

emirates

bird

report 19.....contents

- [Editorial]
- 2 [Recently accepted UAE rarities](#)
- 7 [New species added to the UAE Checklist 1990-96](#)
[Emirates Bird Report 1994 – contributors]
[Important Birdwatching Areas]
- 8 [Rarity review of the year 1994](#) *Colin Richardson*
- 15 [Systematic list of the birds reported in 1994](#) *Colin Richardson*
[First/last dates of common migrants 1994]
[1995 International Waterfowl Census]
- 64 [Large white-headed gulls in the UAE - a contribution to their field identification](#) *Martin Garner*
- 74 [Abu Dhabi islands breeding bird survey](#) *Colin Richardson, Simon Aspinall & Maarten Verhage*
- 80 [A visit to Merawah Island](#) *Martin Pitt*
- 83 [Breeding colony of White-cheeked Terns on Das Island](#) *Rob Western & Mike Wood*
- 84 [An introduction to the birds of Balghelam, Abu Dhabi](#) *Peter Hellyer & Simon Aspinall*
[New for the UAE: River Warbler, Kittlitz's Plover and Lesser Noddy]
Michel Fouquet, Olivier Gerard, Erik Hirschfeld, Jan Lontowski, Michal Skakuj and Tadeusz Stawarczyk
- 89 [Mediterranean Gull at Ramtha tip - the first record for the United Arab Emirates](#) *Steve L. James & John Norton*
- 91 [The sub-species of House Crow in the UAE](#) *Steve Madge*
- 92 [Observations on the display behaviour of Purple Sunbird](#) *Darren Frost*
- 93 [Observations on the territorial behaviour of Kentish Plover](#) *Darren Frost*
- 94 [Just how important is the UAE for visiting passerines?](#) *Simon Aspinall*
[Who are the UAE's top listers?]
[Reviews - Journals and Books]

This digital version is a reconstruction of the original EBR19 and does not contain some elements of the original published version. As a result, the page numbering may not match with the original and should not be used when referencing in any published work. Wherever possible, the original citation has been appended at the beginning of each chapter or feature.

[Report taken from EBR19 (1994)]

Emirates Bird Records Committee

A number of observers have submitted rarity reports and the accepted records follow. Some reports remain to be assessed. It was agreed that fairly flexible rules would govern the criterion for judging rarity descriptions, since in such a small country with so few observers it would be a pity to lose good records because of a technicality. However, insofar as is possible the appropriate internationally-accepted guidelines have been followed, and the EBRC is satisfied with its assessments of all records detailed below.

A description may be sought by the EBRC in the case of the observer reporting a new species (or subspecies) to the UAE, those species with less than 10 records in the last 10 years, or those species where identification criteria is problematical. In addition, confirmation may be required from observers should the species concerned be unseasonal, reported in unusual numbers, breeding behaviour (for non-breeding species) or any other unusual behaviour.

RECENTLY ACCEPTED UAE RARITIES

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* One off Kalba beach 30 April 1995 (S.J.Aspinall *et al*), off Dibba 1 May 1995 (WIWO/T.M.van der Have *et al*) and off Fujairah 11 May 1995 (S.L.James), assumed same bird, 1st record.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* Six seen 12 miles off Khor Fakkan 1 December 1995 (C.Richardson), 5th record.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* One at Ramtha lagoon from 23 December 1994 (S.J.Aspinall), 1st record.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* One near Fujairah airport 4 April 1996 (J.Djerf), 5th record. **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* One at Al Ghar lake 22 January - 1 March 1996 (S.L.James *et al*), 15th record.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* One was in the Zabeel area from 16-25 January and on 3 March 1996 (C.Richardson, J.K.Bannon, U.Olsson *et al*), probably same bird, 2nd record.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* Two Zabeel area 5 March 1996 (P.Rusanen *et al*), 3rd record (one bird probably same as 2nd record, above).

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* One 'ring-tail' Hamraniyah 14 March 1996 (S.Madge, C.Richardson, *Limosa*).

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* One _ at Al Ain camel track 20 March 1996 (S.J. Aspinall).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Khor Dubai 7 February - 11 March 1995 Khor Dubai (C.Richardson, C.Holt, S.L. James *et al*), 3rd record.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Al Wathba 10 April 1995 (S.L. James), 4th record.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Ramtha tip 10-19 November 1995 (R.Porter, C.Richardson *et al*), 5th record.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Al Ain camel track 17 November 1995 (S.L.James), 6th record.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Khor Dubai 23 November - 15 December 1995 (P.Jonasson, D.Bradford *et al*), 7th record.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One at Khor Dubai 1 March 1996 (D.Bradford), 8th record.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* One Zabeel area from 9 April 1996 (J. & E. Djerf), then two seen from 27 June 1996 until last recorded 18 October 1996 (C.Richardson, S.J.Aspinall), 1st & 2nd records.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* One Al Wathba 24 January 1995 (S.L.James), 12th record.

Manchurian Red-footed Falcon *Falco amurensis* One at Al Wathba 9-24 July 1995 (S.J. Aspinall *et al*) was accepted as the 1st record (identification confirmed by Dick Forsman, Finland).

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* One Jebel Ali hotel gardens 20 January 1995 (S.L.James *et al*), 3rd record.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* One Jebel Ali hotel 8 December 1995 (S.J.Aspinall), 4th record.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* One Emirates golf course 1 January 1996 (S.J.Aspinall), 5th record.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* One at Ruwais reed beds 2 September 1995 - 10 January 1996 (A.Rollo), 3rd record.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* One at Zabeel fish ponds 23 October - 28 November 1995 (C.Richardson, U.Wernery), 4th record.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* One at Ramtha tip 10-19 November 1995 (S.L.James, C.Richardson *et al*), 5th record (photographed).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* One Ruwais 4 May 1996 (P.Sharman), 3rd record.

Little Pratincole *Glareola lactea* One at Khor Kalba 2 December 1995 (A.Parker), 7th record.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* One at Abu Dhabi race course 23-25 September 1995 (S.L.James, J.Buxton *et al*), 2nd record.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* One at Al Wathba 2 November 1995 (S.L.James), 17th record.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* Two at Hamraniyah 16 November 1995 (M.Beamon, C.Richardson, *Birdquest*), 18th record.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* One at the Fujeirah National Dairy farm 11 November 1994 (S.J. Aspinall), 8th record.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* One at Khor Dubai 1-2 July 1995 (C.Richardson, S.J.Aspinall), 2nd record in recent times. Previous records need reviewing.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Three Ras Dibba 22 September 1994 (S.L.James).

Little Gull *Larus minutus* One was in the Khor Kalba area 15 March 1996 (M.Dryden), 1st record.

Little Gull *Larus minutus* One next to Sila harbour 3 May 1996 (S.L.James, P.Sharman), 2nd record.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* One Fujeirah beach 8 May 1995 (G.Keijl, WIWO *et al*); one Kalba beach 19 May 1995 (S.J.Aspinall), probably same bird, 2nd record.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* One Ramtha tip 20 January 1995 (J.Norton, S.L.James), 1st record (see P.123).

Common Gull *Larus canus* One was at Rams rubbish dump 27 March 1996 (C.Richardson, *Naturetrek*), 7th record.

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus* One off Ras Dibba 16 June 1995 (S.L.James, J.Buxton), 1st record.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* One on Das Island 15 November 1995 (L.Reaney), 10th record.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* One at Hamraniyah 31 May 1996 (P.Brett), 11th record.

Indian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea* One was in Safa Park 1 March 1996 (M.Garner), 4th record.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* One found exhausted Abu Dhabi garden 27 September 1996 (subsequently died, skin donated to NARC) (P.Hellyer).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* One Al Ain compost plant 12 February 1995 (A.Forsten, T.Numminen), 10th record.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* One Hamraniyah 2 March 1995 (*Natur-Studienreisen*), 11th record.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* One Hamraniyah 2 March 1995 (C.Richardson, *Natur-Studienreisen*), 10th record.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* One Al Ain camel track 27 March 1995 (S.J.Aspinall), 11th record.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* One in Nakheel, Ras al Khaimah, 8 June 1996 (P.Brett), 12th record.

White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* One at Dhayah mangroves 28 December 1995 (NSR, C.Richardson, G.Schön, *et al*), 3rd record.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus* Two at 24°51'N, 54°56'E (10 km. east of Ghantoot) 22 March 1996 (S.L.James); one bird carrying food 24°51'N, 55°02'E 22 March 1996 (S.L.James); pair at 24°50'N, 55°04'E 29 March 1996 (S.L.James); pair 10 km. east of Ghantoot 24 April 1996 (C.Richardson, S.Khabian), were all accepted (and probably breeding nearby).

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* One at Al Wathba camel track 2-11 February (S.L.James *et al*) and 10 April 1995 (S.L.James), 1st record.

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula* This species has been reclassified; formerly a vagrant it is believed to be an *uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor* (pm/wv), due to its regularity in recent years.

One was at Al Wathba camel track 2 & 11 November 1994, two there 2 & 16 December 1994 (S.L.James). Two several occasions 16 December 1994 to end of February 1995 Al Wathba camel track (S.L.James, E.Hirschfeld); one Abu al Abyadh 19 April 1995 (S.J.Aspinall); one 2 November 1995 Al Wathba fields (S.L.James) and two there 26 December 1995 (NSR/C.Richardson), 16th-20th records.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* One at Al Ghar marsh 20 February 1996 (S.L.James *et al*), 1st record.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewski* As there have been 35+ birds reported from October 1993 - April 1996, this species' status is being reclassified to *uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor* (pm/wv).

Two at Al Wathba from 26 September 1994, three 13 October 1994, two 3 November 1994, two from 16 December 1994 (all S.L.James). Five on 24 January, declining to two 5-15 February 1995 Al Wathba camel track (S.L.James *et al*); one 14 February 1995 Fujeirah National Dairy farm, Dibba (S.L.James); three 10-14 April 1995 Al Wathba fields (S.L.James); one Abu Dhabi race course area 10 October - 4 November 1995 (S.L.James); one 30 November - 1 December 1995 Abu al Abyadh (S.J.Aspinall); one 20-21 December 1995 Abu Dhabi racecourse (S.L.James, SJA). Up to four at Al Wathba 4-5 April (G.Clarkson, S.L.James) and two there 8 April (S.L.James); one Al Ain 4 April (G.Clarkson), have all been added to the UAE records.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* One at Merawah Island 16 October 1994 (S.J.Aspinall), 15th record.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* One at Bateen airbase park 2 November 1995 (S.L.James), 16th record.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* One at the Emirates golf course 10-21 October (C.Richardson, S.J.Aspinall), 5th record.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* One Merawah Island 15-16 October 1994 (S.J.Aspinall), 6th record.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* One in Bateen gardens 16-23 October 1995 (A.Twyman *et al*), 7th record.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* One Mushrif Park, Dubai 5 March 1996 (M. Sipponen), 8th record.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* One _ Merawah Island 21 November 1994 (S.J. Aspinall), 23rd record.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* One _ Zirku Island 23 January 1995 (S.J. Aspinall), 24th record.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* One Khalidiyah spit 1 December 1995 (J.Hollingworth, N.Jephsen), 25th record.

Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata* One _ was at the Emirates golf course 22-23 March 1996 (M. & E. Saunt, C.Richardson), 2nd record.

Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata* One Al Wathba 4 April 1996 (G.Clarkson), 3rd record.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* One at Zirku Island 23 January 1995, was accepted.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* One dark-capped individual was at Sila 20 February 1996 (A.Rollo), 3rd record.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* One was at Ain al Faydah from 17 November 1995 - 1 January 1996 (S.L.James), 7th record.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* One was at Bateen Gardens 17 October 1995 (S.L.James, J.Buxton), 2nd record.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* One was at Al Wathba 15 April 1995 (S.L.James, J.Buxton, A.Twyman), 6th record.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* One was at the Emirates golf club 16 April 1995 (C.Richardson), 7th record.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* One Eastern lagoon 8-14 November 1994 (C.Pohl), 15th record.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* One at Fujairah National Dairy Farm, Dibba 13 February 1995 (S.J.Aspinall, C.Richardson), 2nd record.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea (semenowi)* Two at the Emirates golf course 29 March - 1 April 1995 (C.Richardson, J.K.Bannon *et al*), 14th & 15th records.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea (semenowi)* One at the Emirates golf course 7 April 1995 (C.Richardson, C.Holt M.West), 16th record.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea (semenowi)* One at Al Jazeerah Khor 15 April 1995 (T.M. van der Have/WIWO), 17th record.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea (semenowi)* One was on Das Island 26-27 March 1996 (L.Reaney), 18th record.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea (semenowi)* One was at Jazeerah al Hamrah 28 March 1996 (H.,H. & H. De Haag), 19th record.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* One at Hamraniyah 4 March 1995 for several days (N.Ullrich), 8th record.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* One on Das Island 21 November 1995 (L.Reaney), 9th record.

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* One at Abu al Abyadh 18-20 April 1995 (S.J.Aspinall), 2nd (non-escapee) record.

Rarity Descriptions

The following species are considered rare in the United Arab Emirates (# - not yet on UAE list). If you think you have seen any of the following, please send us a short description of your bird for our records. Rare Bird Report Forms are available from the UAE Bird Recorder, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, UAE. Phone/fax +9714 313378.

