



The wonderful Grey Hypocolius was seen both in Oman and Bahrain (Hannu Jännes).

OMAN

3-16/19 NOVEMBER 2017

LEADER: HANNU JÄNNES

Birdquest's tenth Oman & Bahrain tour proved yet again a success for many reasons. We recorded a respectable total of 238 taxa and 52 Birdquest 'diamond' species (regional specialities), saw some fantastic migrants and interesting seabirds. The highlight of this tour were perhaps Oman's special owls species. Again we saw Omani Owl, a species only a handful of tour groups have seen before, and most of these were travelling with Birdquest! We also recorded the newly described Desert Owl, Pallid and Arabian Scops Owls, Little Owl, and 'Arabian' Spotted Eagle-Owl (a potential split from Spotted Eagle-Owl). You might not think a country comprising of mostly of rock and sand would be a great place for owls, but of the seven species sighted on this tour, three occupied the first, second and third place in the 'Bird of the Trip' vote! The mix of Middle Eastern specialities and sought-after migrants encountered on the tour, included Arabian Partridge, Persian Shearwater, Jouanin's Petrel, Masked and Brown Booby, Red-billed Tropicbird, Verreaux's Eagle, Crested Honey Buzzard, Red-knobbed Coot, Crab-plover, Long-toed Stint, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Sooty Gull; White-cheeked Tern, Spotted, Lichtenstein's and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Oriental Turtle and African Collared Doves, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Forbes-Watson's Swift, Sooty Falcon, Steppe Grey Shrike, Fan-tailed Raven, Grey Hypocolius, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, White-spectacled Bulbul, Streaked Scrub Warbler, Plain Leaf and Green Warblers, Arabian Babbler, Asian Desert Warbler, Ménétries's Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye, Tristram's Starling, Blackstart, Hume's, Variable, Red-tailed & Arabian Wheatears, Nile Valley, Palestine and Shining Sunbirds; Rüppell's Weaver, Indian Silverbill, Yemen Serin, Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak and Striolated Bunting. We also added Shikra, Yellow-billed Kite and Black Stork to the Birdquest Oman List. The Kingdom of Bahrain weighed in again with a wonderful pre-roost gathering



The fast flying Jouanin's Petrel was seen both in the north and south of Oman (Eli Sørensen).

of around 160 Grey Hypocolius, plus Socotra Cormorant and Egyptian Nightjar. A very good line-up worth the small detour across the Gulf!

Oman remains the safest country in the Middle East with stunning landscapes, a great road network, generally good food and accommodation throughout and a warm welcome for tourists. It was also good to see that Bahrain is back to 'normal' with peace and quiet restored after the turmoil of 2011's 'Arab Spring'. Our wonderful host, Abdullah, made our stay in Bahrain a very special one as always. It is such a shame that many people are influenced by events in the rest of the Middle East and never get to experience traditional Arabian hospitality!

Our tour began early in the morning in Muscat with the now traditional pelagic trip off Muscat. Our destination was the Al Fahal Island, a huge lump of yellow limestone around 16km offshore, which is home to a colony of Sooty Falcons. As it was quite late in the breeding season, the number of birds sighted were fewer than on my previous visit, but we still had great views of both adult and begging juvenile birds, twelve or so in total. Another good bird encountered here was Red-billed Tropicbird, with three birds flying around the island. We also saw a couple of Parasitic Jaegers in flight and photographed a few Striated Herons of the very dark, odd looking very dark local form. After circling the island several times it was time to head out to sea in search of tubenoses. Ocean-going seabirds were not much in evidence, but we had good views of several sought-after Jouanin's Petrels as we raced after them at full speed. However, they effortlessly keep ahead of us, jinking one way and then another over the waves. Quite a few Red-necked Phalaropes flew here and there, and we got quite close to a rather sizeable flock swimming on the sea. As we neared port again we took the opportunity to see Spinner Dolphins breaching around a flotilla of tourist boats. In the early afternoon a visit to the seafront and rear entrance of Al Qurm (= *'the mangroves'*) Park in Muscat proved quite productive. Ducks are generally scarce in Oman but we logged Garganey, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Teal and Northern Pintail. Overhead a single Greater Spotted Eagle was flying around, and in the tidal creeks and on the beach, our first shorebirds included Pacific Golden Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrels and Eurasian Curlews, Common Ringed, Kentish, Lesser Sand and Greater Sand Plovers as well as a few Common Greenshanks and Common Sandpipers. White-cheeked, Whiskered, Sandwich, Lesser Crested and Greater Crested Terns were amongst the many Slender-billed Gulls.



Adult Sooty Falcon at Al Fahal Island off Muscat (Hannu Jännes).

Travelling north along the Batinah coast expressway we made quick progress to Oman's main industrial city of Sohar for a one night stay in a pretty good hotel. The next morning, after being delayed by a very slow check-out, we headed a little further north to Liwa to make a concerted effort to see its two special birds. The first, Sykes's Warbler breeding in the mangroves showed well, but the endangered Middle Eastern *kalbaensis* form of Collared Kingfisher refused to show for us. Sadly the mangroves here are a little past their best and are showing signs of die-off lying as they do in the shadow of Sohar's growing port and its large aluminum smelter.

