



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Oman & UAE

Arabian Birding Adventure

10th – 23rd November 2016 (14 Days)

Trip Report



Grey Hypocolius by Adam Riley

Tour Leader: Mark Beevers
Trip Report Compiled by Mark Beevers

Top ten species:

1. Arabian Golden Winged Grosbeak.
2. Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse.
3. Grey Hypocolius.
4. Egyptian Nightjar.
5. Pharaoh Eagle Owl.
6. Streaked Scrub-Warbler.
7. Sand Partridge.
8. Demoiselle Crane.
9. Arabian Partridge.
10. Greater Hoopoe Lark

Tour Summary

Day one was an arrival day but because some of the group had arrived early, we took a late afternoon stroll around the hotel garden and the overgrown garden opposite. It was never going to be a bird-filled afternoon, and the Shikra that I saw the previous day failed to appear, but we did see plenty of Grey Francolins, about ten Eurasian Hoopoes, plenty of White-cheeked and Red-vented Bulbuls as they gathered to roost and a co-operative pair of Graceful Prinias.

The first full day of the tour saw us heading north-east towards the Oman border where our destination was the excellent Wamm Farm. This site is famous amongst UAE birders and can be teeming with birds, although we chose a fairly quiet day to visit. En route we stopped at a wadi where I had previously seen Streaked Scrub-Warbler but on this occasion this species would have to wait until later in the trip to get on the checklist. Those that alighted from the bus first were rewarded with a brief look at a Striolated Bunting which very quickly departed and which proved to be the only one on the tour. We gave the wadi half an hour, picking up species such as Green Bee-eater, Desert Lark, Lesser Whitethroat, Persian Wheatear, Black Redstart, Indian Silverbill and perhaps best of all, a Menetries's Warbler.

We moved on to Wamm Farm where two of our first good birds were a couple of Masked Wagtails, a bird that I thought might have been problematic. The farm is mainly grassland with fields in various stages of cultivation, some of which were irrigated. Indian Rollers were present in good numbers and each was diligently checked just in case it was a European Roller and eventually, as we neared the end of our walk, we found two. A plethora of Pipits produced Long-billed, Richard's, Tawny and Red-throated, along with a Citrine Wagtail, whilst amongst the Wheatears we found Red-tailed, Desert and quite a few Isabelline. A European Stonechat was quite a good find as this species has only recently become a rare winter visitor to the UAE and we saw our first Bluethroat of the trip. Better quality birds included a Little Bittern and a couple of Bimaculated Larks and as we neared the end of the walk, perched up was a bird that I knew was there, a vagrant male Amur Falcon, just the 22nd to be recorded in the UAE. All in all, an excellent first morning's birding, after which we had an equally excellent lunch at a local



Grey Francolin by Mark Beevers



Afghan restaurant.



Black Drongo by Mark Beevers

for his assistance. We also saw five Arabian Oryx and three Mountain Gazelles, including one that was trying to break back into the compound, shame about the fence but still great mammals to see.

We went back to Ra's al Khor on day three of the tour, as Mushrif Park didn't open its gates until 08:00, where amongst a good selection of herons, ducks and shorebirds, we found a fine Yellow-billed Stork, a couple of juvenile Purple Herons, twenty-two Eurasian Spoonbills and two Pied Avocets. We also saw two Common Jackals patrolling the edge of the mangroves. We then moved on to Mushrif Park where almost the first birds we saw were three Arabian Babblers. Slowly we started to find common birds such as Southern Grey Shrike and Purple Sunbird and as the morning warmed up, a few birds of prey appeared overhead, including Greater-spotted Eagle, the ubiquitous Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Steppe Buzzard and Crested Honey Buzzard. Miki found the bird of the day, a Black Drongo, right in the parking lot above hordes of children - to whom it seemed completely oblivious, its tameness allowing for some great photographs to be taken. I knew we had a chance for this bird but didn't know its favoured area so it was a relief that we connected as it is just the 10th for the UAE.

White-tailed Plover was a target for the tour and THE place to see it in the UAE was a farm known as The Pivot Fields. *I knew that this farm had ceased operations. Would we be able to get in? Would it still be worth it?* As we were passing right by the place, it made sense to have a quick look but my fears were quickly realised, the site is now an ex-site, finished, which is a great loss to UAE birding. Disappointed, we headed for lunch and then on towards Jebel Hafeet via Al Ain, considered to be the most beautiful city in the UAE. Before we got there, though, we detoured to AL Qudra, or the Saih al Salam Desert Reserve as the place is also called. Only a small site and with people picnicking at the far end, it was nevertheless full of birds.

We then returned to the outskirts of Dubai, to a wetland known as Ra's al Khor and although the front of the hide was taken up by photographers, we still managed to see a few species, including an estimated 5,000 Greater Flamingos, our first Greater-spotted Eagle and a few Gull-billed Terns. We didn't hang around too long for we had one more site to visit and we needed to be there just before dusk. We arrived at Qarn Nazwa by 17:30 and started checking the cliff-face and it was a stroke of good luck that we saw a local birder who kindly put us on the exact spot for our target bird, the impressive Pharaoh Eagle Owl, which sat blinking at the sinking sun and was even gently calling. A great bird that we all enjoyed, and a big thank you to Mark Smiles



Eurasian Hoopoe by Mark Beevers





White-eared Bulbul by Mark Beevers

bird.

Pre-breakfast on day four saw us patrolling the grounds of our hotel looking for Sand Partridge and Chukar Partridge, neither of which materialised but we did see our first Blue Rock Thrush. After breakfast, we set off down the mountain (Jebel Hafeet is the highest mountain in the UAE, with the road climbing 11.7 kilometres to a height of 1,219 metres), stopping at the Sand Partridge backup site on the way. Here we found two groups, totalling nine birds, and we also picked up our first Egyptian Vultures and Hume's Wheatear, along with some more Desert Larks. With the Sand Partridges 'in the bag', we continued down to the verdant Mubazzarah Green Area where we were to spend the rest of the morning.

Almost immediately we found one of our main targets, a pair of attractive Arabian Partridges quietly feeding at the edge of some woodland. We then walked slowly up through the park picking up common species but also Common Kingfisher, a showy Wryneck, another European Stonechat, a Bluethroat, a Northern Wheatear and Water Pipit. At the top end of the park there is a dry wadi that we wanted to enter but a security man had other ideas, which was not good news. Eventually, he was convinced that we were not going to be a problem and he let us through, but only for a couple of hundred metres - he wanted us to stay in his view. Not perfect but at least we got part way to where I wanted to be and we quickly found Eastern Orphean Warbler and the tiny Plain Leaf Warbler. We also put up a couple of Sand Partridge and found another male Blue Rock Thrush, as well as quite a few Hume's Wheatears but, alas, no Hooded Wheatear.



Green Bee-eater by Mark Beevers





Carmine Darter by Mark Beevers

After lunch and a bit of a rest, we were off, down the mountain again to Zakher Lake, some thirty minutes from the hotel. Good numbers of wildfowl were dutifully checked and amongst the hundred and twenty-four Common Pochard, we located a lone female Tufted Duck, the only one we were to see in the UAE. Two Drake Wigeon were also picked out and there was a nice selection of shorebirds, including a flock of sixty Ruff and a couple of Black-tailed Godwits. At the far end of the pond there was a group of Red-wattled Lapwings and amongst them, as expected, was our quarry, a vagrant Spur-winged Plover, just the 10th for the UAE. Unfortunately, the White-tailed Plover that had accompanied it the previous day was nowhere to be seen. A juvenile Purple Heron was found, as was an adult Black-crowned Night Heron, which proved to be the only one of the tour, and a Whiskered Tern floated by too. Two hours had flown by, and it was getting dark, so it was time to return to our hotel. However, the birding wasn't over for a couple of us, for whilst Andrew and I were trying to get round a computer problem, Ann had returned to their room to do some laundry. She quickly returned to say that there was an Owl in the grounds and so we were off to check it out. *Of all the Owls I could have wished it to be, it turned out to be just a Little Owl - but hey, it's the first to be recorded by Rockjumper on this tour.*

Monday 14th November was our last morning in the UAE, Oman was awaiting us. Before breakfast we went back to the Sand Partridge stakeout and had great views of a male sat on a rock and we also saw Red-tailed and Hume's Wheatears and four Desert Larks. We weren't due to cross the border until noon, so we spent a couple of hours in a wadi at the bottom of Jebel Hafeet, called Wadi Tarabat. It took a bit of finding, but we got there eventually and we spent the next ninety minutes slowly working it. We flushed a Sand Partridge but it was Warblers that kept us occupied and these included Desert Whitethroat, Eastern Orphee, the really attractive Asian Desert Warbler, Common Chiffchaff and Plain Leaf Warbler. The border crossing and lunch took a while but by 14:15 we were on our way into Oman.