<i>Great Crested Grebe</i>	<i>Oriental Pratincole</i>	<i>Blyth's Pipit</i>
<i>Red-necked Grebe</i>	<i>Black-winged Pratincole</i>	<i>Olive-backed Pipit</i>
# <i>Jouanin's Petrel</i>	<i>Little Pratincole</i>	<i>Forest Wagtail</i>
# <i>Flesh-footed Shearwater</i>	<i>Kittlitz's Plover</i>	<i>Black Bush Robin</i>
# <i>Wedge-tailed Shearwater</i>	<i>Dotterel</i>	<i>Thrush Nightingale</i>
<i>Sooty Shearwater</i>	<i>Golden Plover</i>	<i>Eversmann's Redstart</i>
<i>Wilson's Storm-Petrel</i>	<i>Sociable Plover</i>	<i>Pied Stonechat</i>
<i>Leach's Storm-Petrel</i>	<i>Knot</i>	<i>Finsch's Wheatear</i>
<i>Red-footed Booby</i>	<i>Red-necked Stint</i>	<i>White-crowned Black</i>
<i>Masked Booby</i>	<i>Long-toed Stint</i>	<i>Wheatear</i>
<i>Brown Booby</i>	<i>Great Snipe</i>	<i>Ring Ouzel</i>
<i>White Pelican</i>	<i>Woodcock</i>	<i>Blackbird</i>
<i>Dalmatian Pelican</i>	<i>Grey Phalarope</i>	<i>Eye-browed Thrush</i>
<i>Intermediate Egret</i>	<i>Long-tailed Skua</i>	<i>Fieldfare</i>
<i>Black Stork</i>	<i>Great Skua</i>	<i>Redwing</i>
<i>Sacred Ibis</i>	<i>Little Gull</i>	<i>Mistle Thrush</i>
<i>Mute Swan</i>	<i>White-eyed Gull</i>	<i>Cetti's Warbler</i>
<i>Bewick's Swan</i>	<i>Sabine's Gull</i>	<i>River Warbler</i>
<i>White-fronted Goose</i>	<i>Brown-headed Gull</i>	<i>Moustached Warbler</i>
<i>Ruddy Shelduck</i>	<i>Common Gull</i>	<i>Blyth's Reed Warbler</i>
<i>Cotton Teal</i>	<i>Armenian Gull</i>	<i>Icterine Warbler</i>
<i>Marbled Teal</i>	<i>Roseate Tern</i>	<i>Greenish Warbler</i>
<i>Red-crested Pochard</i>	<i>Sooty Tern</i>	<i>Yellow-browed Warbler</i>
<i>Red-breasted Merganser</i>	<i>Black Tern</i>	<i>Radde's Warbler</i>
<i>Crested Honey Buzzard</i>	<i>Lesser Noddy</i>	<i>Dusky Warbler</i>
<i>Black-shouldered Kite</i>	<i>Common Noddy</i>	<i>Bonelli's Warbler</i>
<i>Brahminy Kite</i>	<i>Spotted Sandgrouse</i>	<i>Blue-and-white Flycatcher</i>
<i>Pallas's Fish Eagle</i>	<i>Black-bellied Sandgrouse</i>	<i>Pied Flycatcher</i>
<i>Griffon Vulture</i>	<i>Woodpigeon</i>	<i>Bay-backed Shrike</i>
<i>Hen Harrier</i>	<i>Eastern Turtle Dove</i>	<i>Black Drongo</i>
<i>Dark Chanting Goshawk</i>	<i>Namaqua Dove</i>	<i>Wattled Starling</i>
<i>Goshawk</i>	<i>Indian Koel</i>	<i>Dead Sea Sparrow</i>
<i>Shikra</i>	<i>Scops Owl</i>	<i>Tree Sparrow</i>
<i>Levant Sparrowhawk</i>	<i>Long-eared Owl</i>	<i>Chaffinch</i>
<i>Lesser Spotted Eagle</i>	<i>Egyptian Nightjar</i>	<i>Brambling</i>
<i>Golden Eagle</i>	<i>Alpine Swift</i>	<i>Goldfinch</i>
<i>Manchurian Red-footed Falcon</i>	<i>Little Swift</i>	<i>Linnet</i>
<i>Merlin</i>	<i>White-breasted Kingfisher</i>	<i>Pine Bunting</i>
<i>Lanner Falcon</i>	<i>Grey-headed Kingfisher</i>	<i>Yellowhammer</i>
<i>Saker Falcon</i>	<i>Pied Kingfisher</i>	<i>White-capped Bunting</i>
<i>Little Crake</i>	<i>White-throated Bee-eater</i>	<i>Cinereous Bunting</i>
<i>Baillon's Crake</i>	<i>Bar-tailed Desert Lark</i>	<i>Rustic Bunting</i>
<i>White-breasted Waterhen</i>	# <i>Dunn's Lark</i>	<i>Little Bunting</i>
<i>Purple Gallinule</i>	<i>Calandra Lark</i>	<i>Yellow-breasted Bunting</i>
<i>Common Crane</i>	<i>Small Skylark</i>	<i>Reed Bunting</i>
<i>Demoiselle Crane</i>	<i>Temminck's Horned Lark</i>	<i>Red-headed Bunting</i>
<i>Little Bustard</i>	<i>Wire-tailed Swallow</i>	

New Species added to the UAE Checklist 1990-96

Here follows a full list of species added to the UAE checklist up to December 1996, since the publication of *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (Richardson 1990):

SPECIES	FIRST SEEN
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	One off Kalba beach 30.4.95 (S.J.Aspinall)
Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	2 at Nadd al Sheba from 25.1.94 (C.Richardson)
Intermediate Egret <i>Ardea intermedia</i>	One at Ramtha lagoon 23.12.94 (S.J.Aspinall)
Crested Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	One RAK 16.12.92 (M.Saarinen, T.Tuomenoja)
Black Vulture <i>Aegypius monacha</i>	One Ras al Khaimah 26.2.95 (per M.Edwardes)
Shikra <i>Accipiter badius</i>	One Zabeel area 9.4.96 (J. & E. Djerf)
Manchurian Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco amurensis</i>	One Al Wathba fields 9.7.95 (S.J.Aspinall)
Little Crane <i>Porzana parva</i>	One Safa Park, Dubai from 2.10.90 (M.Pitt)
White-breasted Waterhen <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	One Ramtha tip from 12.11.92 (C.Richardson)
Little Bustard <i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	One Mushref gardens, AD 17.12.96 (A.Hakim <i>et al</i>)
Oriental Pratincole <i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	One Emirates golf course 23.11.92 (C.Richardson)
Kittlitz's Plover <i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>	One Merawah Island 10.9.94 (M.Skakuj)
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	One Al Wathba from 30.10.93 (E.Hirschfeld)
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	One Dhabbiyah 9.9.94 (E.Hirschfeld)
Long-toed Stint <i>Calidris subminuta</i>	One Ramtha tip 14.9.90 (M.Pitt)
White-eyed Gull <i>Larus leucopthalmus</i>	One Khor Kalba 9.5.94 (S.Aspinall)
Little Gull <i>Larus minutus</i>	One Khor Kalba 15.3.96 (M.Dryden)
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	One Ramtha tip 24.6.91 (S.Turner, C.Richardson)
Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	One Ramtha tip 20.1.95 (J.Norton)
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	One Kalba beach 8.4.93 (R.Quested)
Lesser Noddy <i>Anous tenuirostris</i>	Two Ras Dibba from 14.9.94 (M.Fouquet, O.Girard)
Common Noddy <i>Anous stolidus</i>	One Ras Dibba 16.6.95 (S.L.James, J.Buxton)
Black-bellied Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	6 at Abu al Abyadh 9.2.92 (R.P. Morris)
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Two Emirates GC 22.8.92 (A.Forsten, T.Numminen)
White-breasted Kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	2 at Ramtha tip 30.11.90 (W.R.P. Bourne)
Grey-headed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	One Asab from 14.6.90 (L.Reaney)
Bar-tailed Desert Lark <i>Ammomanes cincturus</i>	8 Ruwais area from 29.10.91 (S.Baha El Din)
Calandra Lark <i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	One Al Wathba fields 2.2.95 (S.L.James <i>et al</i>)
Small Skylark <i>Alauda gulgula</i>	8 Ruwais area 18.11.91 (S.Baha El Din)
Wire-tailed Swallow <i>Hirundo smithii</i>	One Al Ghar marsh 20.2.96 (S.L.James)
Blyth's Pipit <i>Anthus godlewski</i>	One Abu Dhabi from 12.10.93 (S.James)
Black Bush Robin <i>Cercotrichas podobe</i>	One Emirates golf course 15.4.92 (C.Richardson)
Pied Stonechat <i>Saxicola caprata</i>	One Emirates golf course 6.5.94 (C.Richardson)
Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>	One Ruwais reedbeds from 21.10.93 (S.Aspinall)
River Warbler <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	One Merawah Island 29.8.94 (T.Stawarczyk <i>et al</i>)
Blyth's Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	One Zabeel fish ponds 5.5.94 (E.Hirschfeld)
Greenish Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	One Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi 17.4.93 (S.James)
Radde's Warbler <i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	One Emirates golf course 19.10.92 (C.Richardson)
Dusky Warbler <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	One Safa park, Dubai 19.10.90 (M.Pitt)
Wattled Starling <i>Creatophora cineracea</i>	One Zabeel, Dubai 22.1.92 (C.Richardson)
Dead Sea Sparrow <i>Passer moabiticus</i>	Four on Das Island 21.1.92 (L.Reaney)
Pine Bunting <i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	One Das Island 8.12.94 (L.Reaney, M.Wood)
White-capped Bunting <i>Emberiza stewarti</i>	Two Emirates GC 5.11.92 (C.Richardson, J.K.Bannon)
Red-headed Bunting <i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	One Asab 14.4.91 (L.Reaney)

As of December 1996, the UAE list stands at 401 wild species, plus 13+ feral breeding species.

[Richardson, C. 1997. *Rarity Review of the Year 1994*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 12-18. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

Rarity review of the Year 1994 by Colin Richardson

JANUARY

In spite of atrocious winter conditions in south-west Asia, Dubai basked in warm sunshine throughout most of January, with temperatures of 24-26°C, a little above average for the time of year. There were only 3 days of rainfall, including on the 10th, when thunderstorms, with strong winds, brought over 100 mm of rain to the East Coast, but virtually none to Dubai and Abu Dhabi. There were foggy conditions from 3rd-5th and *Shamal* conditions (north-west winds) on the 17th. Excellent visibility predominated at the end of the month.

The birds were of a high standard with one **Great Crested Grebe** remaining at Ain al Faydah until the 11th and another present amongst 127 **Black-necked Grebe** (the UAE's largest ever flock) at Ramtha from the 31st. On the 22nd two **Mute Swans** (3rd record) were seen flying off Abu Dhabi's inshore islands. A few days later the players at Dubai's Nadd al Sheba golf course reported two large white birds on the central lake. A visit on the 25th revealed two **Bewick's Swans**, the first for the UAE, feeding regally on pond weed, amongst an exceptional flock of six **Ferruginous Duck**. Three **White-fronted Geese** remained in Abu Dhabi until the 14th, while up to seven **Greylags** each were found at Ruwais and Zabeel fish ponds from the 2nd, with six wintering at Ramtha pools. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** (5th record) was at Khor Dubai from the 19th and single **Imperial Eagles** were at Baynunah on 12th and Zabeel on 19th. A **Merlin** (the 9th record) was found at Al Wathba on the 13th. The **Black-winged Pratincole** (2nd record) remained at Kalba until the 30th and a **Little Pratincole** (4th record) was at Nadd al Sheba from 25th-30th hawking insects over the golf course. The first **Golden Plover** in recent years remained at Al Wathba prison pools until the 10th, while the count of **Pintail Snipes** reached a peak of 13 at the Emirates golf course on the 14th. The annual Asian Waterfowl Census, which took place in mid month, was the most comprehensive so far undertaken and logged 66,648 waterfowl, including 42,016 waders and 13,541 gulls. Khor Dubai held 12,422 birds, followed closely by Merawah Island (8,504) and Dhabbiyah (5,929). **Dunlin** formed the bulk of the waders counted at 7,326, followed by **Bar-tailed Godwit** (4,750), **Kentish Plover** (3,146), **Redshank** (3,049) and **Lesser Sand Plover** (2,726).

An influx of visiting birdwatchers from Europe contributed some exciting observations over the New Year period, including a **Woodpigeon** (3rd record) at Zabeel on 2nd and at least 3 **Small Skylarks** (14th record) at the Fujairah National Dairy farm on the 4th. A male **Blackbird** (only the 10th record) was on Das Island from 14th and a rather more interesting **Greenish Warbler** (*trochiloides*) was there from the 16th. The first **Siskin** of the season was found at Ruwais on the 5th.

FEBRUARY

The weather remained virtually clear and calm throughout the month, with temperatures ranging between 25-28°C most days. Strong north-west winds persisted during the first week, peaking at 40 knots with similar conditions on the 19th when a trace of rain was recorded. A short hot spell from 23rd-25th, when the mercury reached 32°C, was followed by rather a blowy day on the 26th, but still no measurable rain threatened.

One of the unusual sightings of the month was of 40-50 **Sacred Ibises** soaring over the Dubai to Awir road on the 14th. By the second week all the odd geese and swans had departed and another **Lesser Spotted Eagle** (or the same as last month's?) appeared at Khor Dubai on the 23rd. The **Common Crane** (4th record) remained at the Al Ain camel track until the 3rd, while another was seen at the Fujairah National Dairy farm on the 8th. Could it have been the Al Ain bird on its way north, we wonder? A **Great Snipe** turned up at the Emirates golf course on the 20th, amongst the flock of now nine **Pintail Snipe**, while at Khor al Beidah up to eleven **Great Knot** were present from the 11th. A **Small Skylark** was found at Al Habab on the 26th with another at the Al Ain Camel track on the 1st, where over 40 **Bimaculated Larks** were present throughout the month. Up to five **Blyth's Pipits** (probably regular, though this was only the 4th record), were at Al Wathba from the 13th. In nearby Abu Dhabi, the star attraction was a

male **Eversmann's Redstart** (15th record) which stayed for several days from 14th on Khalidiyah spit (prompting the start of *Twitchers Guide* in *Emirates News*) and gave everyone a chance to see it well. Not so easy for mainland-bound birders was the **White-crowned Black Wheatear** (2nd record) on Das Island from 2nd-3rd.

A **Moustached Warbler** at the Ain al Faydah reedbeds on 2nd was the 5th record, while the wintering **Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler** (20th record) remained at the Emirates golf course until last seen on the 17th.

MARCH

The driest winter on record continued with only 2mm of rain recorded in Dubai this month, mostly on the 23rd. Local thunderstorms on the 11th accompanied by strong east winds on the 12th & 13th was followed by high temperatures of c. 35°C making it the warmest March since 1984. This brought some unsettled weather and overcast skies, with occasional drizzle on the 17th and local thunderstorms from 22nd-27th.

Migration was rather slow to get into gear and we had to work very hard to find anything interesting. **Lesser Kestrel** migration reached a record peak at the end of the month, with a total of 110 birds counted at just five sites (see *EBR18: 96-99*). Another **Merlin** (the 10th) was at on Abu al Abyadh island on the 31st and a **Lanner Falcon** was on Jebel Hafit on the 27th, a possible nest site of this potential (escaped?) breeding species. It was a poor month for wader rarities, but a **Golden Plover** was picked out from the wintering group of **Pacific Goldens** on the 1st at the Emirates golf course, where it remained until at least the 6th.