Further north, within a stone's throw of the UAE border, we visited Khatmat Milahah, a regular stop on this tour, primarily for Variable Wheatear, a migrant, which crosses the Strait of Hormuz to spend the winter here. We saw one of these, of the sooty *picata* form, sitting in a tree top some distance away, but couldn't relocate it despite a lot of searching. The other speciality of the site, Plain Leaf Warbler, which emanates from roughly the same breeding area as the wheatear was easy to locate, and we obtained some really excellent views. Other good birds here included Arabian Babblers. We turned back south for a late lunch in Barka and the rest of day was spent resting in preparation for a long nocturnal owling session.

Thinking of our evening meal as breakfast, we headed off into the Al Hajar Mountains long after dark, where the plan was to relocate the Omani Owl I had seen a few days earlier on my pre-tour recce. Leaving civilisation and tarmac roads behind us we were driving on a rocky hill side when an owl flew cross the track. After screeching to a halt and a very quick exit from the vehicles, we had decent views of an eagle owl, which started to call and was then confirmed as an Arabian Spotted Eagle Owl! Later it was joined by its mate in a duet! A great surprise, as I really didn't expect to see it here in the north of Oman. We learned later that the Sound Approach team, who know the mountains like the back of their hands, had located three different pairs of Arabian Spotted Eagle Owls in these mountains during their work with Omani Owl, and apparently our birds were one of the pairs they had found some years earlier. Several kilometres further into a remote wadi we reached the area where I knew the Omani Owl was in residence. Sadly we drew a blank despite a two hour search and I decided to check another territory, where the bird used to hang-out regularly couple of years ago. Again no Omani Owl, but instead we enjoyed a Pallid Scops Owl hooting from a hole in



We had two great encounters with the 'Arabian' Spotted Eagle-Owl on this tour (Dave Williason).

the cliff face! For the last couple of hours of darkness we returned to the original site, where, just before day break, Johnny picked up a silhouette of an Omani Owl when it crossed a rocky ridge and landed briefly on a cliff face in front of us before disappearing into an inaccessible wadi. Unfortunately only four of us managed to see the bird, and it was obvious that we had to come back for better views of this magical owl, which after all, is one of the key birds of the trip. After more birding in the wadi we returned to our hotel for a rest and lunch before heading back to the mountains for a shorter evening excursion. Generally the consensus seems to be that Omani Owl is prone to be more active after midnight, but as I had seen a very active bird at 07.30 pm just couple of days earlier, it seemed like a good idea to try a shorter evening excursion. However, this plan didn't work out, and after spending the evening in the wadi we had to rush back to our hotel for a late dinner.

As we were running out of time for the owl, we had to be back in the mountains very early the next morning, which was to be our last in the area. Arriving at the now familiar cliff face at 03.45 am it was very quiet, but when we moved few hundred meters up the track, we started to hear the unmistakable hooting of male Omani Owl and soon located it on a high cliff face, where we had pretty decent views of it for quite some time. Once again hard work had paid off! Other interesting birds seen in the area during the two mornings included Golden Eagle, several Bonelli's Eagles, an excellent Little Owl, Hume's and Red-tailed Wheatears, Menetries Warbler, Plain Leaf Warblers, Striolated Buntings, Desert Larks of the form *taimuri* and Streaked Scrub Warblers. Later in the day we searched agricultural areas close to our hotel and, after a lunch and siesta, Ras as Sawadi, a low lying promontory just west of Muscat. The beach held a number of waders, gulls and terns, most of which we had already seen, and on the nearby *sabhka* (the occasionally flooded mud/sand area above the beach) we tracked down two Steppe Grey Shrike as well as handsome Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks plus Isabelline and Desert Wheatears and a really nice flock of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse in flight.

Early the next morning we began our journey to Barr al Hikman on the east coast of Oman stopping on route for a picnic breakfast with an Asian Desert Warbler for company! Roadside birds during the drive included our first Greater Hoopoe Larks, Egyptian Vulture, Short-toed Snake Eagle and several Long-legged Buzzards. The landscape driving eastwards from the Sayq plateau gradually flattens into a featureless and



Western Reef Herons were very common in Barr Al Hikman (Hannu Jännes).

empty sea of sand and gravel. Here people fight a constant battle against the shifting sands, their homesteads surrounded by perimeter walls, built to keep the relentless attack at bay. We arrived in the small town of Al Hij in time to do plenty of birding at Barr al Hikman, a shorebird heaven with birds stretching into the distance along the coastline as far as the eye can see. Migrants also follow this coastline and are attracted to small settlements. Our first destination was the small desalination plant at Filim, where we found, in the midday heat, a number of commoner waders, including Broad-billed and Terek Sandpipers, but not the hoped for Great Knot. It was puzzling to see several large sea turtles, apparently Green Turtles, lying dead on a small stretch of tidal mud flat we checked. After a lunch in a small local restaurant at Al Hij we visited the mudflats south of Shannah, where we spent the rest of the day and enjoyed some really good birding along the beach in the soft afternoon light. During the day we logged 300 Greater Flamingos, over 100 Western Reef Herons, 520 Crab-plovers, many Grey, Kentish, Lesser Sand and Greater Sand Plovers, 500 Bar-tailed Godwits, 20 Ruddy Turnstones, hundreds of Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stints and Dunlins, several Sanderlings, tens of Terek Sandpipers and Marsh Sandpipers, 600 Common Redshank, our first Common Tern, the only *fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gull of the trip and three Pied Wheatears.

