



OMAN (WITH BAHRAIN) TOUR REPORT 2023

27 October - 8 / 10 November 2023

BY HANNU JÄNNES

This was Birdquest's fourteenth tour of Oman & Bahrain and once again proved to be a great success. We recorded a respectable total of 236 taxa of which 54 were Birdquest 'diamond' species (regional specialities) and saw several interesting migrants and seabirds. Oman's special owls have always been a highlight of the tour, and we were successful in finding the newly described Desert Owl, Arabian Scops Owl, Little Owl, Arabian Eagle-Owl (a recent split from Spotted Eagle-Owl), plus two Eurasian Scops Owls, a new bird for this tour. Unfortunately, some foul weather affected our owling time when chasing the legendary Omani Owl, and we had to make do with a 'heard only' observation. A mix of Middle Eastern specialities and sought-after migrants encountered on the tour included Arabian and Sand Partridges, Socotra Cormorant, Persian and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Jouanin's Petrel, Swinhoe's Storm Petrel (the first ones since 2011), Masked and Brown Booby, Verreaux's Eagle, Lappet-faced Vulture, Red-knobbed Coot, the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing, over a thousand Crab-plovers, good numbers of Cream-coloured Coursers, hundreds of Sooty Gulls, Spotted, Lichtenstein's, Crowned and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, African Collared Dove, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Forbes-Watson's Swift, Sooty Falcon, two forms of Grey Shrike, Fan-tailed Raven, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, White-spectacled Bulbul, Streaked Scrub Warbler, Arabian, Asian Desert, Eastern Orphee and Ménétries's Warblers, Plain Leaf Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye, Tristram's Starling, Blackstart, Hume's, Red-tailed and Arabian Wheatears, Nile Valley, Palestine and Arabian Sunbirds, Arabian Babbler, Rüppell's Weaver, Yemen Serin, Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak and Striolated Bunting. As always, hard work in the field produced unexpected bonus species, which this year included Bank Myna, Indian White-eye, White-eyed Gull, Lesser and Common Noddy and Oriental Turtle Dove. The Kingdom of Bahrain weighed in again with a wonderful pre-roost gathering of ca75 Grey Hypocolius and Persian Mourning Wheatear. 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. In Bahrain our wonderful host, Abdullah, did his best to help us to find our target birds.

The tour began in the morning at a hotel near Muscat airport, from where we headed straight to the shore of the Gulf of Oman at Ras as Sawadi, a low-lying promontory just west of Muscat, and boarded two boats that took us around the small islets, where we had great views of adult and recently fledged juvenile Sooty Falcons. Other birds noted during the boat trip included Western Reef Herons and several Striated Herons, which included individuals of the very dark local colour morph together with quite standard ones. After checking the gulls, terns and waders on the beach and finding a Steppe Grey Shrike, now lumped back to Great Grey Shrike, further inland, we indulged in a big lunch in a local Indian restaurant.

A late afternoon excursion to a nearby agricultural area produced Grey Francolins, Red-wattled Lapwings, Eurasian Hoopoes, Indian and European Rollers, a showy female Pied Wheatear, Delicate Prinia (a recent split from Graceful Prinia), many colourful Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and Arabian Bee-eaters (one of the three species that resulted from the recent split of Little Green Bee-eater), Bank Myna (a new bird for the itinerary), Indian Silverbill and Red-vented, White-spectacled and White-eared Bulbuls. We still needed one important Arabian endemic in the region, so we moved on and, after a search, we found our target, a group of very co-operative Arabian Babblers.

Very early the next morning we headed for the Al Hajar mountains and Wadi 'Mac', home of the legendary Omani Owl, which unfortunately we couldn't find this time. This wasn't a completely unexpected result as I had spent the best parts of two nights in the same wadi on my pre-tour recce with similar outcome. We did, however, have good views of a calling Pallid Scops Owl. As dawn broke, we were enjoying a picnic breakfast in the beautiful, remote wadi, then time for birding in the daylight. Birds included several Hume's Wheatears (what a great song it has), Red-tailed Wheatear, Streaked Scrub Warbler (a must-see bird for family listers), Long-billed Pipit, Striolated Bunting, Desert Lark, a group of three Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse flushed from the bottom of the wadi, and two confiding Plain Leaf Warblers. After taking a rest at the hotel and a good lunch we headed for Jabal Akhdar at 2000m asl, arriving there in the late afternoon. After dinner in a local restaurant at the base of the mountain it was time for more owling in a big wadi. The hopes were high as I had heard the Omani Owl here during my recce just four days earlier, but this time we had no luck despite staying in the area until well past midnight. Some consolation was hearing several calling Pallid Scops Owls and Little Owls, which we eventually managed to see.