Further evidence of **Cuckoos** breeding on the high dolomite jebels to the east of Ras al Khaimah, was obtained when one was heard calling continuously in Wadi Sal on the 4th. More studies are clearly needed here. Of rare swifts, a **Little Swift** (8th record) was at Hamraniyah fields on the 3rd and an **Alpine Swift** (7th record) was over Kalba plain on the 31st. Two more **Small Skylarks** were at Al Wathba on 24th, while up to five **Blyth's Pipits** each were reported from Al Wathba, Dibba and Abu Dhabi from the 13th. Quickly becoming a star attraction, **Grey Hypocolius** invaded in some numbers, with 17 found at Liwa on 13th & 14th and up to 60 at Al Wathba from at least the 24th. There were probably many other undiscovered sites, where the berries of *Salvadora persicus* bushes, now widely planted in Abu Dhabi, provide their favourite food. Another **Eversmann's Redstart** was seen on Das Island from the 18th-20th and single **Finsch's Wheatears** were present at the Abu Dhabi race course on the 17th and at Al Wathba camel race track fields on the 27th (12th & 13th records). A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was in Abu Dhabi on the 29th and a **Cinereous Bunting** (12th record) was found on Abu al Abyadh island on the 31st.

APRIL

The warmest April for 10 years. A hot start to the month sent temperatures rising to 38°C at Hamraniyah on the 1st, though temperatures returned to an average 30°C, before the summer heat returned on the 24th, peaking at 42.5°C on the 28th, the highest April temperature since 1980. There were some isolated showers from 11th-14th and thunderstorms on the 18th brought some rainfall, but the month's total of 2 mm at Dubai airport was well below average.

A **Hen Harrier** was reported in Abu Dhabi on the 19th, while in Hamraniyah, a record 109 **Lesser Kestrels** were feeding over one field on the 7th. At the Emirates golf course, two **White-tailed Plovers** were present from the 4th-11th, single **Corncrakes** on the 14th & 20th-23rd (20th & 21st records) and a **Spotted Crake** on the 20th. A **Little Crake** was at Abu al Abyadh on the 14th and a **Great Snipe** was found at Zabeel fish ponds on the 22nd.

In Al Ain, a **Little Swift** over the race track on the 5th was the 7th record. Meanwhile at the Emirates golf course, up to two male **White-throated Robins** were present until the 20th, a **Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler** from the 20th-30th and three **Masked Shrikes** from the 10th-14th. **Plain Leaf Warblers** stayed late in the mountains this year with one still present on the 1st. Several **Hume's Lesser Whitethroats** were seen in the Dubai area, with the last on the 14th.

Semi-collared Flycatchers were on Das Island on the 5th & 15th and in Abu Dhabi on the 6th. On the 7th a flock of over 100 **Pale Rock Sparrows** were feeding amongst the stones on

the edges of Wadi Bih. Higher up in the wadi a **Long-billed Pipit** and several **Trumpeter Finches** were heard in song on the 2nd.

MAY

Summer virtually arrived this month, with hazy skies and average temperatures ranging between 38-42°C. The summer *shamal* season arrived, with several days of strong north-westerlies and high seas. Thunderstorms were recorded on the night of the 4th/5th, with winds gusting to 45 knots accompanied by local showers.

Late spring is usually quiet in the Emirates, with only the tail end of migration visible with a few **Nightjars**, **Cuckoos**, **Red-backed Shrikes** and **Spotted Flycatchers** still wending their way north. Thousands of **Marsh Warblers** passed through the country, peaking during the first two weeks of the month.

However, this year, 3 new species for the country were reported between the 6-9 May. The first was a **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, long expected and reported by several observers in the field over the years, but never in the hand. The bird was trapped at Zabeel fish ponds on the 6th. The next day a male **Pied Stonechat** turned up at the Emirates golf club, only a second record for the Gulf States. Probably the most interesting for the UAE was the **White-eyed Gull** found on the 9th lounging with several hundred **Sooty Gulls** at Khor Kalba. An **Olive-backed Pipit** on the 8th at the Emirates golf course was the latest ever in spring and only the 12th record.

Apart from all this excitement it was good to receive reports of several **Upcher's Warblers** from the 1st-8th (including 10 at Shwaib on the 4th), a late **Pale Rock Sparrow** at the golf course on the 1st, several **Rock Thrushes** from the 12th-16th at various sites and five **Red-rumped Swallows** at Ras al Khaimah on the 22nd.

A visit to Ras al Khaimah on the 22nd confirmed the breeding of several species which are rarely found nesting in Arabia. Several pairs of **Starlings** were at nest sites at Hamraniyah fields and a pair of **European Rollers** were at a nest hole in an old well nearby. **Spanish Sparrows** were active in the fields and a **Bruce's Scops Owl** was found in a tree in a Kharran garden.

JUNE

Hot, hazy days typified June, with temperatures in Dubai peaking at 44°C on the 9th, dipping to a below average 35°C on the 30th. No rain was recorded. The mid summer heat brings bird movement to a virtual standstill. However autumn passage starts early and wetland species started arriving at pools and lagoons from late June. 290 **Lesser Sand Plovers** made an appearance at Khor al Beidah on the 28th, a good sign, particularly as there were two **Crab Plovers** nearby, a rarity in mid summer.

A survey of over forty islands offshore Abu Dhabi from 9th-19th revealed many more breeding seabirds than had been expected, with 235 pairs of **Sooty Gull**, 40,000+ pairs of **Bridled Terns**, 21,000+ pairs of **White-cheeked Tern**, 24,500 pairs of **Lesser Crested Tern** and 1,256 pairs of **Swift Tern** counted. The most important colonies were found on Muhaiyimat, Qarnein, Dayinah, Ushsh and Ghasha islands. All these colonies represent internationally important concentrations. Other finds included 12-15 pairs of **Sooty Falcon**, ten islands with turtle nesting beaches and a herd of Dugong south of Bu Tinah shoals. The irrigated fields at Hamraniyah attract the country's only breeding **European Bee-eaters**. 10 were there on the 28th, along with 30 **Bank Mynahs**, 40 **Indian Rollers** and a **Swallow**, surely a lost spring migrant (or a potential colonist?).

A slow, but steady flow of **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**, interspersed with several **Audubon's Shearwaters**, was visible from the shoreline at Al Aqqah (the Sandy Beach Motel) on the 30th, supplemented by over 400 **Bridled Terns** and about 30 skuas, mostly **Pomarine**, during a 3 hour seawatch in the late afternoon. They were still passing on the 1st July.

JULY

Most days hot and humid, with average temperatures around 40°C. There a little light rain in Dubai on the 13th and 18th, though heavy rain occurred in Al Ain on the 5th, accompanied by

very strong gusts of up to 60 knots.

Interesting species seen in July included single **Little Bitterns** at Ramtha from 14th-22nd and at Zabeel fish ponds from 11th-22nd, single (probably immature) **Purple Herons** at Dibba on the 1st and Ramtha on the 14th, a **Glossy Ibis** in Dubai from 15th-16th, five **Green Sandpipers** at the Emirates golf course on the 23rd, a **European Nightjar** at Jebel Dhanna from 23rd-24th, a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** and eight **Whiskered Terns** at Zabeel fish ponds on 16th and a **Cattle Egret** and three young **Sooty Gulls** there on the 20th.

A **Lappet-faced Vulture** was seen over Masafi on the 1st, the first sighting from this area since Michael Gallagher led an expedition there in 1971. And on the 15th, a pair of **Barbary Falcons** were found on the summit of 950 metre Jebel Hawrah, near Al Ain, a previously unexplored site. Waders were already pouring into the country, with 571 **Curlew Sandpipers** and 25 **Broad-billed Sandpipers** at Khor Dubai on the 25th.

Several **Bruce's Scops Owls** were found after sunset in Mushrif Park, just 10 minutes drive from Dubai on the 8th & 10th. There have been several sightings of 'scops' owls in this park over the years and this must surely confirm breeding.

AUGUST

It was the warmest August since 1985 and the third warmest on record since 1974. On the 11th, the mean average for the day (over a 24 hour period) was a high 37.8°C, making it the warmest August day since 1987. No rain was recorded in Dubai although convective cloud was recorded over the Hajar Mountains on 9 days, caused by westerly intrusion of the monsoon axis normally centred over the Indian Ocean at this time of year. Thunderstorms occurred in the Al Ain area on the 11th and 14th and the East Coast recorded a little rain on the 13th.

Birdwatching suddenly came to life, due in part to some intensive work by Polish members of the Abu Dhabi Shorebird Project, sponsored by NARC. On Merawah Island a **Knot** (only the 3rd substantiated record) was found on 23rd, a **Moustached Warbler** (6th record) on the 28th, up to nine more **Blyth's Reed Warblers** (2nd-10th records) from the 24th and a **River Warbler** (1st record) on the 29th.

Elsewhere **Cream-coloured Coursers** were dispersing and grouping, with up to nine at the Emirates golf course, 14 at Al Wathba camel track from the 19th, 16+ at the Al Ain camel track and smaller numbers elsewhere. Two **Collared Pratincoles** were at the Emirates golf course on the 6th, c.500 **Lesser Sand Plovers** at Dhabbiyah on 26th and a **Caspian Plover** on Das Island on the 26th. The first **Pacific Golden Plover** of the season arrived on Das Island on the 25th and 24 **Great Knots** were on Merawah Island from the 22nd. This was to be an excellent year for this species on Merawah. 250 **Broad-billed Sandpipers** were already at Khor Dubai on the 19th and three early **Red-necked Phalaropes** were the beginning of an influx at the Emirates golf course from the 6th.

Of passerines, early arrivals (mostly on Das & Merawah Islands) included two **Crag Martins** at Al Wathba on the 19th (only 3rd ever autumn record), **Citrine Wagtails** from the 19th, a **Grey Wagtail** from the 4th, a **Robin** in Bateen wood, Abu Dhabi from the 26th, a **Nightingale** on Das Island on the 6th, two **Desert Wheatears** on Merawah Island on the 30th, a **Song Thrush** on Das Island from the 17th, a **Savi's Warbler** also on Das from the 15th, a **Great Reed Warbler** on Merawah Island on the 23rd, up to five **Lesser Grey Shrikes** on Merawah Island from the 29th, a **Pale Rock Sparrow** at Al Wathba on the 29th and up to three **Common Rosefinches** on Das Island from the 23rd.

SEPTEMBER

The summer heat showed signs of breaking this month, with the average for the month around 38°C, with high humidity. Some intermittent thunder storms were reported on the 2nd & 11th, though little rainfall was recorded in Dubai, but warm dry air associated with the storms raised temperatures to 44°C locally. Some flash floods were reported in the Hatta area and conditions were particularly unstable from 7th-9th. Otherwise it remained hot and sunny, with high humidity.

A **Bittern** was at the Emirates golf course on the 18th and a noteworthy 26 **Squacco Herons** were at Abu al Abyadh from 14th-17th. A **Black-shouldered Kite** (3rd record) on the 15th-16th, a **Lesser Kestrel** on the 16th and a **Lanner Falcon** on the 16th at the Fujeirah National Dairy farm were good records for the East Coast and up to three **Little Crakes** at the Emirates golf course 17th-22nd were the 10th-12th records.

While studying wader migration on the inshore islands, the Abu Dhabi Shorebird Project found yet more new species for the country. The first was a **Red-necked Stint** on the 9th at Dhabbiyah, while the next day a **Kittlitz's Plover** was found at Merawah Island, a first record for the Emirates and only a second for Arabia. An amazing 603 **Great Knot** (a record number for the Gulf) were at Merawah island on the 18th, another record flock of 40 **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at the Emirates golf course on the 8th. Some competitive birding took place in mid month, with most of the Emirates 'surveyed' in just a few days, revealing yet another newspecies: two **Lesser Noddys** were off Ras Dibba on the 14th, one staying to mid October. A **Namaqua Dove** (10th record) was also at Dibba on the 14th and an **Alpine Swift** (8th record) was at Al Ain on the 6th. Meanwhile, **Blyth's Pipits** were found at the Fujeirah National Dairy farm on the 18th and on Merawah Island from the 17th-25th (10th & 11th records). While an **Olive-backed Pipit** (13th) was at Al Wathba on the 23rd, a male **Brambling** (15th+ record) was at Jebel Ali on the 16th, a rather odd place and early date for a boreal species so far south.

OCTOBER

Weather continued to be particularly calm for most of the month, with temperatures around 32-37°C. High pressure predominated over Iran from the 10th-11th, bringing north-easterly flow (bringing in some Siberian rarities to Das Island, see below). Convective cloud built up over the mountains on 19 days and there were localised thunderstorms on the 7th with heavy rain reported near Dubai. Fog was reported for two hours in Dubai on the mornings of the 22nd and 24th.

Two **Egyptian Nightjars** were found in Al Wathba woods on the 7th, the only sightings this year. An **Olive-backed Pipit** in Bateen wood on the 15th was joined by another from 23rd-27th (14th & 15th records), while the Emirates Golf course & Merawah Island hosted single **Forest Wagtails**, from the 10th and 15th respectively (5th & 6th records). This species must have come a long way from its normal far-eastern range. Two **Hypocolius**, one of the region's most enigmatic species, turned up at the Emirates golf course on the 25th and eight were on Das Island on the 30th.

This is traditionally the month for Siberian rarities, and as usual Das Island hosted most of the goodies. A **Black-throated Thrush** on Das from 13th-15th was the year's only sighting, a **Blackbird** from 7th-9th was only the 11th record of this common European woodland bird, while the season's first **Yellow-browed Warblers** were found there on the 11th. This latter species remains very rare on the mainland. Three **Red-breasted Flycatchers** were on Das from the 25th and one was at the Emirates golf course on the 30th. A **Little Bunting** was on Das Island 11th-18th and another was there from 20th-27th, the 8th & 9th records. Five previous records have been on Das Island.

NOVEMBER

The mean temperatures were all above average, making it the warmest November on record. Temperatures peaked at 36°C on the 4th at Ras al Khaimah and 35°C on the 25th at the Emirates golf course. Rain spots were recorded on three days including the 13th (0.3 mm only) and a trace on the 18th, the first November rain for 5 years. The air was particularly dust-free in Dubai on the 1st, when the mountains were clearly visible 75 kms to the east. The first winter *shamal* hit Dubai on the 9th bringing force 7 north-west winds and 3 metre seas.

Almost matching last year's record in date and place, a female **Cotton Teal** (4th record) was on one of the lakes at the Emirates Golf course from the 24th-25th while a **Ruddy Shelduck** (12th record) arrived at Ramtha from the 27th, where it remained over the winter. A **Golden Eagle** (5th record) was at Al Ain on the 11th, leaving us to ponder from where they originate. At Ruwais reedbed, a **White-breasted Waterhen** (the 2nd record) turned up from 26th-28th, while at Al Ain camel track a **Caspian Plover** from the 3rd-11th was noteworthy and more easy to find. Meanwhile, on the East Coast, a **Sociable Plover** at the Fujeirah National Dairy

Farm on the 11th, was the 7th record of a declining species whose Central Asian breeding habitat is now under considerable pressure.