Our first port of call was on the coast at Liwa, one of only two patches of Mangrove in the whole of Oman and home to the critically endangered, highly localised and rarely seen *kalbaensis* race of Collared Kingfisher. Needless to say, we didn't see one, but our walk along the edge of the mangroves and then along the seashore produced our first chances to try our hands at separating Greater and Lesser Sand Plover, which we succeeded in doing. An Osprey flew by, disturbing thousands of Gulls, which were our next challenge. We painstakingly worked our way through hundreds of large White-headed Gulls and



Desert Wheatear by Mark Beevers



eventually found individuals of Caspian, Steppe and Heuglin's Gull that we were all happy with, pity they weren't as easy as the adult Sooty Gull that flew over! Greater and Lesser Crested Terns were also present and a Saunderson's Tern flew past too.



Schmidt's (White-spotted) Fringe-toed Lizard
by Mark Beevers

Oman - apart from the extreme north at Musandam. A group of noisy Arabian Babblers went through, Desert Whitethroats and Asian Desert Warblers were regularly seen and a Tawny Pipit was found. The rest of the day was pretty much a travel day during which we had to swap our minibus for four-by-fours, after which we had a long drive to Nizwa.

We arrived at Nizwa in time to check in, freshen up and then collect our picnic dinner, for tonight, we were off in search of a very special bird, the recently rediscovered Omani Owl. I'd done plenty of research into this bird and the various locations from where it had been recorded and getting to the initial site was out of the question, it was a three-hour drive away. Fortunately, there was a wadi close to Nizwa that I had been to previously, and that was where we were to spend the next three hours. We slowly walked the wadi, stopping every hundred metres or so, trying for the Owl and Pallid Scops Owl but nothing was responding, we'd drawn a blank. Downhearted, we called it a day and set off back down the Wadi. The Omani Owl was known to occur above the village but we'd failed to find it. I decided to give the area below the village a chance, one last chance, fifteen minutes maximum, as time was rolling on. We slowly set off, walking down the wadi, hearing nothing. I checked my watch, one more minute and that would be it, and then I heard it - a faint, distant, single hoot. I wasn't sure at first so I strained my ears and yes, it was there, a definite hoot. I got others to listen and, slowly, several others managed to pick up the call. We moved closer and the bird was clearly responding, giving both the four note hoot and the pulse call too. We'd

The following morning, we visited the other patch of mangrove in Oman, at Shinas, which is also home to the elusive Collared Kingfisher where we found a Little Bittern, Wryneck and Red-breasted Flycatcher, but no Kingfishers. Two Clamorous Reed Warblers showed well but a Sykes's Warbler that responded to the iPod steadfastly refused to show itself, despite my best efforts. As we left the site, bound for Khatmat Milahah, we found another Arabian Babbler. A new road layout at Khatmat Milahah meant that we couldn't get to the area I wanted to bird so we had to try somewhere nearby - which was the same habitat and which I hoped would have our target bird. It didn't take us too long to find it, a smart male Variable Wheatear, here at the only regular site for the species in



Rock Semaphore Gecko by Mark Beevers



found it with a minute to spare. Try as we might, we could not pick up the bird in the spotlight but we'd found Omani Owl against the odds and more importantly, we'd found our own Omani Owl for I have since learnt that the species had not previously been reported from the location we had it. *Despite not seeing the bird, I was elated!*



Pied Wheatear by Mark Beevers

Our destination for day seven was the Sayq Plateau in the High Hajar Mountains. A couple of stops on the way up produced fare such as Arabian Babbler and Desert Whitethroat, but our main birding destination was a water hole called Khail-Haml. This isolated pool of water can be fantastic, as a continuous stream of birds come in to drink and we were not to be disappointed, for almost the first bird we looked at was a stunning male Black-throated Thrush, *now that wasn't expected!* Neither was the fifteen or so that flew off as we approached and in fact, we estimated that at least twenty (possibly even twenty-five) birds were present, setting a new record for Oman. Many Chiffchaffs were around the pool, as were several Water Pipits and a couple of Green

Sandpipers; whilst overhead, upwards of seventy Brown-necked Ravens were in the air. Having given the waterhole some time, two of us set off in search of the monotypic Streaked Scrub Warbler. We soon found a pair but they didn't wait around for the group to see. There was nothing for it, we would have to find a second pair, which we did quite easily and this pair gave brilliant views, Tim then went on to find a third pair. *Another target in the bag!* We explored a few more areas and after lunch, we visited Wadi Bani Habeeb to admire the ruined village there before returning to the waterhole, where Black-throated Thrushes were still in attendance, along with a Song Thrush and there was a very brief appearance of a Barbary Falcon. We met Jens Eriksson, who is Mr Oman in respect of birds, and he gave us some valuable information, unfortunately, we had to leave as we wanted to re-visit our Omani Owl site before dinner. We did so, but on this occasion there was no sound of the Owl, but what is more galling is that had we have stayed chatting to Jens a few minutes longer, we would have seen the male Eversmann's Redstart that came in to drink just five minutes after we left! *Birding can be so cruel at times.*



Bluethroat by Mark Beevers





Purple Blushed Darter by Mark Beevers

Day eight was another long travel day as we relocated to Ad Duqm via the coast at Shannah and then Filim. We came to an abrupt halt three hours into our journey, as a Greater Hoopoe Lark flew across the road, in front of the lead vehicle. We turned around and quickly located several of these stunning Larks, whilst also enjoying a Short-toed Eagle that we disturbed from a telegraph pole. We stopped again an hour later to let the second vehicle catch up as we had lost contact with it. This turned out to be a fortuitous decision, for whilst we were stretching our legs, a flock of five Cream-coloured Coursers flew over, *the birding Gods were smiling on us today*. We arrived at Shannah by late morning, arranged our lunch in the only restaurant and then set

about trying to find some important shorebirds. We drove north across unstable, sandy mud, getting one of the vehicles stuck in the process and then the second car decided to return to town for lunch. Our car carried on until it was unsafe to proceed further, so we went on foot. It was worth it, for after a couple of hundred metres we found what we were after, a big flock of Crab Plovers, but they were distant. We had hit the place at just the right time though, as the tide was just starting to fall and the roosting shorebirds were getting closer. Unfortunately, we had a pre-arranged lunch to deal with, so we had to leave, but not before picking out a Great Knot. A hastily eaten lunch saw us back at the place within the hour and we started to get to grips with the spectacle that was before us. Thousands of Gulls of all three in the white-headed group, plus a good number of Sooty Gulls, a great selection of Terns, including a thousand or more Greater Crested Terns, a few Lesser Crested, Caspian and Sandwich Terns, plus about twenty Saunder's Terns, two hundred or more Crab Plovers, thirty-five Great Knot, hundreds of Sand Plovers of both species, hundreds of Bar-tailed Godwits, Dunlin, Sanderling, Turnstone, Little Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and even a few Terek Sandpipers. It was a birding spectacle but, unfortunately, the tide was receding and the waders became more distant. Walking back to the vehicles even produced an Asian Desert Warbler. We moved on to Filim, an hour away, seeing more of the same but also adding Eurasian Spoonbill, Osprey, Peregrine and Marsh Sandpiper to the day list but try as we might, we could not find a Broad-billed Sandpiper.

The next morning saw us briefly trying to get to a headland overlooking an island near Ad Duqm in an attempt to find Socotra Cormorant, unfortunately, we had to abandon the effort as it was taking too long and we had to set off for Ja'aluni Oryx Preserve in search of Sandgrouse. The place is difficult to find and we stopped to ask directions in Al Ajaiz, which turned out to be productive as eight distant (but calling)



Slender Skimmer by Mark Beevers



Spotted Sandgrouse flew over, a male Black-throated Thrush appeared, as did a Song Thrush, an Asian Desert Warbler and a Greater Hoopoe Lark, and for a couple of the group, a male Black-crowned Sparrow Lark. *Not a bad stop really.* We got to the Oryx preserve only to find that we were not allowed to enter, which was a disappointment, though we did see plenty of captive Arabian Oryx and Mountain Gazelles, and some distant, unidentified Sandgrouse flew over.



Cinnamon-breasted Bunting by Bernard Master

We still had a fair way to go and after lunch we made our way to the rather run down Al Ghaftayn Guest House, with its rather neglected grounds. However, it is in the middle of the desert and it has water. Desert plus water equals birds and we found a few, including a few Chiffchaffs, a couple of Eurasian Blackcaps, a really photogenic Bluethroat, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, our first Yellow Wagtail of the tour and our only Rosy Starling. It was rather productive for a short stop. We moved on to make an unscheduled stop at Muntasar Oasis, some thirty kilometres from Qatbit, and here we found more Bluethroats and another Red-breasted Flycatcher. Around the water we kicked up Red-throated and Water Pipits, White and Citrine Wagtails and found at least five Asian

Desert Warblers.

Day ten saw us walk to the café for breakfast, which yielded the rarest bird of the tour, European Robin. *Okay, perhaps we wouldn't normally get too excited - and a few didn't - but hey, this was just the 7th for Oman!* The Robin was nice and easy to identify but the Snipe that we saw was a real birder's bird, one that needed close scrutiny, which paid off as we had my best ever views of a Pintail Snipe, both on the ground and in flight, just to ensure that we got all the salient identification points. Another Bluethroat and another Black-throated Thrush made for a reasonable pre-breakfast stroll and after breakfast, another hour in the garden produced a rather rare (for Oman) Water Rail, a couple of Great Reed Warblers, a male Blackcap, Desert Whitethroat, a couple of Red-breasted Flycatchers and an eclipse plumage Nile Valley Sunbird.