Next morning saw us at the Sayiq plateau, where we visited several promising looking valleys. Highlights included a total of four Lappet-faced Vultures, Egyptian Vultures, many Brown-necked Ravens, eastern Black Redstarts, Menetries, one Barred and three Eastern Orphean Warblers, numerous Lesser and a couple of Common Whitethroats, a pair of Streaked Scrub Warblers, Pied, Hume's and Red-tailed Wheatears and Common Rock Thrush. It was also good to connect with an Oriental Turtle Dove, a rare bird in Oman. In the evening we did more owling, but unfortunately the weather with high winds and rain became so bad that we decided to return to our accommodation early. After a short night's sleep, part of the group was ready for more owling in the early hours, when conditions were much improved. We soon heard the distinctive call of the Omani Owl, but unfortunately, the bird decided to stay on the distant, high cliffs and we simply ran out of sufficient time to maneuver closer. Back at our accommodation we had a good breakfast before revisiting a valley near the hotel for more views of the Oriental Turtle Dove and other birds we had seen the previous day. Then we headed for the lowlands and the tidal shores of Barr Al Hickman. We reached the village of Al Hij in early afternoon and after a very decent lunch in a local restaurant and checking in to our pleasant accommodation, we did some late afternoon birding. The first stop was at a promising roadside spot, where we soon located a very confiding and photogenic Asian Desert Warbler, a new bird for the trip. A visit to the shoreline gave us the first taste of the great wader show the huge Barr Al Hickman area has to offer. Amongst the hordes of feeding waders, we identified Grey and Common Ringed Plovers, Greater and Tibetan Sand Plovers, Eurasian Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little Stint, Terek Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank and a distant flock of 50 Crab-plovers.

Next morning, at sunrise, we were back at the shoreline, where we found, thanks to John's sharp eyes, a group of three Indian White-eyes, a new bird for this tour, flitting around the mangroves. This species has been known to occur regularly in only one place in Oman, on a small island few kilometers offshore from here, but in last couple of years it has been seen here in the coastal mangroves. We then headed for another part of the tidal flats at the Barr, where huge numbers of palearctic waders are known to roost. The rising tide was pushing masses of waders towards us and the high tide roosting sites further inland providing the opportunity to admire massive flocks which included over 1000 Crab-plovers both feeding on the shore and flying past us. Unfortunately, soon after, whilst looking for another wader watching spot, two of our vehicles got stuck in the sand, and it took quite some time and effort to get us out and back to terra firma. Completely mud-caked and exhausted after working hard in the heat (+33° C), we decided to leave the area and head for new pastures!

The long drive to our next destination, Qitbit oasis, was interrupted by a couple of comfort stops, a photo op at some impressive sand dunes, a lunch break and a longer birding stop at the Al Ghaftayn oasis. The oasis was rather quiet, but we managed to find a Red-breasted Flycatcher, Pied Wheatear and, best of all, a European Scops Owl, a new bird for the itinerary, hiding in an acacia. At Qitbit oasis in the evening we watched a confiding European Nightjar, before heading to another oasis, where we soon located some Egyptian Nightjars with brilliant close-up views of one. In addition, Dave found another very approachable European Nightjar.

The next day we were back in the oasis, where, whilst waiting for the sandgrouse to arrive, we enjoyed yet another field breakfast and had great views of a juvenile Cream-coloured Courser, several Greater Hoopoe-Larks, Daurian Shrike, Whinchat, a scarce bird on this itinerary, Bluethroat (for some), Masked Wagtail (a form of White Wagtail) and Tawny Pipit. Eventually the sandgrouse arrived, and we saw a total of 22 handsome Spotted Sandgrouse. In the afternoon on the way to the truck-stop town of Thumrayt, we visited a complex of several farms in the middle of the central desert, where cultivation of grass on a large scale has created a premier staging point for migrating and wintering birds. Here, despite the gale force wind, we managed to find new birds including African Collared Dove spotted by Richard, several Montagu's Harriers, Greater Spotted Eagle, Abdim's and White Storks and a large flock of Greater Short-toed Larks. The following morning was spent in Mudday, a small village situated ca 80 kms west of Thumrayt. Highlights here included several confiding Blackstarts, sizeable flocks of Chestnut bellied Sandgrouse, a few African Collared and Namaqua Doves,