A **Small Skylark** (17th record) was at Al Wathba from the 11th along with at least two **Blyth's Pipits** from the 3rd. **Robins** were at the Jebel Ali hotel from the 21st and on Das Island from the 29th, a fine male **Eversmann's Redstart** was found in CR's garden from the 14-15th and another, a female this time, was on Merawah Island on the 21st, (the 23rd and 24th records). A **Ring Ouzel** (6th record) was seen fleetingly at the Emirates golf course on the 22nd and another **Yellow-browed Warbler** was discovered on Das Island on the 23rd. In Abu Dhabi, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was in Al Wathba wood on the 3rd and a male **Brambling** (16th+ record) was near the Eastern Lagoon from the 8th-14th.

DECEMBER

The month was generally settled with dust-haze on many days, particularly on the 4th. A strong north-west *shamal* from the 5th-7th raised seas and caused some flooding along the coast. A north-easterly gradient from the 8th collapsed the *shamal* and brought cool calm conditions until the 16th, during which time temperatures came down to a very comfortable 20-22°C, from a December average of about 25°C. At this time night temperatures dropped to between 5-10°C (Al Ain was the coldest), the lowest December temperatures on record. No rainfall was measured.

A few good rarities turned up in December, including a **White Pelican** (7th record and the first record since 1981) on Das Island on the 26th. It became the focus of local fishermen and hunters (visions of a late Christmas dinner perhaps?) and was gone the following day, back to the safety of the Clarence Straits perhaps? (Iran). A **Bittern** (16th record) at Khor al Beidah on the 4th, was rescued from attack by a falcon and soon became one of the exhibits in Dubai Zoo. One of the year's challenges was the country's first **Intermediate Egret** which was at Ramtha lagoon from the 23rd. It was amongst a party of *modesta* Great White Egrets, which are smaller and could cause confusion to the unwary. Another **Merlin** (11th record) was at Abu al Abyadh on the 27th and a **Lanner Falcon** was at Khor Dubai on the 15th. A very late **Spotted Crane** was at Zabeel on the 19th and up to eight **White-tailed Plovers** returned again to winter at Ramtha tip from the 1st.

On Das Island a **Ring Ouzel** (7th record) was an interesting visitor on the 11th, while even more interesting (though actually long-expected) was a **Pine Bunting** on the 8th, the country's first record. Both probably blown in by the *shamal*, followed by the north-easterly flow, as were 90 **Corn Buntings**, found at Al Habab on the 22nd.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Taffy Owen at Dubai International Airport meteorological office for the monthly weather summaries.

(Full version with charts and vignettes, refer EBR19)

Systematic list of the Birds reported in 1994

Compiled by Colin Richardson Edited by Simon Aspinall

Due to a marvelous improvement in the number of observers submitting records a record-breaking 324 species were reported in 1994 (compared to 309 in 1993). In addition, a further eight species are now on a list of recently introduced feral breeding species (introduced within last 10 years), appended at the end of the Checklist. 10 new species were added to the UAE list (compared to five new ones in 1993), plus five recorded only once before (seven in 1993). Of these new ones, long predicted were **Intermediate Egret** (Ramtha tip, from 23.12.94), **Red-necked Stint** (Khor Dubai, 26.9.94), **Pied Stonechat** (Emirates golf course, 6.5.94), **River Warbler** (Merawah Island, 29.8.94), **Blyth's Reed Warbler** (Zabeel, 5.5.94) and **Pine Bunting** (Das Island, from 8.12.94) and we are pleased to add them to the UAE list. Species not predicted (complete surprises in fact), were **Bewick's Swan** (Nadd al Sheba, from 25.1.94), **Kittlitz's Plover** (Merawah Island, 10.9.94), **White-eyed Gull** (Kalba, 9.5.94) and **Lesser Noddy** (Ras Dibba, from 14.9.94). Runners up, were second country records (in taxonomic order) **White-breasted Waterhen** (Jebel Dhanna, from 26.11.94), **Golden Plover** (Emirates golf course, from 1.3.94), **Long-tailed Skua** (Ras Dibba, 22.9.94), **White-crowned Black Wheatear** (Das Island, from 2.2.94) and **Greenish Warbler** (Das Island, from 16.1.94).

By the end of 1994 the UAE Checklist had 390 species on the main list, plus 13 on the feral list, making a total of 403 species (source, Richardson & Aspinall 1996).

The list follows the taxonomic order of Vouss's *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species* (1975). Readers will also find it useful to refer to the official EBRC list, *A Checklist of the Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (Richardson & Aspinall 1996) for summaries on the status of each species.

All records have been provisionally accepted by the Records Committee except those marked '#'.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Resident breeding population stable, restricted to permanent and semi-permanent freshwater ponds and lakes, notably in 1994, the Emirates golf course, Al Wathba prison pools, Ramtha tip, Zabeel fish ponds, Ain al Faydah, Wadi Shih reservoir, Nadd al Sheba and Safa Park. Up to 6 pairs in best sites. Migrants and winter visitors present September to March.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Accidental visitor (though locally very common in northern Gulf in winter). Previous records November to early March. Last recorded November 1988.

One remained, having over-wintered, at Ain al Faydah until at least 11 Jan (R.Read *et al*) and one Ramtha lagoon with the flock of Black-necked Grebes 31 Jan-5 Mar (C.Richardson *et al*). 6th & 7th records.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Regular localised winter visitor September to early April. Numbers at most sites stable, although the Ramtha population showed a dramatic increase from 60 in 1993 to 127 in 1994.

WINTER/SPRING: Large flock wintered Ramtha lagoon, peaking at 127 on 17 Feb, declining to c.60 by 18 Mar, 21 on 4 Apr and seven on 7 Apr. Three still present 16 Apr.

Less than five wintered at each of Zabeel fish ponds, Emirates golf club, Muqatara airbase marsh, Nadd al Sheba and Khor Kalba.

AUTUMN/WINTER: First arrival, one Ramtha 2 Sep, five at the Emirates golf course 25 Sep and five Shwaib dam 30 Sep. Build-up commenced mid-November with 15 Ramtha 17 Nov, 69 on 9 Dec, increasing to 127 by 31 Dec. Up to four each recorded Ras Dibba, flooded pools in Sharjah and Nadd al Sheba golf club during period.

(Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*) No confirmed records in UAE territory, though likely off East Coast.

One reported off Dibba 8 Oct (ADSP), though not seen in sufficient detail, probably this species.)

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* Present off East Coast most of year, peaking in summer months. Sea-watching is infrequent and following sightings are only the tip of the iceberg.

At least three off Al Aqqah ('Snoopy Rock') 1 Jul, one flying south off Dadnah 14 Sep, c.20 off Ras Dibba 8/9 Oct, 15 off Fujairah 3 Dec and 10 off Ras Dibba 4 Dec.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Best seen coastline from Khor Fakkan to Dibba on East Coast Surprisingly only following reports received.

At least four off Al Aqqah 30 June-1 Jul (CR, SJA) on calm days. Likely off deeper most days at least April-August.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* Resident pelagic species, low population rarely seen from land. Nests November-April.

60 nest sites found, c.80 birds seen Qarnein Island 19 Jan (M.Verhage) with three there 17 Jun. Up to 10 seen from Das Island 19 Jan-14 Feb and October to December.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Numbers similar to 1993. Fairly common and widespread winter visitor November to March, mostly coastal, inshore lagoons and nearby freshwater ponds with fish.

WINTER/SPRING: Maximum of 215 E.Lagoon 14 Jan, 130 Khor Dubai 11 Mar. Flocks of up to 40 other sites. Scarce after March, with ones and twos recorded in April several sites including Khor Dubai and Ramtha tip. One overwintered Zabeel, last recorded 29 Oct.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 19 Zabeel 12 Nov, first noted winter arrivals. 100+ Khor Dubai from 28 Nov with a peak of 335 there 9 Dec.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis* Difficult to assess population trends of this sometimes abundant resident. Several large flocks found and a survey was made of seabird colonies on Abu Dhabi offshore islands during June (outside the breeding season).

WINTER/SPRING: 2492 counted flying at sunset over inshore Abu Dhabi islands 13 Jan.

Rather scarce inshore January to October, when maximum flocks recorded from mainland was 300. None seen Siniyah Island 3 Apr. (But see below). 2000 seen from Das Island 20 Mar.

c.4,000 came to evening roost Jazt.Muhammalaiyah 12 Jun. Signs of c.15,000-strong breeding colony Jazt.Dayyinah on 16 Jun, where remains of c.2,000 dead chicks were still evident from recent season.

c.12,000 came to roost on Dayyinah on evening of 16 Jun. UMM AL QUWAIN COLONY: Est.40,000 Khor al Beidah 5 Oct. Breeding colony active, with 15,555 occupied nests counted 27 Oct. Up to 3000 off UAQ beach 1-4 Nov, 5000 there 25 Nov,

c.5000 Al Rifaa and an estimated 10,000 Khor al Beidah (15 km. south of Al Rifaa) 6 Dec about one hour later (C.Richardson *et al*). 5000 in Khor al Beidah 23 Dec.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 16,530 near Bahrani Island, Abu Dhabi 15 Dec.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Rare visitor to the southern Gulf. Last recorded March 1981.

One Das Island 26 Dec (LR), 7th record.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* Rare late autumn migrant September to November. Same number of records (2) as in 1993.

One Emirates golf course 14 Sep (A.Owen, M.Fryer) and one was rescued from attack by falcon Khor al Beidah 4 Dec, later taken to Dubai Zoo (per M.R.Khan). 14th & 15th records.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Rather scarce migrant. Occurrence followed similar pattern to 1993, with most records late May to July.

SPRING: Up to two Emirates golf course 26 May-8 Jul, one Zabeel fish ponds 29 May, 11-22 Jul and one Ramtha reed beds 14-22 Jul.

AUTUMN: One Emirates golf course 10 Oct and one E.Lagoon 23 Oct.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Fairly common migrant and winter visitor September to April. Regular Zabeel fish ponds where it first nested 1992. Suspected of nesting 1994, though no nests found. Migrant numbers similar to previous years.

WINTER/SPRING: Most records Zabeel fish ponds: maximum of 27 there 23 Jan, fewer April-August, with up to three recorded throughout the summer. Less than five Emirates golf course and Ramtha tip during period.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Numbers built up from September, with 30 Zabeel 17 Sep peaking at 38 on 28 Nov. 14 Ramtha tip 27 Nov probably wintering. Less than five each at other sites including Ruwais, Merawah Island, Jebel Ali Hotel and Emirates golf course.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus* Rather scarce resident of mangroves with some dispersal in autumn, though rarely far from the coast. Selected records follow:

One Emirates golf course 26 Feb was unusual. At least one present, sometimes 3-4 in October, Zabeel fish ponds throughout the year. Up to two Das Island 6/7 Nov.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Uncommon passage migrant, occasionally in winter. 42 birds reported in 1994 compared to just six in 1993.

SPRING: Singles reported Ramtha tip 21 Jan, Fujairah Dairy farm 3-22 Mar and up to two Ramtha tip 22-31 Mar.

AUTUMN: One Das Island from 11 Aug, with five 19 Aug and two 25 Aug. One Safa Park 26 Aug. Up to 26 reported Abu al Abyadh 14-17 Sep, one Al Wathba 30 Sep-1 Oct and three Das Island 20 Oct.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* Regularly over-winters (c.5-10 birds) Khor Kalba from late August to mid April. Only three previous records away from this site.

SPRING: One Ain al Faydah 17 Apr & 23 May. One Khor Kalba 18 May latest sighting there.

AUTUMN: Up to five Khor Kalba 15-23 Sep, probably present to end of year.

Ardeola sp. One Al Wathba 30 Sep.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Winter visitor late September to April, numbers increasing annually, notably on Abu Dhabi island.

WINTER/SPRING: 80 wintering Abu Dhabi, declining to two on 16 Apr. Up to 13 Ramtha tip 7-15 Jan, with 2-3 seen most visits until 19 Apr. Three Umm al Quwain beach 5-18 Mar with one remaining to 21 Mar. One was at Zabeel fish ponds 20 Jul. Smaller numbers other sites.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Three E.Lagoon 3 Sep, with five Abu Dhabi area from 27 Sep, nine from 9 Oct, 17 from 31 Oct, 28 on 11 Nov, 42 on 14 Dec and 66 there 27 Dec (see graph below). At least one Zabeel fish ponds from 3 Sep, with two there 23 Oct. 13 Das Island 28 Sep and 16 Khor Dubai 29 Sep. Five UAQ 1 Nov, increasing to 15 from 6 Dec to the end of the year. Two Safa Park 28 Nov, up to 10 Ramtha tip from 9 Dec, seven Al Wathba 16 Dec. Smaller numbers other sites.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Regular passage migrant and winter visitor September to April, more common in northern Emirates. Numbers similar to previous years.

WINTER/SPRING: High counts include 21 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, eight Ramtha tip 14-21 Jan, 15 Zabeel 21 Feb. Rare May-July, though single birds were found at Ramtha and Khor Dubai throughout the summer.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Ones and twos from late August, with five Zabeel fish ponds 30 Sep, increasing to 10 on 29 Oct. 20 Khor Dubai 3 Nov-9 Dec, 12 Khor al Beidah 6 Dec and 20 Ramtha tip 31 Dec. Smaller numbers other sites.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* A common migrant and winter visitor, abundant at Khor Dubai. Many non-breeders present in summer.

WINTER/SPRING: 109 Khor Dubai 14 Jan; 35 Ramtha tip 21 Jan and 26 there 7 Apr. Rather scarce in May, though 35 Khor Dubai 25 Jul, possibly early migrants.
 AUTUMN/WINTER: Usually 200+, but a record 366 were counted Khor Dubai 29 Sep, with numbers down to 95 on 9 Dec. Otherwise less than a healthy 40 at most regular sites to end of the year.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* Common breeding resident, numbers remaining stable compared to previous years.

WINTER/SPRING: Largest numbers, 39 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 33 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 76 Ramtha lagoons 15 Jan, 26 Khor Kalba 29 Jan, 23 Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar, 85 Khor al Beidah 5 Mar, 35 Abu Dhabi corniche 19 Apr and 40 Abu al Abyadh 15 May.

Less widespread during nest period, May to early August.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Common in September with up to 30 at most regular sites including Zabeel fish ponds, Ramtha, Khor Dubai and E.Lagoon. Up to 80 Merawah Island 10 Sep-16 Oct. 55+ Ramtha lagoons from early September and 82 there 9 Dec to the end of the year. c.100 Khor Dubai 31 Dec, 147 Khor al Beidah 5 Oct.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Common migrant September to March. Numbers of migrants showing steady increase since 1991. (See graph above).