Next morning, we paid another visit to Filim area where, in addition to scanning the waders in much better light than the previous day, we spent time for searching migrants, which included Short-eared Owl (brilliantly spotted by Dave), several Marsh Harriers, Bluethroat, Jack Snipe (for Eli and Sue) and a lone Bimaculated Lark. We then drove across 370 kilometres of desert before we reached our next destination, the oasis of Al Ghaftain, where we enjoyed lunch and birding in the garden of the quest house in scorching early afternoon heat. The best bird here was without doubt a first-winter Oriental Turtle Dove, which we saw well. This small oasis seems to be a hotspot for the species in Oman, as we had one on my previous visit in 2015 as well! Also our first two Blackcaps, several Chiffchaffs including a bird that gave the Siberian Chiffchaff call, several Spotted and one Red-breasted Flycatcher were also seen. Later, on our way to Qitbit for the night, we visited Meqshen and Muntasar oasis, without seeing too much in the way of birds. At Qitbit Eli had two European Nightjars hunting in the garden of the guesthouse after dark.

Next morning we had a very interesting drive back to Muntasar oasis as the desert was covered in very thick fog making driving quite a challenge. At the oasis we waited with two other birding teams for the fog to lift and sandgrouse to arrive for their morning drink. The fog lifted as soon as the sun rose higher, but the sandgrouse action never really got going and we only saw a small flock of Spotted Sandgrouse in flight. After a lunch and birding at Qitbit, where a Green Warbler was the best bird, we headed further southwest and visited some isolated farms. The first was the Dokah Farms, which used to be the one of the best migrant hotspots in the desert. Unfortunately the place was pretty much dead now without any green vegetation and consequently only very few birds were around. During the afternoon we visited couple of other areas with



Common Chiffchaff was wintering at Muntasar oasis in good numbers (Hannu Jännes).

green pivot fields, but none of these were as productive as the Dokah Farm once was. The best birds of the afternoons birding included two Pallid Harriers, large numbers of Desert and Isabelline Wheatears, Asian Desert Warblers and Greater Hoopoe Larks. In the evening we drove to the truck-stop town of Thumrayt, gateway to Oman's oil and gas fields.

Heading out in the dark from our hotel in Thumrayt, we sped west along a new sealed road to Mudday (or 'Mudhai' on road signs). This is a new site, not even in the site guide and is basically a small village with an oasis and several palm groves but now easily accessible thanks to the new road. As well as being a wintering site for Grey Hypocolius, it is also a very easy place to see both Nile Valley Sunbird and African Collared Dove, both of which have established a breeding foothold in southern Oman. We spent time by a pool surrounded by palm groves, where we scanned the surroundings for anything of interest whilst consuming our picnic breakfast. Our sightings included a total of eight Red Foxes on the rocky hills, a first-winter Shikra (a write-in), a Menetries Warbler and a confiding Blackstart. Later we went into the small, partly run down village, and soon found a pair of Grey Hypocolius, which eventually showed well, and several showy Nile Valley Sunbirds. African Collared Dove proved harder to locate, and it was only found by Sue when we entered a camel farm. Desert Lark (of the sandy form *saturata* here) was also seen during the morning.



White Wagtail is another species that winters around the oasis and farms in the middle of the desert (Hannu Jännes).



Female and male Desert Wheatear (Hannu Jännes).

After lunch and check-out from Thumrayt we drove down to Salalah, stopping on route at Wadi Dawkah of the franciscense fame, before going on to our nice hotel on the beach in Dahariz. Getting out of our vehicles in the warm and humid night air with the sound of waves on the beach in the darkness gave us all a really magical experience.

Next morning we headed directly to a wadi, where some Belgian birders had recently seen Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak, one of the key birds in the Salalah area. Apparently one of the better sites for this species, which we have used on earlier trips, hadn't proved very productive in recent times and we were keen to try this new stake-out Yvon had been given by his friends. This wadi had plenty of water for cattle and proved to be an excellent birding spot. Whilst waiting for the grosbeak we enjoyed a beautiful morning with great views of a flock of Arabian Partridge, tens of Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, African Silverbills, Abyssinian White-eyes, Tristram's Starlings, Shining Sunbirds, Common Rock and Blue Rock Thrushes, and, eventually, a gorgeous grosbeak put in an appearance posing for ten minutes on a top of a leafless tree, providing us with really good scope views before disappearing for good. Satisfied we moved on to a more wooded gully where we added a number of typical southern Oman species like Palestine Sunbird, African Paradise Flycatcher, Arabian Warbler and Black-crowned Tchagra to our bird list.



African Paradise Flycatcher (Dave Williamson) and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (Hannu Jännes).



The escarpment at Jabal Samhan is great place to see Verreaux's Eagle (Nick Baker).

Before lunch we still had time to visit a small wetland close to our hotel, where we had several new birds including Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, and, best of all a Long-toed Stint, a scarce winter visitor to the area. After a welcome seated lunch at Beach Villas, we spent the afternoon in the mountains east of Salalah visiting Jabal Samhan, a wonderful site on an escarpment. Perched high above the flat Mirbat plain we found our main target, Verreaux's Eagle, after much scanning. First we saw two birds soaring far away in the distance, then a third, slightly closer, individual and finally a fourth bird that flew past us twice at very close range giving brilliant views and decent photo ops. We also noted Arabian Wheatears here and had close-up views of several Tristram's Crackles. On the way back we stopped to look at Desert Roses, some of which still bore a few pink flowers. The last stop of the afternoon was at Tawi Attair, the site of an immense limestone sinkhole at which Yemen Serin was found by cavers in 1997, more than 1000km from the nearest population in Yemen (although it has since been found at another sinkhole to the west of Salalah). The Yemen Serins were, as always by this time of day, a little distant across the sinkhole but afforded very reasonable scope views.