We headed off to Muntasar Oasis for the promised Sandgrouse spectacle. *What is it with these birds! Don't they get a copy of the itinerary?* Clearly not, for after three hours, not one turned up. *C'est la vie, as they say, that's birding.* Our time here wasn't wasted though, and in addition to the species we saw the previous afternoon, we added a couple of Eurasian Sparrowhawks, seventeen Brown-necked Ravens, a Greater Short-toed Lark and a Pied Wheatear. The briefly seen *Tringa* wader we saw the previous day was confirmed as a Wood Sandpiper, another Pintail Snipe was seen and a Dunlin was a bit out of place. The previous day's Turkestan (Red-tailed) Shrike was still present but the bird of the day that jumped up from in front of two of us was an adult Baillon's Crake. Thankfully,



Sand Partridge by Forrest Rowland



another target species had read the itinerary and right on cue, half a dozen Black-crowned Sparrow Larks came in to drink. We adjourned for lunch soon afterwards as it was starting to get hot.



Desert Lark by Forrest Rowland

After lunch we birded the garden at Qatbit, seeing what had become the usual fare, such as Black-throated Thrush, Bluethroat and Red-breasted Flycatcher, although a Pied Wheatear was new. Behind Qatbit there is an oasis which we visited briefly before returning to the garden for a final hour, as the oasis was very quiet. We did, however, notice that there was some open water, perhaps suitable for Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse to come in to drink so at dusk, we returned. No Sandgrouse but always willing to try something different, I played Egyptian Nightjar and almost immediately one came in, giving great flight views in the spotlight, a real bonus bird and a lifer for all

but one guest on the tour. *It was the seventh time I had seen this species on a Rockjumper tour!*

Day eleven was always going to be a long day, but we had a specific target in mind. Before breakfast, a Robin, a Bluethroat and a Black-throated Thrush were seen, and then we set off south-west. Our first stop was Dawkah Farm but we soon sacked that as it is now abandoned, so we decided to concentrate on another location, Al Baleed Farm, which can be very good for Larks. They were conspicuously absent, but mid-morning produced a flock of fourteen Spotted Sandgrouse flying over, giving good flight views, followed shortly afterwards by six Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. More Sandgrouse started to come in, this time Crowned Sandgrouse, and some of the seventy or so that we saw landed, allowing hazy scope views. We returned to the vehicles and tried a different area, finding fifty White Wagtails and fifty Black-crowned Sparrow Larks. Time was pressing but as we left the farm, we stopped to admire a flock of twenty-two Eurasian Stone Curlews, which were a bit of a bonus.

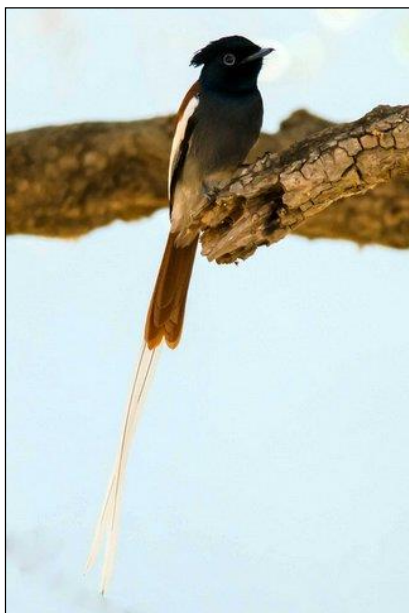
After lunch, we continued on our way towards our afternoon birding spot and our target bird. An *Aquila* Eagle that was sat on a rock caused an another abrupt halt, and we quickly identified it as an adult Golden Eagle, a declining resident of the empty quarter and another bonus bird for the tour. We arrived in Muday (also spelt Mudday and Muddai) just after 14:00. We commenced with our search, quickly finding a pair of Blackstarts and a number of Nile Valley Sunbirds and then the target fell, Grey Hypocolius in the bag! And not just a single bird, but two or three juveniles plus a brief male. *A great result, and it only took an hour!* We checked out numerous Collared Doves but try as we might, we couldn't convert one into its African cousin and we closely scrutinised a juvenile Turkestan Shrike. We then set off on the long drive to Salalah on the coast, where we were to spend the next three nights. After dinner, three of us took a stroll along the beach to a hotel that served beer to celebrate the Hypocolius, which was Tim's last family, and as we supped a cold pint, we heard a Spotted Thick-knee calling as it flew away.



Isabelline Wheatear by Forrest Rowland



Today was always going to be a busy day, with several important target species on the agenda. Driving through Salalah, a Black-throated Thrush was spotted on a grass verge and then we hit the coast at Ras Mirbat where we commenced with a sea-watch. Caspian, Heuglin's, Slender-billed and Sooty Gulls were passing, as did a Saunder's Tern, whilst our first Tristram's Starlings flew over. Two Ospreys and a Marsh Harrier floated past and a distant flock of Red-necked Phalaropes also flew by and it wasn't long before our first Persian Shearwater was picked up, followed soon after by our first Masked Booby. Eventually, it took ten Persian Shearwaters and five Masked Boobies before everyone had satisfactory views and we could leave.



African Paradise Flycatcher
by Forrest Rowland

Our next stop was Wadi Hanna, where after mishaps with a defective speaker and a pair of trodden on specs, we started to pick up birds, particularly birds of prey, with Steppe, Eastern Imperial and Bonelli's Eagles all quickly seen, along with a couple of European Honey Buzzards. We also quickly found our first Bruce's Green Pigeon, which didn't hang around long enough for everyone to see in the scope. We also enjoyed our first Fan-tailed Ravens, Abyssinian White-eyes and an African Paradise Flycatcher. One of the group had brief views of a Percival's (Black-crowned) Tchagra, which refused to reappear, and we all had exceptional views of several Arabian Warblers, a Blackstart and Cinnamon Breasted Buntings.

From here, we moved on to the sinkhole at Tawi Atayr where as soon as we alighted from the bus, we scored a pair of Arabian Wheatears along with Palestine and Shining Sunbirds, plus more Cinnamon Breasted Buntings and a few African Silverbills. Not a bad start, but we had a serious target to find, the stunningly beautiful Yemen Serin. *I wish, a major target, yes, but one of the dullest passerines there is.* Tawi Atayr is the place in Oman for this species and this isolated population is more than a thousand kilometres from its core range in Yemen, it's an important bird for the tour. We tried

the sink-hole to no avail and as we walked back, we had a couple of unsatisfactory views of the bird. We noted a dripping pipe at the back of the café where a few birds were coming in to drink, these included quite a few Ruppell's Weavers, so we decided to stake the place out. We didn't have to wait long before a bird arrived to bathe, albeit out of view. Fortunately, it then flew to a nearby tree and started to preen, allowing us prolonged scope views. Also seen in this area were a couple of Tristram's Starlings and a migrant Tree Pipit, after which we moved to Wadi Darbat where we found a flock of fifty of the latter. Other birds in the wadi included five Northern Pintail and a selection of waders, including another Pintail Snipe, a Whiskered Tern and an African Paradise Flycatcher.

After lunch, we devoted the afternoon to checking out various Khawrs (wetlands), starting off at Khawr Taqah. Here, Intermediate Egret and six Pheasant-tailed Jacanas were added to the trip list and other birds noted included Purple Heron, eleven Garganey, over forty Common Moorhens,



Black-crowned (Percival's) Tchagra by Bernard Master



good numbers of Ruff and Wood Sandpipers and a couple of Citrine Wagtails. We moved on to Khawr Rawri, where a small flock of ducks included three each of Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Ferruginous Duck, the latter being new for the trip. A Little Bittern was flushed, Eastern Imperial and Greater-spotted Eagles were present as was an Osprey and a Blue-cheeked Bee-eater was a first for a Rockjumper tour to Oman. The habitat looked good for Percival's Tchagra and a quick blast on the iPod encouraged one to give superb views, though it also had to compete with a male Namaqua Dove, the only one we saw on the tour. From here we moved to Khawr Sawli where a pair of Ruddy Shelduck was a welcome bonus, as this species is an uncommon and irregular visitor to Oman. Five Eurasian Spoonbills were present and amongst the shorebirds we found two Little Ringed Plovers, two Temminck's Stints and a Curlew Sandpiper.



Palestine Sunbird by Forrest Rowland

Oman and our fourth Sandgrouse of the trip. With darkness upon us, you would be forgiven for thinking that was it for the day, but it wasn't, as we had one more special bird to look for. Much to the chagrin of the driver, we went to Ayn Hamran, where several Arabian Scops Owls were already calling. We worked one nearby bird, slowly getting it to come closer until suddenly there it was, directly above our heads and showing very well indeed, a lifer for everyone on the tour. *Including me!* We hadn't finished yet, for as we walked back to the vehicles, we flushed a European Nightjar. *Now that wasn't expected!*

Our penultimate day of the tour saw us head back to the Lichtenstein's site at first light, but not for the Sandgrouse. The juvenile Bonelli's Eagle was still feeding on Laughing Doves and a couple of Short-toed Eagles were above the nearby ridge. The water that held Sandgrouse hours earlier was now attracting Cinnamon Breasted Buntings and African Silverbills, whilst a Citrine Wagtail was also in attendance. A flock of twenty plus Tristram's Starlings flew over and then just after 08:00, the reason for our visit arrived, a group of Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeaks. This species can be incredibly difficult to find outside April and May when they are singing, so to see five in November was a fantastic result.