Sand Partridges, Golden Oriole, our first Tristram's Starling and African Silverbills, and a male Hooded Wheatear. In the afternoon we checked another area of farms, where we connected with our main target Sociable Lapwing, and spent a fair amount of time admiring a flock of 15 of this critically endangered species. Other birds seen during the afternoon included an amazing number (ca 100) of Cream-coloured Coursers in this agricultural area.

The following morning, we were back in the general area of Mudday, where our aim was to try and find couple of species, we had missed the previous day. The first, Nile Valley Sunbird, gave up quite easily and showed well in a small wadi while we were enjoying our breakfast. The other, Crowned Sandgrouse, took longer, but, eventually, we located a total of 16 birds coming to drink at a small pool. After a lunch in Thumrayt we headed down to the coast and the city of Salalah. On the way we paid a quick visit to Wadi Dokah, a World Heritage site for the Incense Tree *Boswellia serrata* and had a longer stop at the Thumrayt landfill, with its many eagles, the most common of which was Steppe Eagle, but we also found couple of Imperial Eagles, two Lappet-faced Vultures and a Griffon Vulture, a rare bird on this itinerary. Also, there was a female Arabian Wheatear that was a new bird for the trip. In Salalah a late afternoon visit to the magnificent East Khwar gave us an opportunity to get close-up views of a number of wetland species, many of which were new for the trip, including Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Common Moorhen, Eurasian and Red-knobbed Coots, Little Grebe, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Temmink's Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, African Sacred Ibis, Squacco and Indian Pond Herons and Graceful Prinia.

Our first full day in Salalah began before sunrise in a wadi, where we soon found our main target Arabian Scops Owl, which eventually provided good views for all. We also heard a duetting pair of Arabian Eagle-Owls, and it didn't take us long to find the male of the pair and enjoy great views of this beast of a bird. Next stop was at another wadi, where our main target was the Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak, perhaps the most wanted species in the whole of Dhofar area. This year it took quite a time to find it, but patience paid-off and in the end, we had great views of a bird that sat in trees around a trough giving good, protracted views for everyone to enjoy. Other important birds seen during the morning included a flock of seven Arabian Partridges offering brilliant scope views, a single Jacobin Cuckoo, Bonelli's and Short-toed Snake Eagle, Forbes-Watson's Swifts, some Bruce's Green Pigeons, four Grey-headed Kingfishers, skulking Black-crowned Tchagras, many African Paradise Flycatchers and Graceful Prinias, Arabian Warblers, three Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, many Abyssinian White-eyes, one or two Palestine Sunbirds, Arabian Sunbird (a recent split from Shining Sunbird), Rüppell's Weaver, African Silverbill, many Cinnamon-breasted Buntings and a beautiful Arabian Chameleon well spotted by Richard. After lunch and a siesta, we visited yet another wadi, where after a search, we had brilliant close-up views of another Arabian Eagle-Owl. Back at the East Khwar in the late afternoon we added Rosy Starlings to our rapidly growing bird list.

Next morning found us at the harbour of Mirbat, where we boarded our boat for a pelagic excursion. During the morning our captain took us several kilometres offshore stopping at regular intervals to chum on the calm sea. This year's pelagic was the best I have ever done here, and we enjoyed a great seabird experience with many Jouanin's Petrels, twenty Masked Boobies, a few Persian Shearwaters, the first Socotra Cormorant of the tour, Arctic and Pomarine Skua, many Bridled Terns, several Flesh-footed Shearwaters, 30 or so Wilson's Storm Petrels and three Swinhoe's Storm Petrels, a lifer for nearly everyone on the boat! In addition, on the way back to the harbour, John spotted a Lesser Noddy, a new bird for this tour, in a flock of Bridled Terns. After the boat trip we had a relaxed lunch in a fish restaurant near the harbour. Whilst waiting for the food to arrive, Mike decided to test someone's pair of binoculars and focused them on the nearest gull, which proved to be a White-eyed Gull, a new bird for this itinerary! In the afternoon we headed for the mountains east of Salalah visiting Jabal Samhan, a wonderful site on the escarpment. This is where we normally see the amazing Verreaux's Eagle, but unfortunately the whole area was covered in cloud, which made it impossible to see anything. Some consolation was offered by a pair of rather confiding Arabian Wheatears. The last stop of the afternoon was at Tawi Atayr, the site of an immense limestone sinkhole where 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). It took some time and effort to find the serin, but eventually we managed good views of a small group. In addition, a pair of Bonelli's Eagles, that breed in the sinkhole, showed well as did a gorgeous male Palestine Sunbird and some of the group had splendid views of Arabian Partridge.