After dinner and a short rest we headed out again just after midnight to do owling! Our destination was a wadi west of Salalah, where the much-sought after Desert Owls are known to be. It took me some time to find the right track to the right area, but luckily the owl was very active, and gave us all brilliant views. Our owling session in the wadi took only 20 minutes, and I wonder what the tourists camping at the parking lot were thinking about our short nocturnal visit! On the way back we spotlighted Eurasian Stone-curlew on the side of the highway and saw Spotted Thick-knee in the middle of Salalah city. Thanks to the quick success of our owling excursion we were back in our hotel at three in the morning and managed to catch some sleep before a relaxed seated breakfast, only our second of the trip!. After breakfast we headed for Raysut Water Treatment Plant where nose-pegs would have been useful, but by way of compensation the settling pools here were very birdy as always. We added several species to the trip list including: Cotton Pygmy Goose,



The magnificent Verreaux's Eagle at Jabal Samhan (Hannu Jännes).

Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard, Abdim's and White Storks, Spur-winged Lapwing and Green Sandpiper. Other interesting species here were Citrine and Western Yellow Wagtails. Next on the agenda was a quick visit to Raysut tip, a pretty horrible place, with fewer birds than we had hoped for. We wasted time checking couple of wetlands, which proved to be too dry, and finally, on the way for lunch, we checked a day roost with several Spotted Thick-knees.



Dave and his friend Whitey at Dahariz Park (Hannu Jännes).



Persian Shearwater and Masked Booby off Mirbat (Hannu Jännes).

After the lunch wet visited Dahariz park, where birds included a first-winter Crested Honey Buzzard and Grey-headed Kingfisher. There were also many Rüppell's Weavers and introduced Scaly-breasted Munias around, and Dave made friends with 'Whitey', an albino Zebra Finch, which he claimed was a genuine vagrant from Australia! Later we birded the Ayn Tobrug area, where we remained at a small pool till dusk to see a lone Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse to fly in and have few sips of water.

The new morning found us at the harbour of Mirbat, where we boarded our small boat for a pelagic excursion. During the morning we sailed several kilometres offshore from Mirbat, stopping at regular intervals to chum. At this time of year this did not produce the feeding frenzy people can experience elsewhere, but nonetheless we did see several Jouanin's Petrels, including a swimming bird, a handful of Persian Shearwaters, Masked Boobies and Bridled Terns. After our boat trip we enjoyed a relaxed lunch, with three types of grilled fish, in a restaurant by the harbour, during which we saw a juvenile Bonelli's Eagle and a Black Stork, which was a write-in. In the afternoon we headed for Al Mughsail, where a brief seawatch produced three Brown Boobies, and the rest of the afternoon was spent at a reed fringed pool nearby, where Yellow Bittern, Baillon's Crake, Jack Snipe, and our first and only European Roller of the trip, were added to our bird list. After dinner it was time for another, highly successful, owling session, which provided excellent



We had excellent views of Arabian Scops Owl In Dhofar (Dave Williamson).

views of an Arabian Scops Owl (four others were heard) and a stunning, very confiding pair of 'Arabian' Spotted Eagle-Owls. All this in less than an hour! Why can't all owls behave like this?

Next day we started at Khawr Rori, which is always a very birdy place. The marshy northwest inlet came up with an interesting wagtail showing some characters of Eastern Yellow Wagtail of the form *taivana* but is in fact a hybrid between Yellow Wagtail forms. Interestingly we saw a similar bird here on my previous visit two years ago. Also a European Reed Warbler was new here as well as four Alpine Swifts flying overhead with many Forbes-Watson's Swifts. There were plenty of birds at the main khawr including two Greater White-fronted Geese, three Tufted Ducks, Intermediate Egret, five Red-knobbed Coot and four Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, all new species to our trip list. Birds of prey were also well represented, and we had great views of several Greater Spotted, two Imperial and two Bonelli's Eagles, and one Long-legged Buzzard. The famous ruins of Sumharan here are said to be the site of the palace of the Queen of Sheba (although this is not 100% certain), and two of us took the opportunity to visit the air conditioned exhibition hall, while others were sweating in the very humid heat scanning the waders and ducks! After lunch we visited the huge Jarziz Farm, which unfortunately doesn't allow birders entry, so we scanned this promising area through the fence from couple of different spots seeing a couple of Singing Bush Larks, two Cream-coloured Coursers and a flock of five Rosy Starlings, a rather scarce winter visitor.

The last day of the main tour started with a visit to Ayn Hamran, where we finally managed to located Bruce's Green Pigeon, a gorgeous species that had managed to elude us this far. Another magical encounter here was an Arabian Chameleon showing really psychedelic colour patterns. Later in the morning we paid brief visits to Jarziz Farm, East Khawr and finally Dahariz park, where we saw three Yellow-billed Kites, a new species for this tour. After lunch, packing and check-out it was time to fly back to Muscat, where the main tour ended.