Following a tip-off from the Belgian group, we amended our plans so we could pull in a small park at Ayn Razat and it didn't take us long to find

Following our chance meeting with Jens Eriksson, we were now armed with additional information which we were about to put to good use. We drove to a minor road junction where we met a tour group from Belgium, so we knew we were in the right spot. On the face of it, the place didn't look like a prime birding site, but it had one important attribute - water - and so we settled in to wait for the stars of the show. A juvenile Bonelli's Eagle kept us entertained as it took a Laughing Dove from under our noses and then, as it got dark, the target birds appeared and in the gloom we thoroughly enjoyed our looks at ten Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse - another first for a Rockjumper tour of



Arabian Warbler by Forrest Rowland



our quarry, an Arabian Spotted Eagle Owl, a subspecies of Spotted Eagle Owl but a potential future split. Half a dozen Bruce's Green Pigeons added to the entertainment, as did an adult Bonelli's Eagle with a side order of Abyssinian White-eye, and Palestine and Shining Sunbird. From here we moved to Jarziz farm, which took a bit of finding. The previous day, the Belgian crew had seen ten Sociable Lapwings and they had given us the exact location, a shoo-in one would think. *Wrong!* There was no sign and we spent two hours looking. We picked up a few birds, but not the important one; Greater Short-toed lark, Red-throated Pipit, a flock of fifteen Little Ringed Plovers and a juvenile Grey Hypocolius was all we could manage.



(Arabian) Spotted Eagle Owl
by Mark Beevers

We had another change of plans due to the heat, and after lunch, we went to Raysut Water Treatment Works, where I had a particular species in mind. It took a bit of finding but we got there and very quickly Frank found the target bird, an immature Demoiselle Crane. *Cue one very happy Miki and to be fair, a very happy Frank too.* Raysut is a great birding site, we picked up a few species, not least were the over three hundred and fifty Abdim's Storks, a rare and irregular visitor to Oman. Over two hundred White Storks were equally impressive. Big Eagles are a feature of this area and many hundreds hang around at the nearby rubbish dump, which you can no longer visit, but overhead we still logged Eastern Imperial, Greater-spotted, Steppe and an intermediate Booted Eagle. We also found our one and only Black Kite and amongst a few Red-wattled Lapwings, we found another vagrant Spur-winged Lapwing. The last one I saw in 2014 was the 13th record for Oman, so a truly rare bird in the country.

Our next site was Al Mughsayl, which is a wetland with a wadi behind it, but there is also a headland from where it is worth sea-watching. We had time, so in we went and very quickly we picked up a new bird for the trip, an adult Brown

Booby, although we actually saw three eventually. We also picked out a Socotra Cormorant, thirty or more Greater Crested Terns and an immature Common Tern. On the rocks, about twenty Western Reef Herons were present, the largest gathering we had seen on the tour, but then we had to go to the wetland and then into the wadi proper. A few ducks included four Wigeon, and two Geese that we disturbed proved to be the expected Greater White-fronted Geese. That proved to be the last birding of the day as transport issues prevented us travelling into the wadi.

The final day also didn't go to plan, but adaptation is key and so although we couldn't carry out the activity I'd planned for, there were still birds to be seen. For a change, we had a later breakfast, though we were sea-watching from the terrace, picking up our only White-



Greater Hoopoe-Lark by Forrest Rowland



winged Tern of the trip, plus two Socotra Cormorants, a Greater White-fronted Goose, two Masked Boobies and about twenty Greater Crested Terns, not a bad breakfast! One of the sites I intended to visit was East Khawr and as it is just a kilometre along the beach, it made sense to walk down there, especially as Long-toed Stints had been recently reported. A variety of shorebirds were present, including seventy Little Stints but despite our diligent searching, we couldn't pick out the rarer species, though we did find two Temminck's Stints. Ten Indian Pond Herons were on the lake, but more importantly, so were two Squacco Herons, which we needed for the trip, whilst a small selection of wildfowl included the hoped for Cotton Pygmy Goose, another species which had so far eluded us. Ten Common Snipe were disturbed, as was another Pintail Snipe and then we got word that a Little Crake had been seen, so we spent the rest of the morning trying to find that. The group splintered, with several people walking back to the hotel early, whilst I paddled through the Arabian Sea, and that was it, the tour was over.

It hadn't been without its problems and we missed a few birds. However, equally, we saw a lot of good birds and in fact, I saw thirty-six species that were new to Oman for me. We saw a number of vagrants without really trying, pulled out a few surprises and found our own Omani Owl, which, although it was never seen, for me, was bird of the tour. With generally good accommodations and some really tasty food, it was, all things considered, a very good tour - one which I enjoyed and one which I look forward to developing and doing again. Thanks guys for a great trip.

Annotated List of Birds Recorded 232 species (3 heard only)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List 6.4. Please cite: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Swans, Geese & Ducks Anatidae

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

We found two juveniles at Al Mughsayl on our penultimate day, whilst during our final morning one flew past our hotel as we ate breakfast and another was seen during the morning.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

We found two at Ra's al Khor and a flock of 22 at Al Qudra Lake as we travelled towards Jebel Hafeet.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

A total of six were amongst other wildfowl at Al Qudra Lake.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Two at Khawr Sawli were a bit of a surprise as it is an uncommon and irregular visitor to Oman.

Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*

Finally after checking several wetlands around Salalah we found a female at East Khawr on our last morning.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

We found a pair at Al Qudra and another male was seen at Zakher Lake.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

A good count of seventy from Al Qudra with twenty the following day at Zakher Lake.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

We recorded this species on four dates at five sites with a best count of twenty five at Zakher Lake.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

The second most common species of wildfowl with sightings on six dates, three in UAE and three in Oman where ten at Raysut Water Treatment works was the largest group seen during the tour.



Garganey*Anas querquedula*

A female at Al Qudra Lake was our only sighting in UAE but once we got to Salalah we came across this species daily where eleven at Khawr Taqah was the largest group. Elsewhere we saw one at Khawr Sawli, six at Raysut Water Treatment Works and six at East Khawr.

Eurasian Teal*Anas crecca*

Recorded on three dates in UAE with notable counts of one hundred at Ra's al Khor and over forty at Al Qudra whilst in Oman this species was seen on four dates with a maximum of thirty five at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

NOTE: This species has been split into 2 species, the nominate Eurasian Teal (which is the one we recorded on the tour) and Green-winged Teal A. Carolinensis. This split is not recognized by Clements.

Common Pochard*Aythya ferina*

Six were seen at AL Qudra in the UAE with three at Khawr Rawri in Oman but by far the highest count was one hundred and twenty four at Zakher Lake.

Ferruginous Duck*Aythya nyroca*

Three were found with the next and previous species at Khawr Rawri.

Tufted Duck*Aythya fuligula*

A female was hidden amongst the Pochard Flock at Zakher Lake and three were seen at Khawr Rawri.

Pheasants & Quails Phasianidae**Arabian Partridge***Alectoris melanocephala*

We watched a pair strutting around for several minutes on the edge of the trees at Mubazzarah Green Area.

Sand Partridge*Ammoperdix heyi*

On our first morning at Jebel Hafeet we saw two coveys totalling eleven birds and by returning to the same area the following morning we had good scope views of a calling male before disturbing another at Wadi Tarabat.

Grey Francolin*Francolinus pondicerianus*

This species was remarkably common around Dubai with thirty or more logged during our first full days birding and daily sightings on each of our days in UAE. The only ones we saw in Oman were four at Khatmat Milahah.

Petrels and Shearwaters Procellariidae**Persian Shearwater***Puffinus persicus*

One was a single observer bird that flew past our Salalah hotel but the following morning with a bit of perseverance the whole group managed to see at least one of the ten that flew past Ras Mirbat.

Grebes Podicipedidae**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

We recorded this species on six dates during the tour, three in each country. Usually encountered in small numbers larger counts included twenty at Ra's al Khor, forty at Al Qudra and a hundred at Zakher Lake whilst the highest count in Oman was fifteen at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Black-necked Grebe*Podiceps nigricollis*

A single bird was seen by some of the group at Ra's al Khor but it couldn't be relocated.

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae**Greater Flamingo***Phoenicopterus ruber*

An estimated 5000 were at Ra's al Khor on our first visit with 500 the following day in just one small



part of the wetland whilst in Oman this species was logged on four dates with a peak count of 100 on the mudflats at Shannah whilst twenty four were at East Khawr on our final morning.

Storks Ciconiidae

Yellow-billed Stork

Mycteria ibis

One was seen at Ra's al Khor on our second visit.

Abdim's Stork

Ciconia abdimii

We had an impressive count of three hundred and fifty at Raysut Water Treatment Works. This species is an irregular visitor to Oman. (A Stork species over Khawr Taqah remained unidentified as it flew into the sun).