WINTER SPRING: Up to five regularly Zabeel fish ponds, Ramtha lagoons and several other sites to late March. Two Zabeel fish ponds most days in April. Ones and twos May to June. 10 Ramtha 31 Mar, 15 on 17 Apr and six there on 30 Apr; less than five at all other sites. One or two present in several locations throughout the summer.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Migrants reported from late August. 10 on Das Island 26 Aug, first sightings. Up to 12 Zabeel fish ponds 1 Sep-11 Oct, 22 Ramtha 2 Sep, peaking at 32 from 18-26 Sep, with 20+ there regularly to end of December. 22 at sea off Juneina Island 12 Sep. Smaller numbers other sites including Khor Dubai, Khor Kalba, Emirates golf course, Dhabyah, Merawah and Fujeirah Dairy Farm.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* Vagrant, no previous records. Main range includes the Indian sub-continent. One Ramtha tip from 23 Dec to end of year (S.J.Aspinall *et al*), 1st UAE record.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* As usual, a rather localised migrant, only really common late August to October.

WINTER/SPRING: Single birds Zabeel fish ponds 5-16 Jan, 2-7 Feb and 6-19 Mar and Al Wathba prison pools 1-13 Jan & 4 Feb. Two Zabeel fish ponds 20 Mar, two Fujeirah Dairy farm 22 Mar, one Khor Kalba 30 Mar, one Ramtha 19 Apr, four Zabeel fish ponds 25 Mar, three 3 Apr, up to two there 13-25 Apr and one 11-26 May. Two Khor Kalba mangroves 13-23 May and one Ain al Faydah 23 May and two there 31 May. Some of these reports may refer to the same birds.

SUMMER: Up to two immatures oversummered Zabeel 29 May-6 Aug, one was at Fujeirah dairy farm 1 Jul with another at Ramtha 14 Jul.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Fairly good numbers from late August to early October. Up to six Zabeel fish ponds 1 Sep-6 Oct, up to eight Kalba 3-15 Sep, 12 Safad plain 7 Sep, 36+ birds passed through Das Island from 2 Sep-19 Oct with a maximum flock of 11 on 25/26 Sep. 4-6 Abu al Abyadh 17 Sep and 22 there 7 Oct. Up to two Ramtha tip 2/26 Sep.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Irregular migrant, mostly strays from western flyways occur in the UAE. Numbers down on 1993 which saw an exceptional October influx.

WINTER: Five remained at Al Ain camel track until 9 Jan, one until 25 Jan. One Al Habab 23 Feb-19 Mar. Seven over Jebel Buhays 10-12 May (OW).

AUTUMN: Up to five Fujeirah dairy farm 14-29 Sep, with three remaining to 11 Nov. Two Madam fields 18 Sep (one caught a Blue-cheeked Bee-eater as it flew past) and one on 29 Sep. Seven Al Wathba camel track 18 Sep, five 21-23 Sep, (one dead 29 Sep), with two remaining to 10 Oct. 19 Al Ain camel track 16 Oct, with two remaining 18 Nov. Note this

interesting southward movement, possibly of same birds?! ie. Dibba, 14 Sep; Madam, 18 Sep; Al Wathba, from 18 Sep.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Regular migrant in small numbers September to April. Similar numbers and distribution to recent years reported.

WINTER/SPRING: One Abu Dhabi 14 Jan-16 Mar.

SUMMER: One Ramtha tip 1 Jun and 21 Jul.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Ramtha 2 Sep, increasing to two 18 Sep and three from 23 Sep, 18 flew over Merawah Island 7 Sep with three there 26 Sep and four 21 Nov. One Bateen airbase park 1 Oct, one Zabeel fish ponds 9 Oct. One E.Lagoon 9 Nov with two there from 15 Nov.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Vagrant, but also occurs as free-flying escape from zoos and private collections.

40-50 soaring over road near Al Awir 12 Feb (N.Gosse), extraordinary record, so far from any known collections. Possibly genuine wild stock and if so only the 4th UAE record.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Regular migrant and winter visitor, some immatures present in summer.

WINTER/SPRING: Maximum numbers, 21 E.Lagoon 2-14 Jan, 29 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 18 Ramtha lagoon 31 Jan, with smaller numbers reported at other sites.

SUMMER: Eight Khor Dubai 27 Jul, summering.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to 10 Khor Dubai July to Oct, 24 there 3 Nov, increasing steadily with 34 there 28 Nov and 41 on 31 Dec. 27 E.Lagoon 17 Nov. Up to four Ramtha during same period.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* Common migrant and winter visitor. Potential breeder. After the failure of Al Ghar's breeding colony in 1993, numbers were rather disappointing in 1994 as much of the site was destroyed.

Khor Dubai: 844 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 98 on 19 Jun, 134 on 30 Aug, 54 on 2 Sep and an all-time low* of 44 there on 9 Sep, increased only slowly to 124 on 29 Sep, 157 on 6 Oct, 219 on 22 Oct, 167 on 9 Dec remaining steady to end of year.

Al Ghar Lake: 177 on 19-20 May and five (only) there 16 Dec.

Ramtha lagoon: 92 Ramtha lagoon 5 Mar, 158 on 14 Jul and 95 on 30 Aug. 29 on 4 Nov to end of year.

Other noteworthy numbers - 140 E.Lagoon 2-14 Jan. Five Das Island 1 Feb was a rare find.

* *The mudflats at Khor Dubai are affected by effluent from a number of sources, including ground water discharges and semi-treated waste water from the Dubai sewage treatment plant.*

These are major factors and, depending on the salinity of the water at the discharge, can create a rich food source for the flamingos and other waders. Conversely these and other creek pollutants can negatively affect the food chain. It is not currently understood what caused this recent decline in flamingo numbers at Khor Dubai.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* Vagrant, with only two previous records.

Two west of Abu Dhabi, near Futaisi Island 22 Jan (anon), possibly same birds as reported there 8.12.93.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* Vagrant.

Two Nadd al Sheba golf course from 25 Jan-8 Feb (C.Richardson *et al*) were the first of this species to be recorded in the UAE.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* Rare winter visitor. Three remained at Abu Dhabi's E.Lagoon until 14 Jan (SLJ, RQ, EH *et al*), 3rd confirmed record. (Reported in *EBR18*, present since 5 Nov 1993).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* Rare winter visitor, with 18 reported, compared to 16 recorded in 1993.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to seven Ruwais 5-12 Jan, three Zabeel fish ponds 2 Jan and six wintering birds remained Ramtha tip through 4 Feb, with two stragglers still there 5 Mar.

WINTER: Individuals were on Das Island 8 Dec and Emirates golf course 11-12 Dec.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Rare winter visitor with an average of one record per year. One Ramtha tip 27 Nov to end of year (A.Topp *et al*), 12th record.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Uncommon migrant and irregular winter visitor, mostly in late winter. Two Khor Dubai 14-19 Jan, one Ramtha 15 Jan, increasing to two on 31 Jan.

Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus* Accidental visitor from Indian subcontinent, last recorded at Emirates golf course 26 November 1993.

One female was at the Emirates golf course 24-25 Nov (C.Richardson), 4th record.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* Regular winter visitor October to March, though rather localised.

WINTER: 13 Nadd al Sheba 25 Jan, eight Zabeel fish ponds 28 Jan-2 Feb and seven Ramtha tip 5 Mar. Pair Zabeel fish ponds 3 Apr, male remaining to 23 Apr. Small numbers other sites.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One male Zabeel 18 October was the first record of autumn. Numbers here peaked at 26 (a record in recent years) on 25 Dec. 15 Ramtha tip 9 Dec. Smaller numbers other sites including Emirates golf course and Nadd al Sheba.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Irregular winter visitor October to early March, usually in small numbers. 1994 was a good year with 35+ birds recorded (compared to c.20 in 1993).

WINTER/SPRING: Up to seven remained at the Emirates golf course until 27 Mar and 17 were discovered at Nadd al Sheba golf club on 25 Jan. Up to six Ramtha tip 21 Jan-5 Mar, where a straggler remained until 31 Mar. Two Al Wathba prison pools during period.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Emirates golf club from 21 Oct-1 Nov was the first autumn record. Two UAQ 27 Oct. Four Ramtha tip from 4 Nov, one Zabeel fish ponds 10 Dec and up to two Emirates golf club 12-27 Dec.

Teal *Anas crecca* Common migrant and winter visitor September to April. Autumn numbers above average in 1994.

WINTER/SPRING: 60 Ramtha tip 7-15 Jan, 47 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 40 Abu al Abyadh 20 Jan and 44 Zabeel fish ponds 28 Jan, were highest counts. Late migrants, five Ramtha 19 Apr and one Zabeel fish ponds until 2 May were latest recorded.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at the Emirates golf course 6 Sep was first arrival. Main influx from late September. 103 were at Ramtha lagoons 4 Nov and a record 203 there 17 Nov. c.100 Ain al Faydah 1 Nov, 134 Khor Dubai 18 Nov and 75 Zabeel fish ponds 13 Dec were noteworthy numbers. c.50 several other sites.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Very common winter visitor October to April. Introduced locally and resident. January numbers similar to previous years, though December 1993 counts were higher.

WINTER/SPRING: Highest numbers, 716 Khor Dubai 14 Jan and 346 Zabeel fish ponds 11 Jan and 640 Ain al Faydah pools 2 Feb. Latest departure from Emirates golf course 29 Mar while 25 remained at Sir Bani Yas Island to 8 Apr (some possibly feral residents). Female with brood of seven Zabeel fish ponds 3 Apr. One remained at Al Ghar lake 30 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 48 Ajban 17 Sep and six Emirates golf course 20 Sep were first reports. One Das Island 30 Oct, first ever record there. Maximum flocks, 520 Khor Dubai 9 Dec and 598 ponds inside Zabeel palace 19 Dec (assumed part of same flock).

Pintail *Anas acuta* Fairly common winter visitor September to April.

WINTER/SPRING: 32 Zabeel fish ponds 2 Jan, 18 Khor Dubai 14 Jan and 20 Ramtha tip 31 Jan, were peak numbers at regular sites. Two Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr were latest stragglers.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Earliest arrival was one Khor Kalba 15 Sep, with odd reports until general influx from mid October, with a peak of 20 birds at Zabeel fish ponds 10 Dec. Smaller numbers other sites.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Regular migrant February to April and August to October, rare in winter.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to three Ramtha 15-21 Jan, probably there all winter. First migrants noted were two at the Emirates golf course 26 Feb. 28 were at Ramtha tip 31 Mar, one of the largest flocks in recent years. Otherwise up to five several sites until six Ramtha 4 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Two Zabeel fish ponds 26 Aug, 13 E.Lagoon 27 Aug and six Khor Dubai 2 Sep, first autumn records. 24 Jebel Ali Hotel, 14 Merawah Island 7 Sep, 18 Emirates golf course 8 Sep, 31 Khor Kalba 15 Sep, 20 Abu al Abyadh 20 Sep, 14 Ramtha 26 Sep, 14 Zabeel 26 Sep and 15 Shwaib pool 30 Sep, highest numbers recorded. Up to six several other sites and one remained at the Emirates golf course until at least 12 Dec. One Ramtha tip 31 Dec.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Localised winter visitor September to March, often more than 60 at a favoured site. Numbers were slightly lower than previous years.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 70 birds counted on most visits to Ramtha lagoons 7 Jan-31 Mar, with numbers declining to six on 7 Apr, and one on 19 Apr. c.30 Al Wathba prison pools 1 Jan. One Abu al Abyadh 17 May, latest record.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Four Emirates golf course 6 Sep was first autumn arrival. 20-70 recorded Ramtha tip 26 Sep to the end of the year. Smaller numbers other suitable sites, including Zabeel fish ponds, Khor Dubai, Dhayah marshes and Safa Park.

Pochard *Aythya ferina* Uncommon winter visitor November to March. Numbers showed an increase from previous years. Earlier autumn arrival than usual.

WINTER/SPRING: Four Emirates golf course until 12 Mar, decreasing to two on 21 Mar; largest numbers Ramtha tip with peak of 13 there 16 Feb and at least two still there 7 Apr (5 weeks later than last winter record in 1993). Smaller numbers Zabeel fish ponds and Nadd al Sheba golf course, (where two remained until 26 Mar).

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Ramtha 16 Sep and three Emirates golf course 10 Oct, were first records. Two Emirates golf course 16 Oct-8 Nov (three 13 Oct), three Nadd al Sheba from 16 Nov and up to 12 Ramtha tip from 17 Nov to end of year. Two Zabeel fish ponds 16 Nov.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Rare migrant, occasionally in winter late October to early March. Above average numbers this year.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to six Nadd al Sheba from 25 Jan, (largest ever flock), two remained until 27 Feb. One Zabeel fish ponds 20 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Safa Park 28 Nov. Up to two each Ramtha tip 6-31 Dec and Emirates golf course 11-27 Dec. Two Zabeel ponds 15 Dec (possibly same pair as at nearby Nadd al Sheba).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Scarce winter visitor October to February. A better-than-average year for this species.

WINTER/SPRING: Three Ramtha tip 15 Jan and one remained at the Emirates golf course until 9 Feb. One or two Zabeel ponds until 25 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to three Ramtha lagoons from 17 Nov-16 Dec, with max. of 19 there from 16 Dec. Two Safa Park 28 Nov, up to two Zabeel ponds 7-13 Dec, up to five Nadd al Sheba from 8-17 Dec and up to six Emirates golf course 9-27 Dec.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Regular migrant in south notably on Abu Dhabi island late September to April, though rare in north. Some records may be confused with Crested Honey Buzzard, first recorded in the Northern Emirates in December 1992.