The new day started with a pre-breakfast visit to the agricultural areas, where we soon found our main target, Singing Bushlark, which showed well whilst singing from a fence post. Other additions to our bird list were a small flock of Scaly-breasted Munias and a pair Spotted Thick-knees hiding under a bush and well spotted by Richard. After breakfast we visited the river mouth near Raysut, where a Caspian Gull, good numbers of Caspian and Greater Crested Terns, five hundred Socotra and one Great Cormorant and an Eurasian Hobby provided the entertainment, despite an army patrol arriving on the scene and asking us to leave the area and causing us to move to the opposite side of the river to continue birding. We then visited the Raysut water treatment plant, a very birdy place, but unfortunately nowadays closed to visitors. We did however scan the area through the fence and found, amongst the large numbers of birds we had seen earlier on the tour, a single Spur-winged Plover, Red-wattled Lapwings and the two Spur-winged Plover x Red-wattled Lapwing hybrids we first discovered here in 2018. In the afternoon we headed for the Al Mugh sail area for a short seawatch session, which produced Brown Boobies and around ten Brown Noddies, both new species for us, a handful of Persian Shearwaters, a single Jouanin's Petrel and few Socotra Cormorants. At sunset we headed for the traditional Desert Owl site and bagged this very co-operative owl with ease. It is no wonder that this very charismatic owl was voted bird of the trip for the second time in a row.

Our last full day in Oman began with a visit to Khwar Rowri, where, whilst having our last field breakfast of the tour, we had good views of two Jacobin Cuckoos, a fine adult Imperial Eagle, several Forbes-Watson's Swifts and, best of all, another European Scops Owl, this time found by Dave. Then we revisited the mountains at Jabal Samhan for our second attempt at the Verreaux's Eagle. The weather was again cloudy, but we still managed multiple great views of a displaying pair of these magnificent eagles. We also had good scope views of an Arabian Partridge and watched Fan-tailed Ravens as they flew around. Lunch was enjoyed in the fish restaurant in Mirbat harbour. The afternoon began with a visit to Sumhuran Archaeological Park at Khwar Rowri, where, amongst the commoner waders, Diedert picked up a Pin-tailed Snipe, a new bird for the trip. Later, whilst enjoying refreshments at a coffee shop next to the Sumhuran ruins, we had the opportunity to listen to the distinctive calls of Forbes-Watson's Swifts as they flew high in the vivid blue sky. The day was rounded off at East Khwar, where an Intermediate Egret, a new bird for the tour, was seen.

The next day was time to say goodbye to Dave and Andreas, who were not joining us for the extension, before heading for Bahrain for a two-night stay. The journey to Bahrain went smoothly and we arrived in our comfortable hotel in Manama around sunset.

Our full day in Bahrain began around the arid hills of Jabal ad Dukhan, where, after a search, we managed to locate our main target, the Persian Mourning Wheatear, a potential split from Mourning Wheatear. The Bahrain racecourse yielded two new birds with Grey-headed Swamphen and Water Pipit before heading off for a delicious lunch. The afternoon was spent in the Hypocolius pre-roost area, which consists of patches of acacia scrub, where the birds congregate before flying off to their roost, presumably in the palms of VIP gardens. 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 purposefully towards their roosting area. They really are unique, superb-looking birds, so reminiscent of waxwings in their appearance and behaviour. We counted around 75 of these excellent birds during the afternoon. Back at the hotel we had great dinner and drinks after which it was time to say our goodbyes, and to thank everyone for their excellent company, which, together with all the wonderful birds and exciting places combined to make such a memorable trip. Special thanks to my assistant guides Dave and Diedert, who did such a great job driving their vehicles and making sure that we had plenty of hot water for coffee every morning!