Next morning four of us took a flight to Bahrain with thoughts of the grand finale to our tour. Bahrain might not be the most attractive birding destination in terms of landscape, but it has never yet let us down in producing the number one most sought after bird on this tour, Grey Hypocolius. As we had already seen it in Oman, the pressure was off, but we were still looking forward to seeing this exotic bird in good numbers. After finding, by trial and error, the right hotel in down town Manama and checking into the smart rooms, we



Long-toed Stint, a rare winter visitor to Oman (Hannu Jännes).

enjoyed a quick lunch and made our way down to the beach at Busaiteen for to go through the waders and gulls. After this we continued to the regular pre-roost site for Grey Hypocolius in the Jasra village area, where we met Abdullah, our wonderful Bahraini host. The pre-roost areas are usually patches of acacia scrub, where the birds congregate before making their way down inside the bushes, we think to dust bathe, before flying off to their roost presumably in the palms of VIP gardens. The first birds flew in from high and then more arrived in small groups. As usual, there was no large build up, just lots of comings and goings. The birds tower from the scrub as they leave and head off with purpose towards their roosting area, sometimes swinging from side to side as they gained height, presumably to avoid potential predators. They really are unique superb-looking, sleek birds, so reminiscent of waxwings in their appearance and behaviour. We counted 163 of these excellent birds during the afternoon. Other birds seen included Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin, introduced Grey Francolins and Red-vented Bulbuls. Our first day in Bahrain always ends with a farm session and happily Abdullah was able to use his considerable charm to talk the security guy into letting us in. It was thanks to this that we were able to see the wonderful Egyptian Nightjar, with up to three birds sat on the warm farm tracks, soon after dark. We also added Water Pipit and Eurasian Skylark to our list and had our second sighting of the tour of Short-eared Owl.

Next morning found us on the beach at Busaiteen, where we quickly located Socotra Cormorant, our main target here, and we were soon on our way to Jebel, in the middle of the island, which is good for wheatears. We saw White-crowned Wheatear (new bird for our list) and Red-tailed Wheatear, but unfortunately the regular Iranian (or Persian Mourning) Wheatear had not returned to the same area we have seen it in the past and much searching failed to find one here or elsewhere in the Jebel. We also paid a visit to the nearby Bahrain racecourse, whose artificial lake in the centre of the track (as well as the irrigated track itself) usually has some good birds. Amongst the small numbers of ducks that included Common Pochard, Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Mallard and Eurasian Teal, we found a Marbled Teal, which unfortunately may have been an escape from Bahrain Zoo. Later we headed off to buy lunch and then spent the afternoon at the Hypocolius pre-roost, where the idea was to try to get some decent photos of these lovely birds. In addition to the many hypocolius we noted a Masked Shrike, which proved to be the last addition to our bird list. This was a fine way to finish our short stay in Bahrain before we returning to Manama for the end of tour meal with our host Abdullah and his charming assistant.



Arabian Chameleon at Ayn Hamran showing psychedelic colour patterns (Eli Sørensen).

Bird of the trip (main tour)

1. Desert Owl
2. Omani Owl
3. 'Arabian' Spotted Eagle-Owl
4. Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak
5. Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse & Sooty Falcon

Bird of the trip (Bahrain extension)

1. Grey Hypocolius
2. Egyptian Nightjar
3. Socotra Cormorant



Pelagic off Mirbat (Johnny Mikes).

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRD SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species). Conservation threat categories and information are taken from Threatened Birds of the World, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website:

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home> E = Endangered, V = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* Two at Khawr Rori.

Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* A total of three in the Salalah area.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* First noted at Al Qurm, Muscat.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* A total of 25 in Salalah. Also seen in Bahrain.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* One at Al Qurm, Muscat and another one at Khawr Rori, Salalah.

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* Three in Muscat and another three in Salalah.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Three at Filim near Hij.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Handful of sightings from Muscat to Bahrain.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Handful of sightings from Muscat to Bahrain.



One of the three Red-billed Tropicbirds seen on our boat trip off Muscat (Hannu Jännes).

Common Pochard *Aythya farina* One in Salalah and three at Bahrain Racecourse.
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Three at Khawr Rori, Salalah and one at Bahrain Racecourse.
Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* One, possibly an escape, at Bahrain Racecourse.
Arabian Partridge ♦ *Alectoris melanocephala* Great views of a flock in the Dhofar Mountains.
Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* Several encounters, the first in Muscat. Also seen in Bahrain.
Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (NL) A singleton at Khatmat Milalah.
Persian Shearwater ♦ *Puffinus persicus* Six on our pelagic off Mirbat in Dhofar.
Jouanin's Petrel ♦ *Bulweria fallax* NT Six on our Muscat pelagic and 50 on our Mirbat pelagic
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Noted on four days with a maximum count of 30 at Bahrain Racecourse.
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* Noted on seven days with a maximum of c.350 at Barr al Hikman.
Red-billed Tropicbird ♦ *Phaethon aethereus* Great views of three at Al Fahal Island off Muscat.
Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* Another amazing gathering of c.2000 at Raysut Tip.
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Around 100 at Raysut and one elsewhere.
Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* One in flight at Mirbat in Dhofar.
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* A maximum of 50 at East Khawr.
Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Three sightings of total of five birds.
Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* One at a pool in Wadi Ashawq.
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A total of eight in the Dofar region.
Striated Heron *Butorides striata* Four at Al Fahal Island, one at Al Hij and one in Dhofar.
Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Small numbers were noted daily in Dhofar.
Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* Two at Liwa and one at Al Hij.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* A total of fifty on two days in Dhofar, a poor showing.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Noted almost daily.
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Four in Dhofar.
Great Egret *Ardea alba* A small scatter of sightings after the first at Al Qurm, Muscat.
Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* One at Khawr Rori.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* A small scatter of sightings.
Western Reef Heron (W R Egret) *Egretta gularis* First noted at Al Bustan. Numerous at Barr Al Hikman.
Masked Booby ♦ *Sula dactylatra* A total of five on our Mirbat pelagic.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Three off Al Maghsayl.