WINTER/SPRING: One Mushrif Park, Dubai 15 Jan. Up to two Abu Dhabi area 22-24 Jan. Singles seen most visits to Bateen gardens area 2 Mar-22 Apr, with two there 7-9 Apr and three 27 Mar & 11 Apr. One Abu Dhabi Inter-continental hotel 13 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to two Bateen gardens area 30 Sep-28 Oct and four there 20 Oct.
One Al Wathba camel track 11 Nov.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Vagrant, only three previous records: February 1984, November/December 1992 and November 1993.
One was at Fujeirah dairy farm, Dibba 15-16 Sep (E.Hirschfeld *et al*), 4th record.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Rather scarce migrant November to March. 5 in 1994, compared to 11 in 1993. 'Black-eared' Kite (*ssplineatus*) probably regular.
One was at the Zabeel fish ponds 2-19 Jan and one *lineatus* race E.Lagoon 14-19 Jan. One flying north of Safa Park 20 Mar.
One Al Ain camel track 29 Sep, 16 Oct and 18 Nov, one Bateen Gardens 'early Oct' and up to three Al Ain Zoo 15-24 Nov, possibly some duplication of records. One Al Wathba camel track 1 Oct & 22 Nov.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Resident around Jebel Hafit, occasionally elsewhere, but always near mountainous areas. Less common in spring when nesting.
Pair seen displaying Jebel Hafit 22 Feb.
ROOST COUNTS (only site Jebel Hafit): 0 on 4 Apr, 50 on 17 Apr, 85 from 22-29 Sep, 122 on 14 Oct, 111 on 18 Nov, 60 on 30 Nov & 29 Dec.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus* A scarce and enigmatic resident. Most records in Buraimi and Mahdah (regional Wilayats in Oman) adjacent to Al Ain.
One Kalba plain 16 Mar, one near Jebel Buhays 5 Apr and one over Masafi 1 Jul, two over Al Ain Zoo 11 Nov (C.Pohl) and one there 14 Nov (S.Smith), only reported sightings in the UAE in 1994.

Vulture sp. One over Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 8 & 9 Oct (ADSP).

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* Uncommon migrant and suspected breeding resident. Usually less than 20 sightings per year.
WINTER/SPRING: One Al Kharran 21 Jan, one Jebel Hafit 22 Feb & 4 Apr, one north of Sweihan 28 Feb, two in Masafi area 1 Mar, one Dibba 3 Mar, one over Wadi Bih 7 Apr and one Al Ain camel track 3 Jun.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Three E.Lagoon 17 Nov and one Jebel Hafit 30 Nov.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Regular winter visitor September to April.
WINTER/SPRING: Five E.Lagoon 14 Jan. 12 (an unusually high number) 13 Mar and five 28 Mar Al Ain camel track counted at roost. Apart from five Dhayah 4 Mar, mostly recorded in ones and twos at suitable sites. One Zabeel 2 May and one Al Ain 8 May were latest spring stragglers seen.
AUTUMN/WINTER: First migrant, one 2 Sep Ramtha tip, with small numbers thereafter. Four Al Ain camel track 29 Sep and five there 10 Nov, six E.Lagoon 17 Nov and up to five Ramtha lagoons 17 Nov to end of year. Four Dhayah 5 Dec. Present many other sites in smaller numbers.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Rare migrant, with few reliable reports.
One new Corniche, Abu Dhabi 19 Apr (DR, JMH, LG), awaits assessment.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* Regular migrant September to mid April, peaking March and late September to early November. Only notable sightings listed.
WINTER/SPRING: Al Ain camel track: up to five 28 Feb-13 Mar. Hamraniyah: one 3 Mar, three 17 Mar, one remaining 17 Apr. Al Wathba camel track: Up to two 24 Mar-1 Apr.
Other sites-two Baynunah 3 Jan, two Sweihan 31 Jan, two Ajban 16 Feb, two Al Habab 12 Mar, two Abu al Abyadh 15 Apr. One was on Das Island (where it is rare) 2 Apr.
AUTUMN/WINTER: One Merawah Island 12 Sep, first record. Al Ain camel track: Two 28 Sep, four 10 Nov and one 1 Dec. Hamraniyah: One male Sep, two 26 Sep and three 3 Oct. Al

Wathba camel track: Two 26 Sep & 11 Nov, three 3 Oct and one 16 Dec.

Two Abu al Abyadh 25 Sep. Reported widely other sites including Sir Bani Yas Island, Das Island (two on 8 Oct), Al Habab, Fujeirah dairy farm, Dhabyah, Al Jazeerah Khor.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Autumn passage migrant August to October, occasionally in winter and scarce in spring. Noticeably more common than in previous years, with exceptional numbers reported. A selection of reports follows.

SPRING: Al Ain camel track: one 25 Jan, one 13 Mar and two 24 May (latest record); Hamraniyah: one 7 Apr & 29 Apr.

AUTUMN: Al Ain camel track: up to eight 28 Sep-16 Oct, Al Wathba camel track: up to three most days from 21 Aug, increasing to four from 18 Sep and six from 26 Sep, up to seven 1-11 Oct; Hamraniyah: two 18 Sep and three 5 Dec.

Other sites-up to two Al Habab 11-30 Sep, up to five Fujeirah national dairy farm 15-29 Sep. Singles widely reported at all these sites plus Merawah Island, Mirfa, Khor Kalba, E.Lagoon.

harrier sp.

Two Hamraniyah 7 Apr, one Zabeel fish ponds 15 Sep, singles Al Habab 30 Sep, a distant adult male there 19 Oct and a 'ring-tail' on 18 Nov. One Hamraniyah 5 Dec and two there 30 Dec, all not identified to species.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* Vagrant, and generally very rare in region with only two previous records. One E.Lagoon 16 Nov (C.Pohl), awaits assessment.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* Elusive, but regular migrant and winter visitor September to April.

SPRING: Two Hamraniyah 3 Mar. One Abu Dhabi 31 Mar last UAE record. One Wadi Sharm 8 Apr, probably in Oman.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 14 Aug, was unusually early. Single birds widely reported from October, with two Al Wathba camel track 8 Dec.

(Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo (vulpinus)* Scarce migrant September to February (usually).

All records listed:

Singles Munay 7 Feb, Abu Dhabi 10 Aug & 20 Oct, Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 9 Oct and on Das Island 26/27 Aug.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* Localised resident, few on passage September to April. No breeding sites reported this year and species probably declining due to disturbance in desert nesting areas.

WINTER/SPRING: Singles Zabeel fish ponds 2 Jan, Baynunah 5 Jan, Ruwais 11 Jan, Hamraniyah 17 Mar, 29 Mar and 1 Apr (two there 29 Apr), Wadi Bih 2 Apr, Shwaib 21 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Singles Ain al Faydah 18 Aug, Al Ain camel track 30 Aug, Wadi Bih 18 Sep. Balghelam 23 Sep, Fujeirah national dairy farm 29 Sep, Ramtha tip 4 Nov and Qatuf (TB25) 25 Nov.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* Rare vagrant, only three previous records (February, March and December).

One was at the Zabeel fish ponds 19 Jan (C.Richardson) and one (possibly same bird) Khor Dubai 23 Feb, 5th record. One Hamraniyah 4 Mar probably this species (see 1993 record below, same location). One reported in cage on Sir Bani Yas Island, recently caught, early April (PH).

1993 RECORD: One Hamraniyah field 27 Dec 1993 (J.Dierschke, CR, NSR), 4th record.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* Commonest wintering eagle Northern Emirates October to March.

WINTER/SPRING: Zabeel/Khor Dubai: At least two (occasionally five) overwintering until 19 Jan and one 6-29 Mar; Ramtha tip: Two 21 Jan & 5 Mar; Rams/Dhayah: one Dhayah 4 Mar; Hamraniyah: One juv. near RAK airport in March. Other sites: One E.Lagoon 2 Jan, one Khor

al Beidah 5 Mar, and one being mobbed by Bonelli's Eagle Wadi Bih 2 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Zabeel/Khor Dubai: One, probably this species, 25 Oct and another from 29 Oct, with up to two present until late November, then up to six 24 Nov to end of the year, representing the largest group ever at Khor Dubai; Ramtha Tip: three (including one of *rufescens* sub-species) from 1 Nov, five from 4 Nov; Hamraniyah: Up to four 4 Nov & 5 Dec (probably present Nov-Dec); Rams/Dhayah: Up to four 4 Nov & 5 Dec, including one *rufescens* (probably all present Nov-Dec). Other sites: One hit (not killed) by aircraft Dubai International Airport 4 Nov. One Abu Dhabi lagoons 7-11 Nov and four Al Wathba camel track 11 Nov, one Al Ain zoo 15 Nov.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Scarce migrant September to April, possibly regular in winter in south (Al Ain area).

WINTER/SPRING: One probably this species Zabeel fish ponds 19 Jan and 15 Feb, one 5 km. north of Madam 30 Mar, one 3 km. east Abu Dhabi airport 3 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 26 Sep, one Ramtha tip 1 Nov, one E.Lagoon 14 Nov, one over Al Ain zoo 15 & 24 Nov, one Khor Dubai 24 Nov and three reported there 29 Dec (U.Wernery).

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* Rare passage migrant, occasionally in winter. Usually less than 5 per year (although none reported some years).

WINTER/SPRING: One adult Baynunah 12 Jan and one Zabeel ponds 19 Jan.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Ramtha tip 31 Dec. Two near Ras al Khaimah airport October and one immature there 5 Dec. One Khor Dubai from 29 Dec.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* Rare accidental, origins unknown, though probably from Saudi or Oman populations. One 6-week old juv. brought to Dubai Falcon Hospital in March, from Al Ain area. One adult Al Ain 11 Nov (C.Pohl), 5th record in recent years.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor, average less than 10 per year. Rare in 1994. One overwintered (from 17 December 1993) in Zabeel area, last seen 6 Mar, only report.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* Adults resident in the mountains (c.10-50 pairs). Immatures wander from September.

WINTER/SPRING: One immature Zabeel fish ponds 19 Jan & 15 Feb, two Ramtha tip 22 Mar, one adult Wadi Bih mobbing Spotted Eagle 2 Apr and one adult Al Ain 17 Apr.

SUMMER: A pair were seen at Daftah (Wadi Ham) 23 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 14 Sep & 8 Oct with pair and one juv. there 9 Oct, one Kalba 15 Sep, one immature Zabeel fish ponds 30 Sep, remaining until 28 Oct, when two were reported. Pair Ain al Faydah 2 Oct. Singles Hamraniyah 4 Nov, Ramtha tip 16-17 Nov and Jebel Hafit 18 Nov.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Healthy resident population with 65 eyries counted on 30+ islands and islets west of Abu Dhabi in June 1994, counted during island survey (Richardson & Aspinall 1997, pages 104-111). See also bar chart on following page and Aspinall (1994b).

Pair nested Ruwais oil jetty, young in nest 11 Feb (per PH). Pair Makhasib Island 1 May. Otherwise common in winter at coastal wetlands and tidal lagoons.

Two at Khor Dubai most visits to April and from November (three there 18 Nov) to end of the year. Four resident on Merawah Island. One Al Hayer 30 Sep and another reported Ain al Faydah in autumn, presumably passage migrants. Single birds at other regular sites.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Irregular migrant, mostly March to April, fewer September to November. Numbers seen are dependent on local food availability (large moth larvae and locusts). This year was another good one for the species and the spring passage was well-documented by Simon Aspinall, *Spring Migration of Lesser Kestrel through the UAE*. (EBR18:96-99)

WINTER: One possible Jebel Hafit 25 Jan (SJA).

SPRING: Digdaga/Hamraniyah: At least three 3 Mar was the first spring record, 50 on 27 Mar, building up to peak of 109 (a record) on 7 Apr, 75 on 12 Apr. Numbers declined to seven on 19 Apr, when they were last seen here.

Madam fields: Up to 39 from 25 Mar-12 Apr, declining to three on 19 Apr. **Fujeirah dairy farm:** Up to 20 from 17 Mar-10 Apr. **Das Island:** Nine on 6 Apr, seven on 7 Apr.

At least five Shwaib 24 Mar, two Bidiyah 31 Mar, one Bateen gardens 9-11 Apr and four Bida Zayed 14 Apr. Other single birds were reported Al Ain, Al Wathba, Sweihan, Al Habab and Abu Dhabi.

AUTUMN: One Fujeirah national dairy farm 16 Sep, four there 29 Sep, seven Das Island 20 Sep and two 27-30 Sep, two Khor Fakkan 23 Sep, one Al Wathba camel track 26-28 Sep, three 3 Oct, and two Al Ain camel track 29 Sep. Late individuals were at Khalidiyah spit 7-9 Oct, Al Wathba camel track 13 Oct & 11 Nov (very late) and Bateen gardens 30 Oct.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Migrant and resident. Migrants pour through the country from mid September to late October. Four main sites as follows:

Al Ain camel track: Five 9 Jan, six 29 Sep, up to five 1-30 Dec.

Hamraniyah: At least five 4 Mar and up to seven 4-5 Dec.

Fujeirah national dairy farm: Up to nine 16 Sep-4 Dec, 20 on 8 Oct and 12 there 14 Oct. **Al**

Wathba camel track: Six 21 Sep, 17 on 13 Oct

Al Habab: Six 30 Sep-19 Oct.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Vagrant, or rare migrant and winter visitor. Eight previous winter records, all but one November to March.

One Al Wathba prison sewage 13 Jan (E.Hirschfeld), single _s Abu al Abyadh 31 Mar & 27 Dec (S.Smith), ninth to eleventh records.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Rather scarce migrant, more common in autumn. c.18 were recorded, compared to 11 birds in 1993.

SPRING: Individuals on Das Island 12 & 17 Apr, Al Ain camel track 14 Apr and Sweihan 27 Apr.

AUTUMN: Singles Das Island 3 Sep and 27/28 Sep, up to two Al Wathba camel track 21-30 Sep, one Abu Dhabi race track 26 Sep, up to two Merawah Island 26-27 Sep, one Al Ain camel track 29 Sep, three Mushref palace gardens 30 Sep, one there 1-4 Oct & 28 Oct, one Abu al Abyadh 1 Oct and a possible at Zabeel fish ponds 11 Oct. Up to two Das Island for several days in October.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* Summer visitor April to October. Breeding population larger than previously thought, estimate 14-25 pairs (Aspinall 1996), following June island survey, as follows:

Pairs found Delma Island, Ghagha and 10+ other islands and islets west of Abu Dhabi 12-16 Jun. Exact locations and numbers left vague to avoid further disturbance to breeding sites by collectors. Further details in Aspinall (1994). Further surveys required.

One Al Wathba camel track 28 Sep (TS, JL, MS), noteworthy.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Status unclear. Possibly rare local breeding resident at least Al Ain and Ras al Khaimah, though no nest sites known. Escapes could be involved.

One Jebel Hafit 27 Mar (JRB, MAH *et al*) and another, probably same bird 30 Mar (I.Davidson), one juvenile Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 16 Sep (CR) and one Al Ain area 9 Dec (SJA).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* Popular with local falconers. Uncommon on passage and winter September to April and genuine wild birds rarely recorded.

One Abu al Abyadh 22 Apr (G.Clarkson per SJA) and one Jebel Hafit 6 Sep (SJA).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Similarly popular with falconers as Saker, and certainly more common in the wild. Present September to April.