BIRD OF THE TOUR

1 = Desert Owl

2 = Grey Hypocolius & Greater Hoopoe-Lark

3 = Arabian Eagle-Owl

4 = Swinhoe's Storm Petrel & Sooty Falcon

5 = Sociable Lapwing

BIRDS

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Grey Francolin (introduced) *Ortygornis pondicerianus*

Sand Partridge ♦ *Ammoperdix heyi* Endemic to Arabian Peninsula and Middle East.

Arabian Partridge ♦ *Alectoris melanocephala* Endemic to southern half of the Arabian Peninsula.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* Brilliant views in an oasis in the middle of the vast desert.

Egyptian Nightjar ♦ *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Brilliant views in an oasis in the middle of the vast desert.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* non-leader

Forbes-Watson's Swift ♦ *Apus berliozii* Endemic to southern Oman and Socotra.

Jacobin Cuckoo (Pied C) *Clamator jacobinus* Three individuals of this Indian-African migrant.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*

Spotted Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles senegallus*

Crowned Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles coronatus*

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis*

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

African Collared Dove ◊ *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Laughing Dove (Palm D) *Spilopelia senegalensis*

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

Bruce's Green Pigeon ◊ *Treron waalia*

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* One in Bahrain. New bird for this itinerary.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Spur-winged x Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus x indicus* Two hybrid individuals we discovered in 2018 were still alive and well at the sewage works in Salalah.

Sociable Lapwing ◊ *Vanellus gregarius* A flock of 15 in the grass fields of one of the farms along the road to Shisr. Critically endangered.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Tibetan Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons* The good old Lesser Sand Plover is now split into Siberian Sand Plover and Tibetan Sand Plover, which is the form we see on this tour.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* Over thousand birds were seen at a high tide roost in Barr Al Hikman.

Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor*

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* One from the Mirbat pelagic. New bird for this itinerary.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

White-eyed Gull ◊ *Ichthyaetus leucophthalmus* One at the Mirbat Harbour. New bird for this itinerary.

Sooty Gull ◊ *Ichthyaetus hemprichii*

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus [fuscus] heuglini*

Lesser Black-backed Gull ◊ (Steppe G) *Larus [fuscus] barabensis*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Swinhoe's Storm Petrel ♦ *Hydrobates monorhis* This is the first time I have seen this species from the boat in Oman. A rare treat!

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes*

Persian Shearwater ♦ *Puffinus persicus* Endemic to seas surrounding the Arabian Peninsula.

Jouanin's Petrel ♦ *Bulweria fallax* Endemic to seas surrounding the Arabian Peninsula.

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* non-leader

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Socotra Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* Endemic to seas surrounding the Arabian Peninsula.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Medium Egret *Ardea intermedia* With the very recent three way split of Intermediate Egret, the form we encountered becomes Medium Egret *Ardea intermedia*.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Western Reef Heron (W R Egret) *Egretta gularis*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga*

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*
Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
Little Owl *Athene noctua*
Pallid Scops Owl ◊ (Striated S O) *Otus brucei*
Arabian Scops Owl ◊ *Otus pamela* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.
Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* Seen twice, a new bird for this itinerary.
Arabian Eagle-Owl ◊ *Bubo milesi* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.
Desert Owl ◊ *Strix hadorami* Endemic to Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East.
Omani Owl ◊ *Strix butleri* heard only
Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
European Roller *Coracias garrulus*
Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
Arabian Green Bee-eater ◊ *Merops cyanophrys* Endemic to Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East.
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Sooty Falcon ◊ *Falco concolor*
Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Peregrine Falcon ◊ (Barbary F) *Falco [peregrinus] pelegrinoides*
Senegal Parrot (introduced) *Poicephalus senegalus* New bird for this itinerary.
Rose-ringed Parakeet (introduced) *Psittacula krameri*
Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus*
Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*
Great Grey Shrike (Southern G S) *Lanius [excubitor] aucheri*
Great Grey Shrike ◊ (Steppe G S) *Lanius [excubitor] pallidirostris*
Isabelline Shrike (Daurian Shrike) *Lanius isabellinus*
Red-tailed Shrike (Turkestan S) *Lanius phoenicuroides*
House Crow (introduced) *Corvus splendens*
Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*
Fan-tailed Raven ◊ *Corvus rhipidurus*
Grey Hypocolius ◊ *Hypocolius ampelinus*

Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark ◊ *Eremopterix nigriceps*

Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra javanica*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Red-vented Bulbul (introduced) *Pycnonotus cafer*

White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*

White-spectacled Bulbul ◊ (Yellow-vented B) *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*

Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Streaked Scrub Warbler ◊ *Scotocerca inquieta*

Plain Leaf Warbler ◊ *Phylloscopus neglectus*

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Clamorous Reed Warbler (Indian R W) *Acrocephalus [stentoreus] brunnescens*

Common Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis* Common in the south of Oman.