First-winter Crested Honey Buzzard in Salalah (Hannu Jännes).

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Noted on all coastal areas including Bahrain.

Socotra Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* **VU** 20 birds in Bahrain.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A total of 15 was a high count for this tour.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* **EN** One on route to Al Hij and one in the Thumrayt area.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* A total of five were seen.

Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* **VU** A total of 10, the first at Al Qurm in Muscat.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Maximum in Dhofar of around 300 at Raysut.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* **VU** Maximum in Dhofar of around 20 at Raysut.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* Two were seen in the Al Hajar mountains.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* A total of four, with brilliant views, in the Dhofar Mountains.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* Three in the Al Hajar mountains and a total of eight in Dhofar.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (NL) One in Dhofar.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* One juvenile bird in Mudday was new bird for the Birdquest Oman list.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* A scatter of sightings after the first at Al Qurm, Muscat.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* **NT** Two around the farms in the desert and two in Dhofar.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Three in the park near our hotel in Salalah were our first in Oman.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* A total of five were noted.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* One by a pool in Wadi Ashawq.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Common, the first noted at Al Qurm, Muscat.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* Five at Khawr Rori.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* A total of eight in Dhofar and one in Bahrain.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* One was spotlighted in Dhofar.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* Six in Salalah.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Small numbers on all coasts in Oman.

Crab-plover ♦ *Dromas ardeola* Dave counted 520 at Barr al Hikman on our first day.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers daily in Dhofar and in Bahrain.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* One at East Khawr.



Crab-plover at Al Hij (Eli Sørensen) and Black-crowned Night Heron at Mirbat (Hannu Jännes).

- Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* One Raysut.
- Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus* Common on the Batinah coast and also noted in Dhofar and in Bahrain.
- Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* 30 at Al Qurm, Muscat.
- Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* First noted at Barr al Hikman.
- Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* Ten at Al Qurm.
- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* Four sightings.
- Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* First noted at Al Qurm and very common at Barr al Hikman.
- Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* First noted at Al Qurm, abundant at Barr al Hikman. Ssp *pamirensis*.
- Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultia* First noted at Al Qurm, common Barr al Hikman. Ssp *columbinus*.
- Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* Four at Khawr Rori.
- Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* First noted at Al Qurm and common at Barr al Hikman.
- Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* NT First noted at Al Qurm and common at Barr al Hikman. Ssp *orientalis*.
- Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* First noted at Al Qurm and very common at Barr al Hikman.
- Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* NT Ca.20 noted in Dhofar.
- Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* Common at Barr al Hikman, two in Dhofar and seven in Bahrain.
- Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* A maximum of c.100 at East Khawr in Salalah.
- Broad-billed Sandpiper** ♦ *Calidris falcinellus* Nine at Barr al Hikman and four in Bahrain.
- Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* Hundreds at Barr al Hikman, and six in Bahrain.
- Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* Small numbers in Dhofar.
- Long-toed Stint** ♦ *Calidris subminuta* One at East Khawr.
- Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Several at Barr al Hikman, and up to 36 near our hotel in Salalah.
- Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Abundant at Barr al Hikman, smaller numbers elsewhere including Bahrain.
- Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* Abundant at Barr al Hikman, smaller numbers elsewhere including Bahrain.
- Jack Snipe** ♦ *Lymnocyrtus minimus* One at Barr al Hikman, and another one at Wadi Ashawq in Dhofar.
- Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* Scattered records of small numbers.
- Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Common at Barr al Hikman and two in Dhofar.
- Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* 42 off Muscat, 100 at Ras as Sawadi and 80 off Mirbat.
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* A scatter of sightings.
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* A total of seven, all in Dhofar.
- Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* First noted at Al Qurm and abundant at Barr al Hikman.
- Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Up to 30 at Barr al Hikman and one in Dhofar.
- Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Small numbers daily in Dhofar.



Sooty Gull at Mirbat (Hannu Jännes).

- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* First noted at Al Qurm, scattered records of small numbers.
- Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* Two at Jarziz Farms.
- Slender-billed Gull** *Chroicocephalus genei* Common throughout the tour.
- Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* One at Al Qurm, one at Al Hij and few hundred in Bahrain.
- Sooty Gull** ♦ *Ichthyaetus hemprichii* Common throughout the tour, especially in Dhofar.
- Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans* Several noted.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull** ♦ *Larus fuscus* One at Barr al Hikman showed characters of this form.
- Heuglin's Gull** *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* First noted at Al Qurm and common from Barr al Hikman southwards.
- Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Scattered records of small numbers.
- Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* First noted at Barr al Hikman followed by six in Dhofar and seven in Bahrain.
- Greater Crested Tern (Swift T)** *Thalasseus bergii* First noted at Al Fahal Island.
- Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* First noted at Al Qurm.
- Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* First noted at Al Qurm.
- Saunders's Tern** ♦ *Sternula saundersi* First noted at Barr al Hikman but thought not to be separable from Little Tern.
- Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* C.20 off Mirbat in Dhofar.
- Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* One at Barr al Hikman and four in Dhofar, very scarce this year.
- White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa* Two at Al Qurm.
- Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Six at Al Qurm and c.20 in Dhofar.
- White-winged Tern (W-w Black T)** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Two in Dhofar and two in Bahrain.
- Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua)** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Two off Muscat and three at Ras as Sawadi.
- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* A flock of 30 at Ras as Sawadi and a flock of 35 in Dhofar.
- Spotted Sandgrouse** ♦ *Pterocles senegallus* Around 50 in one day in the Qitbit area.
- Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** ♦ *Pterocles lichtensteinii* One visiting drinking pool at Ayn Tobrug.
- Rock Dove** *Columba livia* Common throughout the tour.
- Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* Common throughout the tour.
- African Collared Dove** ♦ *Streptopelia roseogrisea* One at Mudday, a new stakeout for this species.
- Laughing Dove (Palm D)** *Spilopelia senegalensis* Common throughout the tour.
- Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Ten at Barka, two in Dofar and three in Bahrain.
- Bruce's Green Pigeon** ♦ *Treron waalia* Five at Ayn Hamran.
- Pallid Scops Owl** ♦ (Striated S O) *Otus brucei* One hooting in the Al Hajar Mountains.
- Arabian Scops Owl** ♦ *Otus pamela* One spotlighted and another four heard in Dhofar.