WINTER/SPRING: One adult Al Wathba sewage 1 Jan and one juvenile there 13 Jan. One Zabeel fish ponds 28 Jan, one Al Wathba camel track 26 Mar and one Khor Dubai 26 Mar, one Ain al Faydah and one (same bird?) near Al Ain sewage overflow 8 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Singles seen on Das Island 28/29 Sep (two on 16 Oct), Abu Dhabi October (undated), Fujeirah port beach 3 Dec, Ras al Khaimah hotel 5 Dec and Khor Dubai 15 Dec. Two were at Hamraniyah 5 Dec.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* Resident, thinly distributed across mountain areas where it breeds on high cliffs and ravines.

One pair Jebel Hafit seen throughout the year probably resident, a different pair near Jebel Hafit 28 Jan, a pair Daftah 23 May and one Fujeirah dairy farm 29 Apr & 4 Dec. One Zabeel fish ponds 6 Mar (NSR).

Chukar *Alectoris chukar* Wild birds (not including feral birds locally introduced) only found in the dolomite mountains approximately north of a line from Ras al Khaimah to Dibba. At least seven in Wadi Bih 18 Sep.

Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* Resident and fairly widespread in mountain areas, though actual sightings infrequent.

Up to 12 birds reported at Masafi wadi, Jebel Hafit, Kalba foothills, Khatt foothills, Jebel Hafit, Tayibah plain, Wadi Shih and Wadi Bih.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* Common throughout its range. Introductions continue, with natural spread proceeding apace.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* Regular migrant mid February to April and August to November, more often heard than seen. Some may breed.

SPRING: Single birds (5+) seen several locations mid February to April. Two calling Fujeirah dairy farm 17 Mar and at least 20 heard there 22 Mar. At least two Al Wathba fields 13 Feb-1 Apr and five Abu al Abyadh 31 Mar. One Dayinah Island 17 Jun.

AUTUMN: Single birds (c.8) several sites September to October. Two at Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep increased to five on 25 Sep, with at least three still there 11 Nov. Two Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 15 Sep, three Abu al Abyadh 25 Sep, two Abu Dhabi 26 Sep, up to three Das Island 2-18 Oct, with one remaining 27 Oct.

Water Rail *Pallus aquaticus* Rather scarce winter visitor October to mid March. Also a potential colonist.

One heard Ruwais 5 Jan, three heard 3 Feb.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* Regular spring and autumn migrant late March to mid May and mid September to November. 8 reported in 1994 (compared to 12 in 1993).

SPRING: Odd winter individual Al Wathba sewage 2 Jan. An early spring migrant Emirates golf course 26 Feb, with another there 20 Apr.

AUTUMN: One was at the Emirates golf course 17 Sep, 10 Oct and 16 October. Singles were at the Zabeel fish ponds 25 Oct and, surprisingly late, 19 Dec.

Little Crake *Porzana parva* Rare migrant March to April and September to October First recorded in the UAE in October 1990, though undoubtedly overlooked in favour of Baillon's Crake.

One Abu al Abyadh 14 Apr (S.Smith), three were at the Emirates golf course 17 Sep, with two remaining on visits 20 & 22 Sep (CR, SJA, CH), 9th-12th records. # One reported E.Lagoon mid October, no details

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* None reported in 1994.

Crake sp. One Merawah Island 23 Aug.

Corncrake *Crex crex* Irregular passage migrant mid March to mid May and mid September to October, with usually less than three records per year (1991 was a record year with six reported). SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 14 & 20-23 Apr (CR, SJA), only 21st & 22nd records.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Vagrant from Indian sub-continent. One Ruwais 26-28 Nov (A.Rollo), 2nd UAE record.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Locally resident and regular winter visitor late August to March. Nesting probable at Zabeel fish ponds, Ramtha tip, Dhayah mangroves, Ruwais and Al Ain. UAE resident population estimated at 50+ pairs. Six at Al Ain compost plant 29 Sep good numbers on passage.

Coot *Fulica atra* Winter visitor October to March with up to about 30 birds recorded each winter at eight regular sites.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 16 Ramtha, six Emirates golf course, two Zabeel fish ponds, four Nadd al Sheba until mid-March. One remained Zabeel fish ponds until 27 Mar. Also 2/3 wintering Ruwais and Ajban.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Zabeel 1 Nov and two Ramtha 4 Nov, first autumn arrivals.

Common Crane *Grus grus* Rare migrant, last reliably recorded in October 1984 (on Qarnein Island).

One remained at Al Ain camel track, until last seen 3 Feb (many observers). One Fujeirah dairy farm 8 Feb (E.Hirschfeld), could conceivably have been same bird. 5th (& 6th) record/s.

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* Regular winter visitor, though numbers declining through over-hunting. Virtually unseen by birdwatchers.

One Baynunah 3 Jan, only report received. Local hunting parties reported to have caught hundreds during winter seasons but provided no other information.

WADERS

Regular counts are not made at any wetland sites due to lack of observers. Therefore all maximum count figures tend to be at random times and may not reflect peak of passage and winter populations. See below and on page 44 for selected January and September 1994 shorebird counts. The full waterfowl census was published in *EBR18:118-22*.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Migrant, winter visitor and non-breeding summer visitor.

Peaks of 83 Merawah Island 13 Jan & 6 Mar, 88 at E.Lagoon 27 Aug, 120+ most days Khor Dubai July-March and 280 Khor al Beidah 4 Nov. Smaller numbers other sites.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Migrant and casual breeder, with all known nest sites at man-made sewage and waste-water ponds.

Main sites at Ramtha and Al Ghar lake (which had virtually dried out by late 1994).

Ramtha tip: 112 counted 15 Jan, 155 on 1 Jun (estimated 50% young birds), 146 on 9 Dec and 167 on 16 Dec.

Al Ghar Lake: 168 on 19 May and 68 still there 16 Dec.

Small breeding colonies (10 pairs or less) at about five other sites per year. Migrant groups of up to 12 birds at several other sites.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Erratic migrant. Wintering numbers in decline.

One Ramtha tip 9-23 Sep (J.Footitt, J.Hart), only report.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* Winter visitor October to February. Nests at Abu al Abyadh, where the colony is protected by the island's owner (Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan)

since 1993. Winters at Khor al Beidah and seen regularly at Dhabiyah and Merawah Island. Khor al Beidah: 310 on 20 Jan, 120 on 11 Feb and up to 200 throughout March, declining to 107 on 7 Apr. Three overwintered in June, increasing to seven 28 Jul, thereafter showing steady increase in autumn. 258 there 1 Nov-23 Dec.

Dhabiyah: 68 on 29 Apr, 57 on 9 Sep, 115 on 1 Oct, 140 on 7 Oct, up to two 1-31 Dec.

Merawah Island: 495 on 13 Jan, 230 on 6 Mar, 315 on 10 Sep, 464 on 16 Oct (per SJA), 240 on 22 Nov.

Abu al Abyadh: c.30 first returned late March, 20-40 on colony 18-20 Apr, 60 there 8 May, increasing to 350 on 17 May. c.800 including 166 juveniles 1-2 Aug (SJA).

Other records: 50 UAQ beach 4 Apr, two on Dubai Creek 28 Aug (M.R.Khan), 10 Al Jazeerah Khor 27 Aug and 11 there 9 Sep, one Rams 9 Sep, 25 Khor Ajman 9 Sep (M.R.Khan *et al*), two at Umm al Quwain beach 18 Sep, 10 on beach Abu Dhabi/Dubai border 14 Oct, two Al Jazeerah Khor 5 Dec.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* Regular migrant and winter visitor September to March. Seldom seen and usually hunted by local falconers.

SPRING: Up to three Das Island 8-18 Mar, with 21 there on 12 Mar and one 26 Mar and 7 Apr, were exceptional numbers. One Bateen gardens 10 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 2-4 Oct, up to three there 9-10 Oct and one 9 Dec. Four Abu Dhabi race track 7 Oct, two Merawah Island 15 Oct and one at Qatuf 25 Nov.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* Resident and migrant. Numbers well down from record year of 1993 when 150+ were recorded from late May to September. However further breeding evidence was obtained in 1994. Virtually all reports are listed here as so little is understood about the species' range and movements.

Post-breeding dispersal from hot desert areas to cooler areas, including pool edges, irrigated fields and cultivations noted as follows:

Emirates golf course: Four 29 Apr with one there 16 May, exceptionally early, possibly failed breeders. Nine were there on 2 Jul, declining to two on 21 Oct and one 25 Nov (when last seen). Al Wathba camel track: Two 19 May. Up to 14 from 19 Aug-3 Oct, 10 on 13 Oct and five there 3 Nov.

Al Ain camel track: 16 on 15 Jul, 18 on 29 Sep, four on 2 Oct, with five there 11-18 Nov and 16 on 1 Dec.

Al Jazeerah sewage: Three on 22 May, six there 28 Jul and 12 on 2 Sep. Khor al Beidah: Four 22 May and 12 there 10 Jun.

BREEDING: 3-4 Sweihan 8 & 14 Feb. One displaying 27 Mar. Pair with two flightless young Sweihan 25 Apr (believed two weeks old), flying by 7 May (JS, JH). Another pair with two young nearly 27 Apr. See *EBR18*: 105-106.

Other sites: Two Baynunah 11 Jan, one 30 km. east of Sweihan 30 Mar, three adults in dunes Khor al Beidah 2 Apr, 10 seen at salt flats near Al Rifaa 7 May, one Al Ain 24 May and up to nine there 7 Aug-29 Sep, four at Ruwayah 3 Jun, six Khor Dubai 19 Jun, pair near Umm al Quwain border June/July, 34 at Abu Dhabi airport 18 Aug, declining to nine 27 Aug, one W.lagoon 9 Sep, four Sweihan 1-6 Nov, one at Hamranyah 4 Nov, 14 at Halaylah Island 4 Nov and two at Remah 18 Nov. Few other records October.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Common breeding visitor and migrant February to September.

SPRING: One Emirates golf course 14 Jan, increasing to c.20 on 24 Jan, first migrant arrivals. Nest with four eggs Dubai sewage works 29 Mar. (2) chicks first reported Dubai Creekside Park 6 Apr (M.R.Khan)

AUTUMN: Large numbers reported after nesting period from June: viz. 56 at Emirates golf course 23 Jul. Four on Das Island 20 Aug was a rarity for the island. One at Zabeel fish ponds 6 Oct, last migrant seen. One at UAQ sewage dump 23 Dec unusual winter record.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Common migrant.

694 counted at Khor Dubai 14 Jan during midwinter waterfowl census. Otherwise up to 80 at most coastal mudflats January to April and mid-July to December.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Rather scarce, though regular migrant, usually late spring (occasionally in summer) and from early autumn.

SPRING: One Das Island 7 Apr, one Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr, three Al Wathba camel track 19 May, two at Emirates golf course 2 Jun.

AUTUMN: Two at Emirates golf course 6 Aug and 25 Sep. One AD. racetrack area 16-19 Sep and two there 30 Sep. One juvenile Al Wathba camel track 1-9 Sep, increasing to five birds 3 Oct, with three to 13 Oct & one 11 Nov. Two Madam 14 Sep, one Fujeirah national dairy farm 15-29 Sep (two on 16 Sep), c.8 Emirates golf course 20 Sep, one Das Island 9 Oct and one Emirates golf course 13 Oct.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* Vagrant (one previous record October 1993). One was at Kalba beach from 29 Dec 1993 to 30 Jan 1994 (C.Richardson, NSR, S.Aspinall, S.L.James *et al*), 2nd record. One Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr (J.M.Hollingworth), description awaited.

Little Pratincole *Glareola lactea* Rare and irregular winter visitor November to early March. One was at Nadd al Sheba golf course 25-30 Jan (C.Richardson *et al*), 6th record.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* Vagrant, possibly overlooked, from (expanding) African breeding range. One Merawah Island 10 Sep (M.Skakuj *et al*), the UAE's first record.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Very common breeding resident and winter visitor. Nests in virtually all creeks, mudflat edges and some saturated salt flats. Top counts: 1500 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 645 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, 690 at Ramtha (including hundreds of fledglings) 14 Jul, 608 Dhabyiah 9 Sep, 545 Merawah Island 20 Sep. '100's' at 20+ other coastal sites including Al Ghar Lake, throughout the year.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Detailed wader counts published in *EBR18:117-123*. Maximum counts included 1145 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 350 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 185 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, c.1500 Bu Tina islands 18 Jan, c.300 at Khor al Beidah 28 Jun & 4 Nov, c.500 Dhabyiah 26 Aug, 71 E.Lagoon 9 Sep, 300 Dhabyiah 9 Sep, 1933 Merawah Island 10 Sep, 600 at Khor Dubai 2 Sep and 1100 there on 9 Dec.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Considered rather uncommon compared with *C.mongolus*. Following figures may be an underestimate (and no early autumn info on returning juveniles):

Max.counts: 130 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 120 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, c.20 at Khor Kalba 31 Jan and 3 Dec. Up to 25 at Khor al Beidah 11 Feb-5 Mar, with 51 there 7 Apr, peaking at 100+ on 1 Nov, c.30 at Khor Dubai 25 Feb, 50+ at Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar, 10 around Bahrani Island 4 Aug and 24 Dhabyiah 9 Sep.

Sand Plover sp. 1290 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 1310 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, 430 Merawah Island 6 Mar, 970 Dhabyiah 9 Sep, 1950 Merawah Island 20 Sep.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Scarce migrant, average only one or two birds per year, usually August to October.

Individuals were at the Emirates golf course 6 Aug (CR), Das Island 18 Aug & 26 Aug (LR, MW) and Merawah Island 26 Sep (ADSP). One at Al Wathba camel track 3-11 Nov (SLJ *et al*) was unusually late.

Other unidentified **Charadrius** sp. 1700 Dhabyiah 14 Jan (not including sand plovers), 660 Dhabyiah 9 Sep (not including sand plovers), 2095 Khor Dubai 9 Sep, 2000 Merawah Island 16 Oct and 1800 Dhabyiah 6 Nov.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Regular winter visitor late August to May, though rather localised and mostly in Dubai area.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 103 wintering at pools beside the Emirates golf course, declining to one bird 24 Apr when last seen. Up to 51 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan-25 Feb and 29 Mar. 46 Abu Dhabi area 24 Jan and up to 19 Abu Dhabi airport 11 Feb-1 Mar. c.10 Khor al Beidah 26 Mar. Up to five at other sites including shallows around Bahrani Island, Abu Dhabi on 13 Jan and at Ramtha tip 15 Jan. One Abu al Abyadh 14 May. 13 were at Khor Kalba 10-13 May, six remaining 18 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One was at the Emirates golf course 2 Jul-6 Aug and may have overwintered. One on Das Island 25-29 Aug was first autumn record. One Abu Dhabi airport 27 Aug. Main arrival of migrants was early September, when 31 were found at Khor Dubai on 2 Sep, with 38 there 9 Dec and 57 at the Emirates golf course 4 Sep. Numbers reached at 113 at the Emirates golf course on 21 Oct, remaining around that figure until late November. Less at other sites including Merawah, Ramtha tip, Al Wathba camel track, E.Lagoon, Abu al Abyadh and Ruwais.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* Vagrant. One was first seen in October 1993 and remained at Al Wathba sewage pools until 10 Jan 1994 (E.Hirschfeld). Another was identified at the Emirates golf course pools 1-6 Mar (D.A.Scott, S.Aspinall *et al*) and one was at Ramtha tip 4 Nov (SLJ), 1st, 2nd & 3rd records in recent times. Several old unsubstantiated claims exist.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Common migrant and winter visitor in khors and occasionally on beaches. Rather rare elsewhere.

