tibetan Plateau, effectively linking the two previously separate anticyclones (Figure 2). The result of this was that for a short period from the 16th to early on the 19th the streamlines led directly from the Mongolian/North China area directly to the Zagros Mountains in Iran.

Despite the apparently strong surface gradients the winds were not particularly high. In fact many stations reported winds of 10 knots or less, clearly insufficient to transport birds over 2,000 miles in 36 hours. However the upper winds, particularly on the 16th and 17th showed a good 20 knots from the east along the northern edge of the mountains from Alma Ata to Tehran. This would give a distance of about 1,000 miles over the 2 day period.

So either the birds were already in the Lake Balkhash area around the 15/16th, or they may have been carried there by the winds around HIGH B from further east. Or alternatively they were trapped there by adverse head winds around HIGH B. They could then have taken off flying up to 5,000 ft. or higher to clear the escarpment which leads up to the Tibetan Plateau and in doing so were picked up by the unusually strong easterlies and 2 days later around the 17/18th found themselves in the Zagros Mountains. On the 18th the winds dropped and birds following their instinct would head south into the Southern Arabian Gulf.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to Steve Western for providing this exciting insight into the weather pattern over Asia during mid October 1992. Thanks also to Martin Pitt who was faced with the UAE's first Dusky Warbler 2 years previously and helped me to separate these difficult species.

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DO SKUAS OVERFLY THE RUB AL KHALI ON SPRING PASSAGE TO THE ARABIAN GULF?

J.K. Bannon

In early April 1993 I recorded an interesting northbound passage of both Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* from Jumeirah beach, just south of Dubai.

Observations were made during four evenings until dusk as follows:

1 April 1992	30 minutes	Arctic Skua	25	
		Pomarine Skua	8	TOTAL = 33
3 April 1993	30 minutes	Arctic Skua	6	
		Pomarine Skua	4	TOTAL = 12
4 April 1993	40 minutes	Arctic Skua	9	
		Pomarine Skua	3	
		Arctic/Pom	6	TOTAL = 18
7 April 1993	30 minutes	Arctic Skua	7	
		Pomarine Skua	2	
		Arctic/Pom	3	TOTAL = 12

A total of 75 skuas were noted in just 2 hours 10 minutes of observation. All of which, excepting odd birds briefly chasing terns south, were heading strongly northwards towards the Straits of Hormuz. The Straits are probably a major staging area for both species before beginning the 5,000 km. overland journey via Iran and Central Asia to their nesting grounds in the Arctic tundra. That the Straits of Hormuz is a focal point of Spring skua passage is further supported by records from the UAE East Coast, Oman and Pakistan (where birds have been seen heading west along the Mekran coast in Spring (Roberts 1991)).

Research into skua records in the southern Gulf region show that both species are very scarce in Eastern Saudi Arabia (Bundy *et al* 1989), Bahrain (E.Hirschfeld *pers.comm.*) and Qatar (F.E.Warr). It is only along the coasts of Oman and the northern Emirates that these species are recorded frequently in Spring.

I suggest that the birds I observed off Dubai in Spring 1993 had made a considerable short-cut overland along the 55°E line of longitude, from near Salalah on the Arabian Sea to south of Dubai in the Arabian Gulf, a distance of 900 kms. The sea route distance from the Gulf of Aden to the Straits of Hormuz is almost 2,000 km. (Figure 1).

Overland passage of skuas is well documented, with many records for example from Eilat, Europe and Great Britain. Both Arctic and Pomarine Skuas have been noted in the south Caspian Sea area (Hollom *et al* 1988), which is perhaps the next northbound stopping-off point for the skuas assembling in the Straits of Hormuz and which would involve a further overland flight of 1,200 kms.

That skuas should overfly the Empty Quarter (Rub al Khali), might seem incredible but is obviously well within their capabilities and does save 1,000 km. off their journey. Surely worth the risks involved? Further discussion is welcomed.