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

An impressive count of two hundred and five at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

One or two on three dates in UAE and seen on two dates in Oman with a very impressive flock of eighty five at East Khawr.

Eurasian Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Twenty two flew over Ra's al Khor, six were seen at Filim and five were at Khawr Sawli.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae

Little Bittern

Ixobrychus minutus

We flushed a juvenile at Wamm Farm, had great views of another at Shinas and some saw a third at Khawr Rawri. Although a common summer visitor to Oman this species is rare in winter.

Black-crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

An adult came to the shoreline at Zakher Lake and a second winter bird was a leader only sighting pre-tour in Dubai.

Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

After much checking of the next species we eventually found two at East Khawr.

Indian Pond Heron

Ardeola grayii

Our first was seen at Wamm Farms whilst the only other birds seen in the UAE were two at Mubazzarah Green Area. In Oman we had a day total of six in the Salalah area whilst during our final mornings birding at East Khawr we saw about ten birds.

Western Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

One or two on four dates during our time in UAE, usually being seen from the moving bus whilst our only birds in Oman were two seen on our penultimate day.

NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret (which is what we recorded on the tour) and the Asian / Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret E. coromanda. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Commonly seen during the tour with birds recorded on at least ten dates with up to fifty a day logged although the highest count was sixty at Zakher Lake.

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Two were seen at Ra's al Khor on our first visit with three there the following day whilst a total six were seen as we visited various Khawrs near Salalah.

Great Egret

Ardea alba

This species was seen on three days in UAE where a hundred were noted at Ra's al Khor and on three



days in Oman where the highest day count was twenty split between Shannah and Filim.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia*

This species was only seen in Oman where we saw two at Khawr Taqah.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Recorded on three dates in UAE with a maximum of ten at Zakher Lake and on four dates in Oman where the highest day count was eight at various Khawrs near Salalah.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

Up to eight were seen on our two visits to Ra's al Khor whilst in Oman this species was seen on five dates with notable counts of twenty split between Shannah and Filim and twenty five at Al Mughsayl.

Gannets Sulidae

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

Five were seen during our sea-watch at Ras Mirbat, one was seen off Al Mughsayl and three were seen as we sea-watched during breakfast at our Salalah hotel on our last morning.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Three were seen off Al Mughsayl, one of which was very close and another was seen during the breakfast sea-watch on our final day.

Cormorants & Shags Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Recorded on seven dates during the tour with three-figure counts on two dates at Ra's al Khor including five hundred on our second visit whilst the highest count in Oman was fifty at Shannah.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*

We failed to find any large flocks of this species (although 1000 very distant Cormorant sp at Shannah were probably this species) so were fortunate to connect with one off Al Mughsayl and two from our hotel terrace on the final morning.

Ospreys Pandionidae

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Single birds were seen at Liwa, Shannah, Filim, Ad Duqm, Khawr Rawri, with two birds noted at Ras Mirbat and East Khawr.

Note. IOC splits Osprey into two species Western Osprey Pandion haliaetus, which we saw and Eastern Osprey Pandion cristatus. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.

Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures Accipitridae

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Six of various ages were seen at Jebel Hafeet whilst two adults were seen soaring over the Sayq Plateau.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Two were seen soaring over Wadi Hanna. A rare winter visitor to Oman.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One was seen over Mushrif Park in the UAE.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*

A pair was seen three times soaring over various places on the Sayq Plateau. Treated conservatively as the same pair but it could just as easily have been three separate pairs.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Only seen in Oman where our first was a chance sighting as we stopped to look at a few Greater Hoopoe Larks as we travelled towards Shannah. We had another one near Salalah and two more over the Arabian



Golden Winged Grosbeak drinking pool.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

An intermediate bird was seen over Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

One or two juveniles were present at Ra's al Khor in the UAE and another was seen over Mushrif Park. In Oman seen on the last three days with twenty over Raysut Water Treatment works being the highest count. However, over the distant rubbish dump to which there is no longer access there were many more unidentified *Aquila* Eagles many of which were no doubt this species.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Two were seen over Wadi Hanna and at least six were over Raysut Water Treatment Works but the comments under that species also apply to this species and the next.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Only seen in south Oman where our first was over Wadi Hanna followed by two more over Khawr Rawri. At least three were seen over Raysut Water Treatment Works and another was seen at East Khawr.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

An adult in the desert was a real surprise as we travelled towards Muday but later research showed that this species is a fairly common breeding resident in the central desert although there has been a sharp decline in recent years.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

Two adults and an immature were seen over Wadi Hanna with later that day a juvenile, which took a Laughing Dove from under our noses as we waited for the Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse to come in to drink. The following day the same juvenile took another Laughing Dove and we were treated to close looks at a soaring adult at Ayn Razat.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Although not seen on the main tour, one was a leader only sighting opposite our Dubai hotel pre-tour.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One was seen over the Sayq Plateau, another two were together over Muntasar, and one was seen at Al Baleed Farm whilst we logged three from various sites around Salalah on our first day there.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

This species was the commonest bird of prey encountered with up to six a day logged from many sites. Most were either females or immature males with not one adult male being seen.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

An adult male flew over the bus at Al Qudra but we were unable to stop as we were in traffic and as a consequence only those sat on the left hand side of the bus managed to get a view of it.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

A female was seen at Al Baleed Farm.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Surprisingly we really struggled to find this species but eventually one gave itself up as it flew overhead at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

We saw one over Mushrif Park.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

A juvenile showed well at a leaking pipe in Qatbit garden. This is a rare migrant and winter visitor to Oman with forty-two records up to October 2013.



Baillon's Crake*Porzana pusilla*

An adult was flushed from our feet at Muntasar but it was only seen by two of us.

Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

Recorded on six dates during the tour in both countries with fifty at Ras al Khor and up to forty a day around Salalah.

Eurasian Coot*Fulica atra*

This species was seen on five dates during the tour in both countries with maxima of thirteen at Zakher Lake and ten at East Khawr.

Cranes Gruidae**Demoiselle Crane***Grus virgo*

Although I knew that there was an immature at Raysut Water Treatment Works it was a great relief when Frank said that he'd found it and a real bonus bird for the tour as it is a rare migrant and winter visitor to Oman with thirty-nine records up to the end of October 2013.

Stone-Curlews, Thick-knees Burhinidae**Eurasian Stone-curlew***Burhinus oedicephalus*

A flock of twenty two at Al Baleed Farm was a nice surprise.

Spotted Thick-knee*Burhinus oedicephalus*

Three of us heard one calling as we sampled a rather expensive but nice cold beer at a hotel four hundred metres from ours one evening in Salalah. Unfortunately, the bird wasn't seen as it was obviously flying away.

Oystercatchers Haematopidae**Eurasian Oystercatcher***Haematopus ostralegus*

Twenty four were counted at Liwa, forty were split between Shannah and Filim, one flew past Ras Mirbat and two were seen on the beach at East Khawr.

Crab Plover Dromadidae**Crab Plover***Dromas ardeola*

Being one of the three mono-typic families that were major targets of the tour it was pleasing to find a distant flock at Shannah that numbered a couple of hundred and as the tide started to fall a few came reasonably close. We also saw a few more at Filim.

Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

We found up to two hundred at Ra's Al Khor on both visits and up to forty a day around Salalah on our last three days.

Pied Avocet*Recurvirostra avosetta*

Four at Ra's al Khor were the only ones we found on the tour.

Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae**Spur-winged Lapwing***Vanellus spinosus*

We found the one that we knew was at Zakher Lake but unfortunately couldn't find the White-tailed Plover that was with it the previous day. This is the tenth record for the UAE. Amazingly we found a second bird at Raysut Water Treatment Works, which we didn't know was there. This species is a rare migrant and winter visitor to Oman with twenty nine records up to October 2013, so to see two on the



trip was a bit greedy.

Red Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

A fairly common bird in UAE where we found forty at Wamm farms and we had forty at Mubazzarah Green Area with twenty at Al Qudra. In Oman we recorded the species on three dates with a peak count of six at Raysut water Treatment Works.

Black-bellied (Grey) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

This species was only seen at Shannah and Filim where we had twenty or so and at East Khawr where five were on the beach as we dipped our toes in the Arabian Sea (well I did at least).

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Our first was heard calling over Wamm Farms, six were seen at Al Qudra and twenty were seen at Zakher Lake. In Oman just single birds found at Filim and at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Our first were two at Khawr Sawli followed by seventeen at Jarziz Farm near Salalah and two or three more at Raysut Water Treatment Works. We also had three at East Khawr.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Six were at Al Qudra and there was an impressive count of eighty at Zakher Lake whilst twenty were also seen at Liwa. Twenty were split between Shannah and Filim, one was seen at Al Mughsayl and two were at East Khawr.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

We identified our first at Liwa and then saw many at Shannah and Filim.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Like the above species our first were at Liwa with many more at Shannah and Filim.