Green Bee-eater and Grey-headed Kingfisher (Hannu Jännes).

- (Arabian) Spotted Eagle-Owl ♦ *Bubo [africanus] milesi* A pair at Al Hajar mountains and another pair in Dhofar.
- Omani Owl ♦ *Strix omanensis* It took quite a bit of searching, but in the end we saw one in the Al Hajar Mountains.
- Desert Owl ♦ *Strix hadorami* Amazing views of one in Dhofar.
- Little Owl *Athene noctua* Great views of one in the Al Hajar mountains. Ssp *saharae*.
- Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* One at Filim near Al Hij, and another one in Bahrain.
- European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (NL) Two for Eli at Qitbit. Ssp *unwini*.
- Egyptian Nightjar ♦ *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Three at a farm in Bahrain.
- Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* A group of four at Khwar Rawri.
- Forbes Watson's Swift ♦ *Apus berliosi* Not easy, but many birds seen in Dhofar showed characters of this species.
- Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Not easy, but four birds near Sohar in the north were identified as this species.
- Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* Common in northern Oman.
- European Roller *Coracias garrulus* NT Only one was seen so the migration was over for this species.
- Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* Two in Salalah.
- Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* A few scattered records in the north.
- Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* Very common in northern Oman.
- Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* Noted from Thumrayt southwards, several hundreds were seen.
- Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Scattered records throughout the tour.
- Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* First noted at Al Qurm, and rather common from Qitbit onwards.
- Sooty Falcon ♦ *Falco concolor* NT 12 on Al Fahal Island and one at Barr Al Hikman.
- Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Two in the Dhofar region.
- Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked P) *Psittacula krameri* Small numbers throughout including Bahrain.
- Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* A total of three in Dhofar.
- Isabelline Shrike (Daurian Shrike) *Lanius isabellinus* Noted in the northern half of Oman, and again in Bahrain..
- Red-tailed Shrike (Turkestan S, Rufous-t S) *Lanius phoenicuroides* Only small numbers were noted this year.
- Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* A few scattered records including two in Bahrain.
- Steppe Grey Shrike ♦ *Lanius pallidirostris* A total of six after the first at Ras as Sawadi.
- Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* One juvenile in Bahrain was a great surprise.
- African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* 13 noted in Dhofar after the first at Ayn Hamran.
- House Crow *Corvus splendens* Common almost everywhere.
- Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* One at Al Busaiteen and small numbers in the central desert.
- Fan-tailed Raven ♦ *Corvus rhipidurus* Up to 30 a day in the Dhofar Mountains.
- Grey Hypocolius ♦ *Hypocolius ampelinus* Two at Mudday in Oman and 163 at a pre-roost gathering in Bahrain.
- Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* A total of six in the desert.
- Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* 20 in the north (*tamuri*), nine in the Empty Quarter (*saturata*) and one in Bahrain.
- Black-crowned Sparrow-lark ♦ *Eremopterix nigriceps* Noted on five days.



Greater Hoopoe-Lark (Hannu Jännes).