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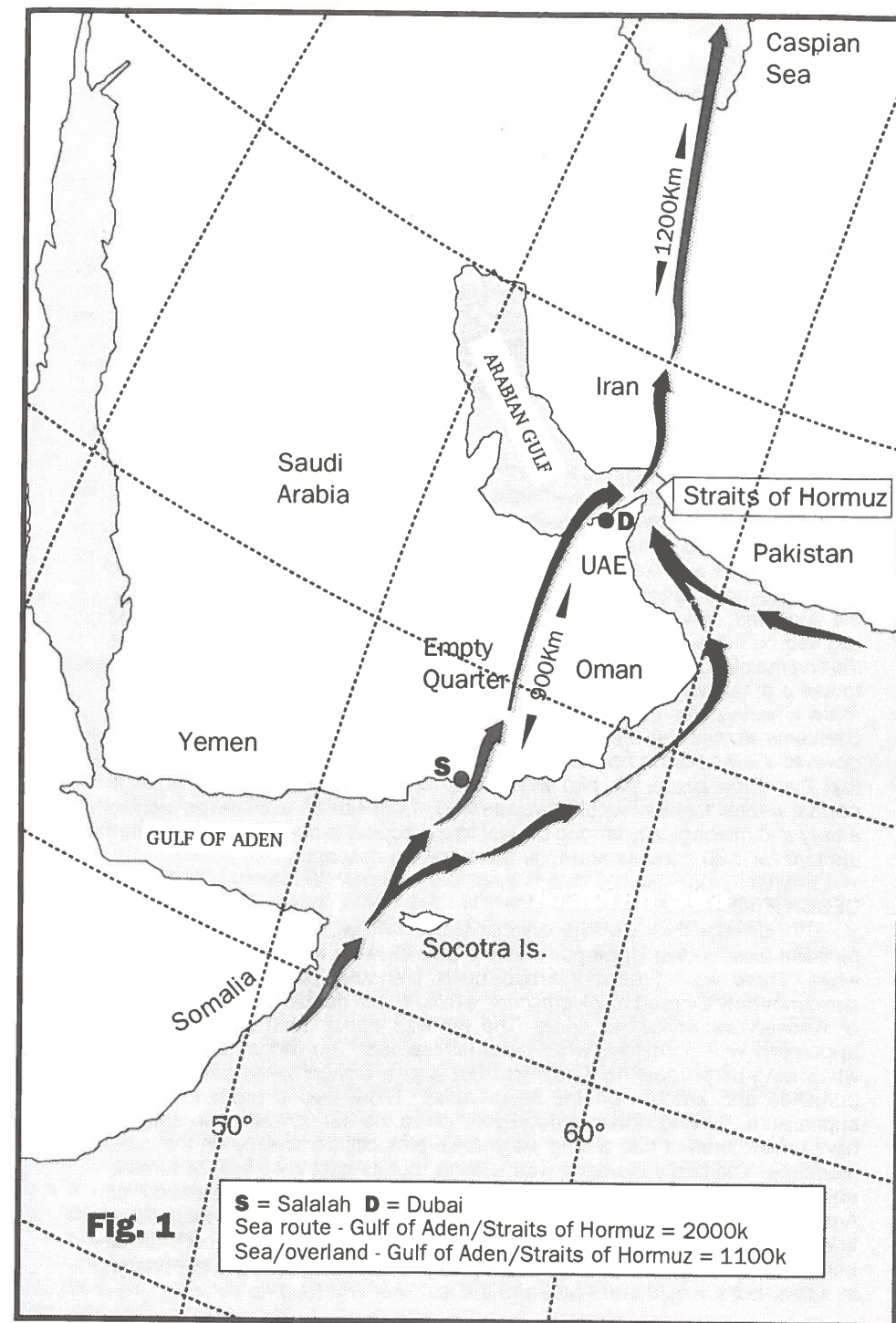
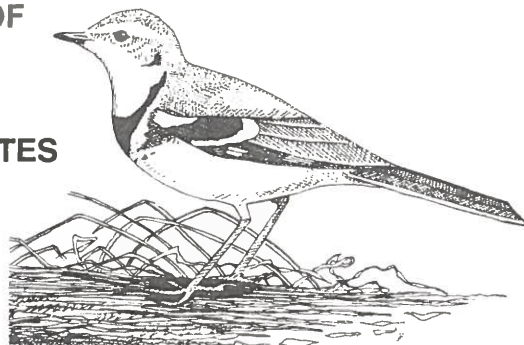


Figure 1. Spring migration routes of Skuas around the Arabian Peninsula.

THE OCCURRENCE OF FOREST WAGTAIL *Dendronanthus indicus* IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

S.L. James



On the 30th October 1992 the author was birdwatching in Bateen Wood, Abu Dhabi. This is a well-established woodland covering 25 hectares, providing deep shade and shelter for a wide variety of migrants. There had been a fall of migrants overnight and the woodland was alive with birds. Consequently I was walking very slowly along a woodland path when I heard a loud distinct Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* 'pink' call and saw a bird fly up from the floor, with all-white outer tail feathers and large white wing bars. The bird alighted on a low branch and as I raised my binoculars I fully expected to see the first mainland record of Chaffinch in the UAE. I was therefore totally amazed to see a small wagtail-like bird staring back at me and wagging its tail! Even more amazing was the bird's plumage; four white wing bars and two black crescents across the breast. Wow! As I was taking all this in, the bird flew down to the woodland floor and started 'trundling along' just like a clockwork toy! Every few paces the bird would stop and as well as wagging its tail in normal wagtail fashion, would sway its body from side to side. It was feeding slowly and methodically among the leaf litter, keeping to deep shade. I followed the bird for c.30 minutes and took the following description:

DESCRIPTION

Smaller than a White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, with a shorter tail and pipit-like proportions. Upperparts were a pale olive-brown, underparts creamy white. There was a distinct broad black triangular patch on the breast, surrounded by a broad black crescent, similar to the double black breast band of Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*. The tail was darker than the rest of the upperparts with prominent white outer-tail feathers. The wings had two large white wing-bars, recalling Chaffinch, but with a smaller white patch on the primaries and another on the secondaries. There was a prominent white supercilium, curving downwards slightly on to the ear coverts, with smudgy olive-brown lores. It had a long wagtail-like pink bill, particularly on the lower mandible. The bird's plumage was striking, but its habits were quite remarkable! It would 'trundle' around the leaf litter, reminiscent of Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* in stealth and creeping behaviour, wagging its tail continuously while walking. It would stop, pivot its body from side-to-side and continue as before. When alarmed it would stand motionless before flying into a low branch in a tree, but it would soon return to the leaf litter and feed as before.

Richardson (1990) lists three other records for the United Arab Emirates:

1. One in November 1987 in Bateen Wood, Abu Dhabi.
2. One on 27th November 1989 at Bu Hasa.
3. One on 6th December 1989 at Shah.

On each occasion the bird was very habitat specific, being found in deep shade, on grassy areas with leaf litter. Remarkably, the 1987 Bateen Wood record was found c.50 metres away from the 1992 record (D. Robinson *pers. comm.*).

All the records are from a relatively small area in the UAE and to date there are no other records for the rest of Arabia. This charismatic Asian gem is obviously one to look out for in the future, in neighbouring Gulf states.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Dave Robinson for his good company in the field and for providing background information on the three previous records for the UAE.

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REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* BREEDING IN DUBAI the first breeding record for the United Arab Emirates Colin Richardson

I heard a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* singing in the newly formed *Phragmites australis* reed beds at the Zabeel water treatment plant in Dubai on 2 March 1990. This territorial behaviour continued during most of my (almost daily) visits to the site from 2-23 March 1990 and a year later, in 1991 I heard one singing again from 10 March to the end of April.

I have heard many migrant species singing on spring passage in the Emirates. Although very exciting to consider, this does not necessarily mean they are about to nest. In addition to Reed Warbler, the most notable of songsters heard are Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, several wheatears *Oenanthe* sp., Sylvia warblers and Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*.

The first Reed Warbler of spring 1992 was found at this site on 13 February, and on 17 February 1992 I heard one singing (at first thought to be a vagrant Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* which had also been seen several times in the reed bed). The area of reed beds (now approximately 3 acres) was also sheltering several pairs of Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* which were also breeding for the first time in Dubai. Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* was also in full song from mid-February

(although it did not nest). Reed Warbler was heard singing on several occasions throughout March and April by a number of observers including Mike Jennings and John Bannon. In May there was heavy passage of Marsh Warbler and by then Reed Warbler had stopped singing, although at least one bird was seen regularly until May. On 13 June 1992, I found a young bird. It was making a rather high-pitched 'dzz...dzz', while at least one of the adults was calling (a low grating churr) nearby.

Later, on 5 August 1992, I found 2 recently fledged young and it is possible that these might have been from a second brood. Small numbers of birds remained at the site until 5 October.

Reed Warbler breeds extensively across Europe, North Africa and parts of the Middle East north of latitude 26° in 2 races (Parmeter & Byers 1991). In the UAE it is a regular passage migrant in spring from late February to May (though never common) and is less regular August to November (Richardson 1990). The only other recently discovered nest sites on the Arabian Peninsula are at Tabuk and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. In 1989, of the estimated 40 pairs at Tabuk most produced young from late June to July (Stagg 1989). In early June 1991 a nest with 2 young was found near Riyadh where the young had all (presumably fledged) and flown by 12 July (James 1991). There are several other unconfirmed breeding records in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Bundy *et al* 1989).

Other information on the species' breeding biology in the Middle East can be found in *The Birds of Israel* (Paz 1987) which describes the breeding itinerary of the subspecies *A.s. fuscus*. Summer visitors are present from March to September, with nesting taking place from April to June. 2-5 eggs are laid (usually 3-4) and 2 broods are reared in a season. This would seem to match the evidence of observations in Dubai remarkably closely. This demonstrates that even Reed Warblers can be opportunistic if the right habitat is available.

Reed Warbler is the 71st species to breed in the Emirates.

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