Jacanas Jacanidae

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

We found seven of these smart looking birds at Khawr Taqah and another two at East Khawr.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

We had excellent looks at one on the ground and in flight at Qatbit and found at least one more at nearby Muntasar. Another was seen at Wadi Darbat with our final bird in flight at East Khawr.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Up to six were seen on six dates in both countries but the highest count was ten or more at East Khawr on our last morning.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Sixty were counted on our first visit to Ra's al Khor with two there the following day whilst in Oman six were present at Raysut Water Treatment Works with six the following day at East Khawr.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Two were found at Liwa but over 100 were present at Shannah.

Whimbrel *Numenius arquata*

Single birds were seen on four dates during the tour and we saw four at Shannah.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Single birds were seen on three dates during the tour but by far the highest numbers were at Shannah where a conservative one hundred was logged.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

One was seen briefly at Shannah but it flew off by the time the 'scope arrived.



Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Only seen in Oman where the species was recorded on seven dates with good counts of one hundred at Shannah and thirty at East Khawr.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Two were found at Al Qudra, four were seen at Filim and one was seen at Khawr Taqah.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Encountered fairly regularly during the tour with log entries for seven dates. Usually seen in single figures but twenty at Shannah, ten at Raysut Water Treatment Works and fourteen at East Khawr.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

We saw two at Khail-Haml waterhole on the Sayq plateau with another the same day at A Roos, we heard one at Al Baleed Farm and had six around the Salalah area on our penultimate day.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

We saw one at Al Qudra, which proved to be our only bird in UAE but we recorded birds on five of our last six days in Oman, usually on or two birds but 25 were seen at Khawr Taqah.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Another regularly encountered shorebird with log entries on eight days, usually in single figures but with twenty at Raysut Water Treatment Works.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

We saw an estimated 500 at Shannah but the only other sighting concerned ten on the beach between East Khawr and our hotel in Salalah.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

This was a major shorebird target so it was good to get reasonable views of thirty five at Shannah.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Twelve were seen at Liwa with two hundred at Shannah / Filim, followed by six near our Salalah hotel and seventeen on the beach near East Khawr.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

We saw this species on seven dates both in UAE where the maximum count was seventy five at Ra's al Khor and in Oman where one hundred at Shannah / Filim was the highest count. Seventy at East Khawr received some serious scrutiny but try as we might we could not pull out a Long-toed Stint, up to three of which had been reported a few days earlier.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

We failed to find this species until we got to Salalah but then we saw it on each of our last three days with two at Khawr Sawli, one at Raysut Water Treatment Works and two at East Khawr.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Ten were seen at Shannah / Filim, with single birds logged at Khawr Sawli and East Khawr.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

More common than the preceding species with sightings logged for nine dates from both countries with a maximum count of one hundred at Shannah / Filim.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Twenty five were seen at Al Qudra, sixty were at Zakher Lake, thirty were at Khawr Taqah with thirty at Sahnawt Farm, Salalah and a final singleton at East Khawr.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

One at Al Qudra was a rather unexpected find whilst a distant flock of fifteen of Ras Mirbat was more expected as they winter off there, though better views of the latter would have been appreciated.



Coursers & Pratincoles Glareolidae
Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

We were very fortunate to pick up a flock of five in flight at we travelled towards Ad Duqm. Had we not have stopped to let the second vehicle catch up we would have missed this species.

Gulls, Terns and Skimmers Laridae**Slender-billed Gull** *Chroicocephalus genei*

Recorded on eight dates during the tour in both countries with the highest numbers, two hundred at Ra' al Khor with two hundred also seen at Liwa.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Recorded on six dates during the tour with up to twenty a day logged.

Sooty Gull *Ichthyaeetus hemprichii*

Our first bird was a seen at Liwa followed by a hundred at Shannah but it was the coast around Salalah that produced the largest numbers and where “lots” were seen on our three days there.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Large white-headed Gulls were first properly encountered at Liwa where we made a concerted effort to identify this species as well as the next two. We subsequently saw this species on six dates with the highest numbers in the north of Oman.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Two subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gull occur in the UAE and Oman. Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini* and Steppe Gull *Larus fuscus barabensis*. We saw both for the first time at Liwa and subsequently went on to see Heuglin's Gull on six more dates, though not in as large numbers of Caspian Gulls. Steppe Gulls were also first seen at Liwa but the largest numbers were along the coast at Salalah. *Note. IOC does not split the Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus, Heuglin's Gull Larus fuscus heuglini or Steppe Gull Larus fuscus barabensis complex keeping all three taxon within the Lesser Black-backed Gull group. Clements follows the same taxonomy.*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

About six showed well at Ra's al Khor and another was seen on the beach near our Salalah hotel on the last morning.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Up to three were seen around Dubai on three dates, mainly at Ra's al Khor, fifteen were at Shannah and at least one was at East Khawr on our final day.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

We found our first four at Liwa but a few days later at Shannah we estimated that a thousand birds were present on offshore sand bars. During our last three days around Salalah we recorded up to forty birds.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Twenty were seen off Liwa with one the following day at Shinas whilst half a dozen were noted at Shannah amongst other roosting terns.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

About a hundred were found amongst other roosting terns at Shannah but the only others were singletons at Al Mughsayl and East Khawr.

Saunders's Tern *Sternula saundersi*

One was seen offshore at Liwa and twenty or more were seen fishing at Shannah. The only other birds were singletons seen on two dates offshore at Salalah.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

One was seen at Ra's al Khor.



Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

A first winter bird was seen well at Al Mughsayl.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

One was seen at Zakher Lake, one was at Wadi Darbat with two at Khawr Taqah. Fifteen were present at Raysut Water Treatment Works and two were seen at East Khawr.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

One was seen flying past our hotel during our breakfast sea-watch on our final morning.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae**Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus*

We saw six in flight at Al Baleed Farm and saw five more on the ground at Jarziz Farm.

Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*

Our first were six distant birds, picked up by their call when we had stopped to ask directions and we saw a flock of fifteen at Al Baleed Farm.

Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

We saw a total of seventy at Al Baleed Farm including some on the ground.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

We received a tip-off about a stakeout for this species and joined a Belgium group at the site where we were pleased to see ten birds. One of the highlights of the trip for most people.

Doves & Pigeons Columbidae**Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

Recorded every day in all towns.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

A common resident that was recorded daily in all towns.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*

Another very common resident that was seen daily.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

We found a cracking male at Khawr Rawri.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*

We had brief views of one perched and then in flight at Wadi Hanna but then had much better views of half a dozen at Ayn Razat.

Owls Strigidae**Arabian Scops Owl** *Otus pamela*

We heard several calling but this species like many Scops Owls is very difficult to see so we were fortunate to get good views of one at Wadi Hamran.

Pharaoh Eagle Owl *Bubo ascalaphus*

We had scope views of one at dusk at a known stakeout near Dubai.

Spotted Eagle Owl *Bubo africanus*

We enjoyed super views of one at a daytime roost at Ayn Razat.

Note. A potential split the race we saw Bubo africanus milesi is currently lumped by IOC and Clements under Spotted Eagle Owl Bubo africanus.

Omani Owl *Strix butleri*

After a long search in a wadi near our hotel at Nizwa we eventually, just as we were about to call it a day, managed to hear this recently rediscovered species but unfortunately although it was fairly vocal it was perhaps just a bit too far off to pick out in the spotlight. Nevertheless even though it was heard



only for me it was the bird of the trip.

Little Owl*Athene noctua*

One after dinner feeding on the lawn at the hotel at Jebel Hafeet was an unexpected bonus, although it was only seen by two of us as the rest had retired to bed. A new species for this tour.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae**European Nightjar***Caprimulgus europaeus*

We disturbed one at Wadi Hamran as we were walking back to our vehicle after connecting with Arabian Scops Owl.

Egyptian Nightjar*Caprimulgus aegyptius*

If you don't try you don't get! We went to the Oasis at the back of Qatbit on the off chance that Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse might come in to drink at dusk at the small area of water there. They didn't but I played Egyptian Nightjar and rather unexpectedly was rewarded with the appearance of this species which showed well in flight several times. This is the first time that this species has been recorded on this tour.

Swifts Apodidae**Pallid Swift***Apus pallidus*

Recorded on two dates only during the tour on both occasions around Dubai. Swift sp were seen on two dates around Salalah, which were either this species or Forbes-Watson's and information received from Jens Eriksson suggests that they were most likely to be the latter as they are the common species of Swift around Salalah between April and November.

Rollers Coraciidae**Indian Roller***Coracias benghalensis*

Recorded on five dates during the first half of the tour with twenty or more at Wamm Farm and up to five elsewhere.

European Roller*Coracias garrulus*

Only seen at Wamm Farm where we found two.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae**Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

We had one at Mubazzarah Green Area and another the same day at Zakher Lake. The following day we saw two at Liwa whilst singles were seen on two more dates during the tour.

Bee-eaters Meropidae**Green Bee-eater***Merops orientalis*

This species was seen daily during the first six days of the tour with high counts of six at Wamm Farms and eight in Mubazzarah Green Area.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater*Merops persicus*

One at Khawr Rawri was rather a surprise and was indeed the first to be recorded on this tour.

Hoopoes Upupidae**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

We saw up to six birds on five dates at the start of the tour with a peak count of ten in Dubai on day one of the tour and then at the end of the tour we had more birds on two dates with a peak of four in the Salalah area.