- Singing Bush Lark** *Mirafra cantillans* Poor views of three at a farm in Salalah.
- Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* Six at a farm in Bahrain, where it is a common wintering bird.
- Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* Common in Oman and Bahrain.
- Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* Noted on four days.
- Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* One at Filim in Barr Al Hikman.
- White-eared Bulbul** (introduced?) *Pycnonotus leucotis* A small scatter of sightings. Very common in Bahrain.
- Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer* A few in Bahrain.
- White-spectacled Bulbul** ♦ (Yellow-vented B) *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* Common throughout the tour.
- Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)** *Riparia riparia* Six at Al Qurm and one at Barr Al Hikman.
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Noted throughout the tour, especially common in Dhofar.
- Pale Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta* A scatter of sightings throughout the tour,.
- Streaked Scrub Warbler** ♦ *Scotocerca inquieta* A total of eight in the Al Hajar Mountains.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* Common at the Empty Quarter oases/rest houses.
- Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus [collybita] tristis* Singles at the Empty Quarter oases/rest houses.
- Plain Leaf Warbler** ♦ *Phylloscopus neglectus* A total of 15 in the north.
- Green Warbler** ♦ *Phylloscopus nitidus* One in the gardens of Qitbit rest house.
- Clamorous Reed Warbler (Indian R W)** *Acrocephalus [stentoreus] brunnescens* A total of 10 were noted.
- Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* One at Khawr Rori.
- Syke's Warbler** *Iduna rama* Good views of one at Liwa.
- Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis* Small numbers throughout the tour.
- Arabian Babbler** ♦ *Turdoides squamiceps* A total of 12 in the north.
- Eurasian Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* Two in Al Ghaftain Motel garden.
- Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* Commonly seen Al Hajar Mountains (*halimodendri*) and in the south (*curruca*).
- Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris* (NL) One in Al Ghaftain Motel garden.
- Arabian Warbler** ♦ *Sylvia leucomelaena* Two seen at Ayn Hamran.
- Asian Desert Warbler** ♦ *Sylvia nana* A total of six logged, first noted on route to Bar Al Hikman.
- Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* One at Mudday. Ssp *icterops*.
- Ménétries's Warbler** ♦ *Sylvia mystacea* Only three were noted. Ssp uncertain.
- Abyssinian White-eye (White-breasted W-e)** *Zosterops abyssinicus* Common in Dhofar.
- Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Sadly abundant and now even common in Salalah.
- Rosy Starling** *Pastor roseus* A flock of five at Dahariz farm in Salalah.
- Tristram's Starling** ♦ (T Grackle) *Onychognathus tristramii* Around 200 noted in Dhofar.
- Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** ♦ (R Bush R) *Erythropygia galactotes* Two at Jasra in Bahrain.
- Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* Handful of birds at the Empty Quarter oases/rest houses.
- Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* Only two were noted.



Tristram's Starling (Hannu Jännes).

- Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* Six at the Empty Quarter oases/rest houses.
- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* Small numbers in the north, Also one at Qitbit. Ssp *semirufus*.
- Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* One at Qitbit.
- Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T)** *Monticola saxatilis* Two in the mountains of Dhofar.
- Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* One in the mountains of Dhofar.
- Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* First noted at Ras as Sawadi, a total of c.50 logged during the tour.
- Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* A common feature of the tour.
- Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Three at Barr Al Hikman.
- Blackstart** ♦ *Oenanthe melanura* Rather common in the south of Oman.
- Variable Wheatear** ♦ (Eastern Pied W) *Oenanthe picata* One at Khatmat Milahah. Ssp *picata*.
- White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* One in Bahrain.
- Hume's Wheatear** ♦ *Oenanthe albonigra* 11 logged in Northern Oman.
- Red-tailed Wheatear** ♦ (Persian W, Rufous-t W) *Oenanthe chrysopygia* A total of four in Oman plus two in Bahrain.
- Arabian Wheatear** ♦ (South A W) *Oenanthe lugentoides* Ten noted in Dhofar.
- Nile Valley Sunbird** ♦ *Hedydipna metallica* c.10 at Mudday.
- Palestine Sunbird** ♦ *Cinnyris osea* Four in Dhofar.
- Shining Sunbird** ♦ *Cinnyris habessinicus* Good numbers in Dhofar. Stunning bird!
- Purple Sunbird** *Cinnyris asiaticus* Common in northern Oman.
- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* Very common. Ssp *hufhufae*.
- Rüppell's Weaver** ♦ *Ploceus galbula* Good numbers in Dhofar.
- African Silverbill** *Euodice cantans* Common in Dhofar.
- Indian Silverbill** ♦ *Euodice malabarica* Only a few in the north.
- Scaly-breasted Munia (introduced)** *Lonchura punctulata* Good numbers in Al Jahariz park in Salalah.
- Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* A number of unidentified Yellow Wagtails were seen especially in Dhofar,
- Western Yellow Wagtail** ♦ (Syke's W) *Motacilla [flava] beema* Three in the Dhofar area.
- Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* A total of 14 logged this year.
- Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* A total of four logged this year.
- White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* Small numbers were noted almost daily.
- Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* Noted almost daily in small numbers.



Shining Sunbird, young and adult male (Hannu Jännes).

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* One at Ayn Hamran.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* A total of seven noted.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Only two were seen.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* 16 logged in Bahrain. Ssp *coutelli*.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* One in the Empty Quarter oases.

Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak ♦ *Rhynchostruthus percivali* One in the Dhofar Mountains.

Yemen Serin ♦ *Crithagra menachensis* Four in the sinkhole at Tawi Attair.

Striolated Bunting ♦ (Striated B) *Emberiza striolata* Six in the Al Hajar Mountains.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (African Rock B) *Emberiza tahapisi* Very common in the Dhofar Mountains



Red-necked Phalaropes at sea off Muscat (Hannu Jännes).



Carter's Rock Semaphore Gecko (Dave Williamson).

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* A total of ten including eight at Mudday.

Egyptian Rousette *Rousettus aegyptiacus* Perhaps a hundred or so in the north.

Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* Two off Mirbat.

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris* Around 50 at sea off Muscat.

Indo-Pacific Hump-backed Dolphin *Sotalia chinensis* Pod of five in Salalah.

Arabian Tahr *Arabitragus jayakari* (NL) One was seen in Al Hajar mountains by some of the group.

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis* One at Tawi Attair.

REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS & FISH (compiled by Dave & Sue Williamson)

Snake-tailed Fringe-toed Lizard *Acanthodactylus opheodurus*

Carter's Rock Semaphore Gecko *Pristurus carteri*

Blanford's Rock Semaphore Gecko *Pristurus rupestris*

Arabian Chameleon *Chamaeleo arabicus*

Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas*

Spotted Eagle Ray *Aetobatis narinari*

Flying Fish species *Exocoetidae* species