Delicate Prinia *Prinia lepida* This recent split from Graceful Prinia was common around Muscat.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria*

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*

Arabian Warbler ◊ *Curruca leucomelaena*

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Curruca crassirostris*

Asian Desert Warbler ◊ *Curruca nana*

Menetries's Warbler ◊ *Curruca mystacea*

Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Abyssinian White-eye (White-breasted W-e) *Zosterops abyssinicus*

Indian White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* A new bird for this itinerary.

Arabian Babbler ◊ *Argya squamiceps* Endemic to Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East.

Bank Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres ginginianus* A new bird for this itinerary.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Rosy Starling (Rose-coloured S) *Pastor roseus*

Tristram's Starling ◊ (T Grackle) *Onychognathus tristramii*

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis*

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Hooded Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe monacha*

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Blackstart ◊ *Oenanthe melanura*

Mourning Wheatear ◊ (B) *Oenanthe [lugens] persica*

Red-tailed Wheatear ◊ (Persian W, Rufous-t W) *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

Hume's Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe albonigra*

Arabian Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe lugentoides* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Nile Valley Sunbird ◊ *Hedydipna metallica*

Palestine Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris osea* Endemic to Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East.

Arabian Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris hellmayri* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Rüppell's Weaver ◊ *Ploceus galbula*

African Silverbill *Euodice cantans*

Indian Silverbill ◊ *Euodice malabarica*

Scaly-breasted Munia (introduced) *Lonchura punctulata*

Western Yellow Wagtail ◊ *Motacilla flava*

Western Yellow Wagtail ◊ (Sykes's W) *Motacilla [flava] beema*

Yellow x Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla flava x citreola* An interesting looking individual in Salalah showed some mixed characters between these two species.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

White Wagtail ◊ (Masked W) *Motacilla [alba] personata*

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* heard only

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak ◊ *Rhynchostruthus percivali* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Yemen Serin ◊ *Crithagra menachensis* Endemic to southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Striolated Bunting ◊ (Striated B) *Emberiza striolata*

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (African Rock B) *Emberiza tahapisi*

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis*

Five-striped Palm Squirrel (introduced) *Funambulus pennata*

REPTILES

Carter's Rock Gecko *Pristurus carteri*

Arabian Chameleon *Chameleo arabicus*

Oriental Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*



Sooty Gull (image by John Oates)



Yemen Serin (image by John Oates)



One of the lovely field breakfasts (image by Hannu Jännes)



Wilson's Storm Petrel (image by Hannu Jännes)



White-eyed Gull (image by Hannu Jännes)



Birding in one of the beautiful wadi's of Oman (image by Hannu Jännes)



Striolated Bunting (image by John Oates)



Streaked Scrub Warbler (image by John Oates)



Sooty Falcon (image by John Oates)



Greater Hoopoe-Lark (image by John Oates)



Grey Hypocolius (image by John Oates)



Jouanin's Petrel (image by John Oates)



Lesser Noddy (image by John Oates)



Pallid Scops Owl (image by John Oates)



Persian Shearwater (image by Hannu Jännes)



Red-tailed Wheatear (image by Hannu Jännes)



Sociable Lapwing (image by John Oates)



Sociable Lapwing (image by John Oates)



Greater Crested Tern (image by Hannu Jännes)



European Scops Owl (image by Hannu Jännes)



Blackstart (image by John Oates)



Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark (image by John Oates)



European Nightjar (image by John Oates)



Asian Desert Warbler (image by John Oates)



Egyptian Nightjar (image by John Oates)



Arabian Scops Owl (image by John Oates)



Desert Wheatear (image by John Oates)



Arabian Green Bee-eater (image by John Oates)



Desert Rose (image by John Oates)



Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak (image by John Oates)



Desert Owl (image by John Oates)



Arabian Eagle-Owl (image by John Oates)



Cream-coloured Courser (image by John Oates)



Arabian Chameleon (image by John Oates)



Bridled Tern (image by John Oates)



Arabian Babbler (image by John Oates)