Clements only recognizes two species of Hoopoe; Eurasian *U. epops* and Madagascar *U. marginata*. One further species, is widely recognized namely African *U. africana* and a 4th is sometime recognized, West/Central African *U. senegalensis*. We only recorded the nominate Palearctic form *U. e. epops*.

Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae

Eurasian Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

One or two on seven widely spaced dates plus four at Wamm Farm.

NOTE: Some authorities including IOC split this species into Common Kestrel, *F. tinnunculus* which we observed (occurring in East Africa and the Palearctic region) and Rock Kestrel, *F. rupicolus* that occurs in Southern Africa. Clements does not as yet recognize these splits.

Amur Falcon

Falco amurensis

Although it took a while to find we did eventually and then had good 'scope views of a male, the 22nd record for the UAE.

Lanner Falcon

Falco biarmicus

One person saw one during our visit to Wamm Farm whilst the rest of the group was watching a European Roller.

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

Our only bird was an adult that was hunting shorebirds at Filim. We saw three other birds where the views were either inconclusive or too distant to identify the birds as this species or the next.

Barbary Falcon

Falco pelegrinoides

We had an adult at the Khail-Haml water hole on the Sayq Plateau which landed close by on a telegraph pole but remained completely hidden but for the tip of its tail and as we repositioned ourselves to get a better view it promptly departed over the ridge.

Old World Parrots Psittaculidae

Alexandrine Parakeet

Psittacula eupatria

We saw at least thirty at Wamm Farm.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

We only saw this species in UAE where up to ten were logged in from Dubai and amongst the above species at Wamm Farm.

Woodpeckers Picidae

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

One showed well at Mubazzarah Green Area and another also performed at Shinas, a new bird for Rockjumper in Oman.

Bushshrikes Malaconotidae

Black-crowned Tchagra

Tchagra senegalus

One showed briefly to one of the group at our normal stakeout at Wadi Hanna but it soon disappeared and would not respond. Fortunately at another site we found a very cooperative bird, which allowed everyone great views.

NOTE: There could be a chance that the bird we saw may in the future be split becoming Percival's Tchagra. This split is not recognised by either Clements or IOC yet.

Shrikes Laniidae

Isabelline Shrike

Lanius isabellinus

We found ten around Wamm Farms and up to six on two dates around Salalah.



Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*

The only birds were positively identified as this species were at Muntasar and Muday. We also saw a couple more birds that were one or the other but which weren't identified to species level.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

A regularly encountered bird with up to four seen on nine dates in both countries.

Drongos Dicruridae**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

We were really fortunate to drop on the one that had been reported at Mushrif Park as it represents just the tenth record for the UAE. Well spotted Miki!

Monarch Flycatchers Monarchidae**African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis*

Three or four were split between Wadi Hanna and Wadi Darbat and another was seen at Ayn Razat.

Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae**House Crow** *Corvus splendens*

This was a common species with log entries on ten dates but by far the highest numbers were at Liwa where two hundred were feeding on dead fish.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*

This corvid was also reasonable common with birds being seen on seven dates. There was an impressive gathering of seventy at the Khail-Haml water hole on the Sayq Plateau.

Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus*

We saw a couple above Wadi Hanna and then later in the day what was presumably a pre-roost gathering of twenty or more was along the escarpment above where we were waiting for the Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse to come in.

Hypocolius Hypocoliidae**Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus*

We were treated to very good views of at least two, probably three juveniles at Muday, which is THE site for this species now in Oman. It was just a pity that the male that was seen briefly with them didn't hang around to be admired. We also found an unexpected juvenile at Jarziz Farm.

Larks Alaudidae**Greater Hoopoe-Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes*

Our first birds, four or more, were seen as we were driving towards Shannah, and we had great 'scope views of these. We also had three more the following day as we drove from Ad Duqm to Haima.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

This is not really a lark of the sand deserts as they prefer more rocky terrain. Consequently our first four were found in a wadi as we travelled towards Wamm Farm. Four more were found around Jebel Hafeet with a further four in Wadi Tarabat.

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*

A couple of the group saw a male during our brief stop at Al Ajaiz and the following day six came in to drink at Muntasar. But by far the largest numbers were at Al Baleed Farms where fifty were feeding near some rotting water melons.

Oriental Sky Lark *Alauda gulgula*

We saw one of these small larks at Wamm Farm.



Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

About ten were seen at Wamm Farm.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

A common & widespread lark except in the Empty Quarter we saw up to 20 of this species on ten dates mainly whilst travelling although at least twenty were at Wamm Farm.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

One which flew over Mushrif Park was a leader only bird, another was seen very well at Muntasar and three or more were at Jarziz Farm.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

Two showed reasonably well at Wamm Farm.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae**White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis*

Recorded throughout UAE and in northern Oman with up to a hundred a day logged on nine dates, especially around our Dubai hotel where there was obviously a roost in an overgrown garden.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Recorded in UAE only but on four dates whilst we were there with again the overgrown garden opposite our hotel holding about twenty just before dusk.

White-spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*

One or two logged on two dates in UAE but more common in Oman with up to twenty a day noted on five dates.

Swallows Hirundinidae**Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)** *Riparia riparia*

Singletons were seen at Khawr Taqah, Khawr Sawli and Jarziz Farm.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Up to six recorded on two dates whilst we were in UAE but much more frequent in Oman with up to six on five dates plus twenty on the day we looked at various Khawrs around Salalah but at least seventy were seen at Jarziz Farm.

Pale Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*

The commonest hirundine with records for twelve dates with up to twenty a day logged.

Streaked Scrub Warbler Scotocercidae**Streaked Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta*

After a couple of false starts we were eventually rewarded with excellent views of this major tour target on the Sayq Plateau where we found at least three pairs, one of which really performed.

Leaf Warblers and allies Phylloscopidae**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Small numbers were seen on nine dates with up to twenty a day logged.

NOTE: Most authorities including Clements have split the Chiffchaff complex into 4 full species. The nominate form which we recorded is known as Common Chiffchaff P. collybita.

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*

Our first was seen in the wadi at the end of Mubazzarah Green Area, after which we saw one in Wadi Tarabat and another at Khatmat Milahah.



Reed Warblers and allies Cisticolidae

Great Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

We were very lucky to find three of these lumbering warblers in the grounds of Qatbit.

Clamorous Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus stentoreus

Our first was at Al Qudra, followed by one heard the next day at Zakher Lake. Two showed very well at Shinas and four were located at Khawr Rawri.

Sykes's Warbler

Iduna rama

We heard this species at Shinas but try as we might it couldn't be coaxed into view.

Graceful Prinia

Prinia gracilis

We saw this perky little warbler on eight dates at many localities with up to four a day logged.

Babblers, Parrotbills Timaliidae

Arabian Babbler

Turdoides squamiceps

We found two parties totalling ten birds in Mushrif Park, one near Shinas, ten at Khatmat Milahah, ten more as we made our way up to the Sayq Plateau with five more on the plateau itself. As usual they were lively entertaining birds.

Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae

Eurasian Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Our first was a female at Wadi Bani Habeeb and then we found two birds (male and female) at Al Ghaftayn with a male in Qatbit Gardens the following day.

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curcura

Only seen in the UAE with one opposite our Dubai hotel, one on the way to Wamm Farm with another at Wamm Farm.

Desert Whitethroat

Sylvia minula

Up to four were seen on six dates during the middle part of the tour, mainly in central Oman.

Eastern Orphean Warbler

Sylvia crassirostris

Only two were seen, the first in Mubazzarah Green Area with another the following day at Wadi Tarabat.

Arabian Warbler

Sylvia leucomelaena

We saw about five at Wadi Hanna, a couple of which showed exceptionally well.

Asian Desert Warbler

Sylvia nana

We saw this very attractive (for a mainly sandy brown bird) warbler on six dates during the middle part of the tour, mainly in central Oman with up to six a day noted, some of which were very tame. Unlike African Desert Warbler (*Sylvia deserti*) which seems to like a specific habitat in north-west Africa, this species turned up in a variety of habitats. A great little bird.

Menetries's Warbler

Sylvia mystacea

We found a very uncooperative bird in a wadi on the way to Wamm Farm and then had another on the Sayq Plateau with a third bird at Muday.

Yuhinas White-eyes and Allies Zosteropidae

Abyssinian White-eye

Zosterops abyssinicus

Up to ten were split between Wadi Hanna and Wadi Darbat whilst half a dozen more were seen at Ayn Razat.

Starlings Sturnidae

Common Myna

Acridotheres tristis

A very common bird with log entries on ten dates though absent from central Oman. By far the highest



numbers were around Dubai where up to fifty were seen although more than two hundred were seen at dawn at Ra's al Khor.

Pied Starling *Gracupica contra*

A pair was seen in the grounds of the Arabian Park Hotel in Dubai on the arrival day.

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

A winter plumaged adult was a nice surprise at Al Ghaftayn.

Tristram's Starling *Onychognathus tristramii*

Our first were six as we sea-watched at Ras Mirbat and the same day we saw four more at Wadi Hanna. The following morning as we waited for the Grosbeaks to come into drink a flock of twenty two flew over.

Thrushes & Allies Turdidae

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

This stunning thrush was one of the surprises of the tour and there had clearly been an invasion of this species. At the water hole on the Sayq Plateau we saw an estimated twenty or so, possibly more, which I subsequently learnt is the highest ever count for Oman (at least eighteen were seen there the following day by another observer). Thereafter we found a male at Al Ajaiz, at least ten were seen around the garden at Qatbit on our first morning there with one the following day whilst the last bird of the tour was another male (most birds were adult males) at the side of the road in Salalah. Generally this species is an uncommon winter visitor to Oman.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

One was seen at the water hole on the Sayq Plateau, about six were found in Qatbit garden with a single there following day and a final bird at Wadi Hanna.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

We saw this familiar Christmas card bird at Qatbit although it took two mornings for everyone to connect with it. A most unexpected species but then it is just the seventh to be recorded in Oman.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

We saw this species in better than expected numbers starting with two at Wamm Farm. After which we had one at Mubazzarah Green Area and two at Zakher Lake. Our next were two at Muntasar with another at Qatbit whilst the following day we recorded five between these two sites. Two were seen again on our second morning at Qatbit and our final bird was seen at one of the khawrs somewhere near Salalah.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

We found one at Shinas and then singles at Al Ghaftayn and Muntasar. The following day we saw the one at Muntasar again but also found three at Qatbit.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

The eastern races of this species are stunning and we were lucky enough to see up to ten on eight dates including many smart males.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Our first was a male at Jebel Hafeet in the grounds of our hotel and later that morning we found another at Mubazzarah Green Area whilst one car saw a female whilst travelling towards Shannah.

European (Common) Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

We saw one at Wamm Farm and found another at Mubazzarah Green Area. It is only in the last ten years that it was realised that this species is a scarce / rare winter visitor to the UAE.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

We found one at Mubazzarah Green Area.



Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

After seeing about ten at Wamm Farm we then recorded this species on a further six dates including six around Al Baleed Farm.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

The commonest wheatear on the tour with up to twenty a day on eleven dates.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Another new bird for Rockjumper in Oman, we saw one at Muntasar and another at Qatbit.

Blackstart *Oenanthe melanura*

Whilst searching for the Hypocolius at Muday we found a showy pair, and then we found four at various sites around the Salalah area with one at the Grosbeak site the following morning.

Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

Our visit to Khatmat Milahah was purely for this species and a fine male duly performed.

Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra*

A bird of UAE and northern Oman our first two were seen whilst en route to Wadi Hanna whilst six were seen in the Jebel Hafeet / Mubazzarah area. Three were seen as we left the Jebel Hafeet area and another six were seen on the Sayq Plateau.

Arabian Wheatear *Oenanthe lugentoides*

We have two main targets when we visit the sinkhole at Tawi Atayr, this species being one of them and we found a pair that gave good views as soon as we arrived in the car park.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

Another species that was confined to the UAE and northern Oman where we saw four at Wamm Farm and eight in the Jebel Hafeet / Mubazzarah area. One or two were seen on the following three days.

Sunbirds and Spiderhunters Nectariniidae**Nile Valley Sunbird** *Hedydipna metallica*

Three males were seen during our first foray around the garden at Qatbit with a pair there the following morning but Muday is the place for this species and we saw eight or more with ease there. The males unfortunately at the time of our visit were in eclipse plumage.

Palestine Sunbird *Cinnyris osea*

This species is somewhat nomadic and difficult to pin down by we managed to find single males at the sink hole at Tawi Atayr and Ayn Razat.

Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus*

More common than the above species we found five around the sink hole at Tawi Atayr and more at Ayn Razat and some of the males were in good plumage.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

The commonest of the sunbirds but only on the northern half of the tour where we saw up to six on our first seven days. There was even a pair in the bush right outside the Arabian Park Hotel in Dubai.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

As to be expected a common species that was seen on all dates during the tour.

Weavers & Allies Ploceidae**Ruppell's Weaver** *Ploceus galbula*

Good numbers at the sink hole at Tawi Atayr where thirty or more were seen and we found four the following day in the Salalah area.



Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae**African Silverbill***Euodice cantans*

This species only occurs in South Oman where we saw up to four at Tawi Atayr with eight or more coming in to drink at the Grosbeak site the following morning.

Indian Silverbill*Euodice cantans*

This species was only found in UAE where we saw up to ten during the first four days of the tour.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

This species was quite scarce and we didn't find one until we reached Shannah and the following day we saw one at Al Ajaiz. Around Salalah we found two at Khawr Taqah and four were seen at Jarziz Farm.

Citrine Wagtail*Motacilla citreola*

We found our first at Wamm Farm and another at Al Qudra but these were the only ones we saw in the UAE. Our next was at Muntasar but once we got to Salalah this species became more common with up to six noted on our last three days of the tour.

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

Three were seen on the trip with singletons at Wamm Farm, at an unspecified site near Salalah and at Ayn Razat.

White Wagtail*Motacilla alba*

This species was a common bird during the tour with up to twenty birds seen on ten dates but with a maximum of fifty at Al Baleed Farm. We also found two of the *personata* race known as Masked Wagtail at Wamm Farm.

NOTE: The personata subspecies is a candidate for splitting although at this time neither IOC nor Clements have done so.

Richard's Pipit*Anthus richardi*

We found about ten at Wamm Farm and another at Jarziz Farm.

Tawny Pipit*Anthus campestris*

At least four were present at Wamm Farm, one was at Khatmat Milahah and another was Al Baleed Farm. Over the last two days of the trip two were seen at Jarziz Farm and one was found at East Khawr.

Tree Pipit*Anthus trivialis*

We had an excellent count of fifty feeding under the trees at Wadi Darbat although our first was at Tawi Atayr.

Red-throated Pipit*Anthus cervinus*

We found four at least at Wamm Farm and ten or more at Jarziz Farm with one or two logged on four more dates including a couple that showed well at Muntasar.

Water Pipit*Anthus spinoletta*

Four were seen at Wamm Farm and two were seen at Zakher Lake but these were the only birds in the UAE. Six were seen at the Khail-Haml water hole on the Sayq Plateau and two were seen on both our visits to Muntasar.

Finches and Euphonias Fringillidae**Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus percivali***

This species used to be considered difficult outside the breeding season but the discovery of a new site for them has hopefully changed this. We visited the site, which is the same place as for the Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse and after an hour and a half wait we were rewarded with excellent views of at least five birds. This species was voted bird of the trip and was the only species to feature in everybody's top ten.



Yemen Serin*Crithagra menachensis*

The sink hole at Tawi Atayr is the well-known stakeout for this species and after seeing three rather poorly we finally got one in the 'scopes preening after bathing at a dripping gutter.

Buntings Emberizidae**Striolated Bunting***Emberiza striolata*

Those who got out of the bus quickly at the wadi stop on the way to Wamm Farm managed to see one that landed briefly in front of us but unfortunately it didn't stay very long and we never located another one.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting*Emberiza tahapisi*

This species was quite common around Salalah where we saw twenty on our first day with ten the following day.

Annotated List of Mammals Recorded**Wolves, Coyote, Foxes, Jackals Canidae****Golden Jackal***Canis aureus*

We saw two patrolling the waters edge at Ra's al Khor.

Cattle, Antelopes, Sheep, Goats Bovidae**Mountain Gazelle***Gazella gazella*

Three were seen at Qarn Nazwa including one that was trying to get back into the fenced off area. Fifteen were at Al Qudra and up to four were seen on two other days whilst travelling. Whether these at the latter site are truly wild or introduced is debateable.

Arabian Oryx*Oryx leucoryx*

Five were seen (behind a fence) at Qarn Nazwa.

Bottlenose Dolphins Delphinidae**Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops uduncus***

We saw pods on two dates whilst down at Salalah, some of which were close inshore.

Annotated List of Reptiles Recorded (identified from photographs)**Rock Semaphore Gecko***Pristurus rupestris*

This species was quite common on the Sayq Plateau.

Schmidt's (White-spotted) Fringe-toed Lizard *Acanthodactylus schmidtii*

We photographed one at Liwa and saw a couple elsewhere.

Tropical House Gecko*Hemidactylus mabonia*

We saw a few of these around Salalah.

Turtle sp*Chelonii sp*

A few of the group saw one off Salalah.



Annotated List of Butterflies Recorded (identified from photographs).

Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Blue spotted Arab	<i>Colotis phisadia</i>
Small Salmon Arab	<i>Colotis calais</i>
Large Orange Tip	<i>Colotis antevippe</i>
African Migrant	<i>Catopsilia florella</i>
Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Blue Pansy	<i>Precis orihtya</i>
Yellow Pansy	<i>Precis hierta</i>
White-edged Rock Brown	<i>Hipparchia parisatis</i>
African Babul Blue	<i>Azanus jesous</i>
Large Skipper	<i>Coeliades anchises</i>

Annotated List of Dragonflies Recorded (identified from photographs).

Carmine Darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>
Purple Blushed Darter	<i>Trithemis annulate</i>
Slender Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum Sabina</i>
Epaulet Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>
Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>
Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>

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