WINTER/SPRING: 1845 were counted in the country on 14 Jan, including 730 at Khor Dubai and 693 at Merawah Island (See pages 38 & 44 and *EBR18:120-21* for census results). 200+ were at Khor al Beidah 7 Apr. Scarce May to July.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 420 were at Khor Dubai 9 Sep & 9 Dec and 150 were at Khor al Beidah 1 Nov.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Hoplopterus indicus* Resident around most man-made wetlands and spreading in range and numbers. Noteworthy reports follow.

Up to 38 were at Hamraniyah 21 Jan-11 Feb, 26 at the Emirates golf course 8 Sep, 26 were at the Fujeirah dairy farm 4 Dec and 28 at Hamraniyah 4 Dec. Two Al Wathba camel track September, first record there.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* Rare winter visitor November to March.

One first-winter bird Fujeirah dairy farm 11 Nov (S.J.Aspinall), 7th record.

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* Passage migrant and winter visitor November to March, from South-west Asia. Rather restricted numbers occur, probably due to lack of suitable shallow (sewage) pools with scant vegetation.

WINTER/SPRING: One Al Ain sewage works 17 Jan, with three in overflow quarry nearby 25 Feb. Nine had overwintered at Ramtha tip, with numbers dropping to four on 5 Mar, before they disappeared. One Khor Kalba gravel lake 31 Mar. Up to two were at the Emirates golf course 4-11 Apr, possibly nest prospecting.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Al Ain sewage 29 Sep, 5-6 there 1 Nov-9 Dec. One immature was at Al Habab 30 Sep-19 Oct. Two Ain al Faydah 2 Oct and two were at the Emirates golf course 10-13 Oct, with one remaining until 8 Nov. Five were at Ramtha 27 Oct, increasing to 10 on 21 Nov and remaining to the end of the year. One near Khor al Beidah 4 Nov and one E.Lagoon 12 Nov.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* Scarce and irregular in winter.

One Al Ain sewage 17 Jan. One at Hamraniyah 21 Jan (probably overwintered and part of original flock of 10). One Das Island 7 Dec and one Ramtha tip 9 Dec.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* Formerly considered a vagrant, but clearly a localised migrant and winter visitor. Numbers (flocks were discovered only in 1990) turned up again this year

from August to April at Merawah Island and Khor al Beidah.

WINTER/SPRING: Khor al Beidah: One 2 Jan, four there 11 Feb, 11 on 17 Feb, 20 on 5 Mar, five 2 Apr.

Merawah Island: 90 on 13 Jan, 10 on 4 Mar, 64 on 5 Mar, 86 from 5-8 Mar, 113 on 1 Apr.

Abu al Abyadh: One 8 May (SJA).

AUTUMN/WINTER: Khor al Beidah: Up to four 6-23 Dec.

Merawah Island: 24 from 22-24 Aug, 342 on 17 Sep, 607 on 18 Sep, 404 on 19 Sep, 340 on 15 Oct, 0 on 22 Nov.

Khor Kalba: One 15 Sep (ADSP).

Knot *Calidris canutus* Rare vagrant. UAE not on flyway of this long-distance migrant, though occurrence here not unexpected. Easily overlooked, probably travelling with Great Knot. This record follows a report of four seen at the same place in November 1993. One at Merawah Island 23 Aug (J.Lontkowski *et al*), 3rd accepted record.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Common passage migrant and winter visitor, almost exclusively confined to sandy coasts, although during peak passage it may occur in lagoons and on tidal mudflats.

Max.numbers reported include 112 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 55 on beaches around islands west of Abu Dhabi 13 Jan, 26 Kalba 14 Jan, 21 Umm al Quwain beach 7 Feb, 36 Fujeirah beach 1 Mar, 50+ Rams beach 4 Mar, 44 Dhabyiah 6 Mar, 37 Kalba beach 10 May, 172 Dhabyiah 9 Sep.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Undoubtedly rare migrant. Some reports under review. One reported at Dhabyiah 9 Sep (E.Hirschfeld *et al*), remains on record. One Khor Dubai 26 Sep (I.Lycett), first accepted record in recent years. All reports under review.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Common autumn passage migrant and winter visitor. Winter and autumn waterfowl counts represent normal numbers occurring.

Highest numbers reported include 537 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan and 230 there 2 Sep, 100+ E.Lagoon 2-14 Jan and 270 there 11 Nov, 431 Ramtha tip 4 Nov, c.100 Al Ain sewage and 164 Al Ghar lake 16 Dec. Fewer at other sites.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Rather localised migrant, preferring fresh water habitats. Noteworthy records follow:

WINTER/SPRING: 32 Al Ain sewage overflow 17 Jan, 12 there 27 Mar and two 28 Apr, 8-10 at Ramtha tip 16 Feb-5 Mar and 12 at Fujeirah port sewage pools 3 Mar. Six E.Lagoon 14 Jan and three there 22 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to 10 at Ramtha 2 Sep to end of the year (22 there 18 Sep). At least 30 at Al Ain compost plant from 1 Nov to year end. Smaller numbers at Al Wathba prison pools, Khor Kalba, Al Ain compost plant, Fujeirah National Dairy Farm, Al Ain camel track and Emirates golf course.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Rare autumn migrant September to early November, once in December.

One was at Ramtha 16 Sep (E.Hirschfeld) and six were at Al Ain camel track 28 Sep (S.J.Aspinall), 8th-9th records.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Very common passage migrant (abundant in early autumn some years). Less common in winter.

Sample counts: 270 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan, c.200 Khor al Beidah 1-2 Apr, 192 E.Lagoon 22 Apr, 571 Khor Dubai 25 Jul (showing influx of migrants from late summer) and 780 Khor Dubai 9 Dec. See pages 38 & 44 and *EBR18:122-23* for comprehensive wader counts in January & September 1994.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Max. counts reported: 2095 Merawah Island 13 Jan, c.3200 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 777 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, 300+ Khor Dubai 4 Mar, 1000 there 5 Apr and 700 Khor al Beidah 7 Apr. Virtually absent in summer (no June/July records).

AUTUMN: Total 2492 birds in UAE 9-11 Sep (September census 1994), including 1125 at Abu al Abyadh and 977 at Merawah Island. 1200 Khor Dubai 9 Dec. 2100 Merawah Island 20-26 Sep. Main influx from October, not reflected in counts.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Very localised passage migrant and winter visitor, confined almost entirely to Khor Dubai.

Highest counts at Khor Dubai, 250 on 19 Aug and 420 on 9 Dec. (see chart below for all maximum counts 1988-94).

Other noteworthy records: 15 Dhabyiah 14 Jan. Very common and found several sites on passage September, including Ramtha, Al Jazeerah Khor, Khor Ajman. 20 Khor al Beidah 25 Nov. One Khor Dubai 1 Sep with colour rings indicating it was ringed on Black Sea in May 1993 (ADSP).

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Regular migrant and winter visitor August to April, at enriched wetlands such as the Emirates golf course, Al Ain Sewage works, Ramtha tip and Al Ghar lake.

WINTER/SPRING: Regularly up to 20 at each site January-May. 32 at Al Ain compost plant 28 Feb, c.30 at Al Ghar Lake 25 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Becoming very common and widespread in September when groups of c.40 were the norm. 63 Ramtha tip 18 Sep and up to 40 Al Jazeerah sewage pools, Ramtha tip, Fujairah National Dairy Farm, Al Wathba camel track, Al Ain compost plant and Emirates golf course October-early December.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* Elusive migrant and winter visitor October to March. 1994 was a good year for this species.

WINTER/SPRING: Four Al Wathba prison pools 10 Jan, otherwise three most days 1-3 Jan and one 11 Feb. One E.Lagoon 14 Jan, up to three wintered at Ramtha tip until 4 Feb, with one or two seen most visits 1 Mar-7 Apr. 4-5 Emirates golf course up to 1 Mar, wintering since December 1993, and one there 29 Mar-5 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Noteworthy early record of three at the Emirates golf course 6 Sep. Singles were at the Fujairah dairy farm 14 Oct, the Emirates golf course 25 Oct and Ramtha tip 21 Nov-16 Dec. Two were at the Emirates golf course on 13 Nov.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Common passage migrant and winter visitor. The Emirates golf course consistently hosts the greatest numbers. (See graph below) Ones and twos at most suitable freshwater sites with sufficient cover, with following exceptions:

WINTER/SPRING: 13 Al Wathba prison pools 10 Jan, 67 Western Lagoon 14 Jan, up to seven at Ramtha tip until 16 Feb and three there 31 Mar. Three at Zabeel fish ponds 13 Apr. Latest spring sighting was one at the Emirates golf course 8 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: First autumn record, one Das Island 26 Jul, exceptionally early. Up to eight at Emirates golf course from 6 Sep, peaking at 25 from mid October to year end. Up to three Zabeel fish ponds from 7 Sep and five there 23 Oct. 20 Al Ain sewage overflow from 29 Sep to end of year. Three Fujairah dairy farm 14 Oct and eight 4 Dec. 14 Ramtha tip from 27 Oct to the end of the year. Five or less seen at several other sites.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* A rarity whose sightings are always carefully scrutinised. May occur only as a passage migrant August to November and late February to May..

SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 20 Feb and another was at the Zabeel fish ponds 22 Apr.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* Rare and localised migrant and winter visitor September to April, though oddly a regular winter visitor at the Emirates golf course.

WINTER/SPRING: 13 seen Emirates golf course 14 Jan and nine there 26 Feb. Otherwise up to seven wintered at the Emirates golf course until 24 Apr when one still remained. Single straggler found there on 7 Jun. One Dhayah 4 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at the Zabeel fish ponds 7 Sep was first autumn record. Two at the Emirates golf course 8 Sep, increasing to three 12 Sep, four 27 Sep and five from 12 Dec to year end. Singles Khor Fakkan roundabout 4 Sep, Jebel Ali 16-17 Sep, Al Wathba prison pools 18 Sep & 3 Nov and Merawah Island 20 Sep. One wintered Fujeirah dairy farm from 14 Oct.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* Uncommon migrant and winter visitor, rather localised, most recorded at Khor Dubai.

WINTER/SPRING: c.50 Khor Dubai 14 Jan.

SUMMER: Three Ramtha tip 1 Jun, two Khor Dubai 27 Jul.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 21 Khor Dubai 9 Sep, 66 there 28 Sep and 18 there 7 Dec, were largest numbers seen. 10 Ramtha tip 9 Dec, though normally up to six September-December. Ones and twos other sites including Fujeirah port beach, Shwaib dam, Al Jazeerah sewage and Emirates golf course.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Common, locally abundant migrant and winter visitor. Largest congregations Khor Dubai, Merawah Island and Khor al Beidah. Small numbers May to mid-July. Maximum counts:

Khor Dubai: c.1500 on 14 Jan, 410 on 9 Sep & 9 Dec.

Merawah Island: 1704 on 13 Jan, 961 on 6 Mar, 1619 on 10 Sep.

Khor al Beidah: 554 on 7 Apr, 350 on 1 Nov.

Other sites: 624 E.Lagoon 2 Jan, 107 around Abu Dhabi 13 Jan.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Common autumn migrant, peak August & September, when it occurs in various wetland habitat, though mainly grassy areas. Rather local otherwise, favouring mudflats around Abu Dhabi, Khor al Beidah, Khor Kalba and Al Jazeerah Khor in particular.

WINTER/SPRING: Less than 10 each reported at favoured sites, plus following: 16 E.Lagoon 2-14 Jan, 23 Merawah Island 13 Jan and 37 Khor al Beidah 20 Jan.

SUMMER: 11 at Khor al Beidah 10 Jun was unusual in mid-summer.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Migration under way by late July. c.100 Kalba area 14 Sep, exceptional numbers. c.40 observed in several locations around Abu Dhabi island from 4 Aug-1 Oct. 48 were encountered at Bateen airport park, Abu Dhabi 1 Oct. 42 were at Khor al Beidah 1 Nov and 22 there 6 Dec. Smaller numbers elsewhere.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* Fairly common migrant and winter visitor to mudflats and may be found feeding on grassland in early autumn. Long-billed race *orientalis* predominates.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 50 each at many sites, including Khor Dubai, Khor al Beidah, Sir Bani Yas Island and Al Jazeerah Khor.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Noticeable on passage from mid-July. 33 at Khor Dubai 25 Jul and 42 at Khor al Beidah 28 Jul. 50+ regular at favoured sites September-December.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* Rather uncommon migrant mid September to early May.

One was at Ramtha tip 22 Mar and up to five were there 19-30 Apr. Four Ramtha 21 Nov (A.Topp). Reports of ± 10 reported several locations, including Khor Dubai and Merawah Island 2-11 Sep (ADSP), awaits confirmation.

Redshank *Tringa totanus* One of the commonest migrant shorebirds. Many of long-legged, greyer eastern race noted (sometimes mistaken for *E.erythropus*).

WINTER COUNT MAX: 1175 at Khor Dubai 14 Jan.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 340 were already present at Khor Dubai 25 Jul, with 710 there 9 Sep. Only 160 there on 9 Dec. 397 Merawah Island 10 Sep. Several other sites with 200+.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Uncommon migrant, occasionally in winter. 22 recorded in 1994 (compared to 37 in 1993, which was above average).

WINTER/SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 6-14 Jan, two at Khor al Beidah 17 Feb, one at Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar and one at Ramtha tip 31 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Four Ramtha tip 2 Sep, up to three remaining until the end of the year. One Nadd al Sheba 6 Sep, five Al Jazeera Khor 9 Sep, two Emirates golf course 6-17 Sep and one there 13 Nov-18 Dec. Two Khor al Beidah 5 Oct, two Khor Dubai 28 Nov and three Al Ghar lake 16 Dec. Single birds also reported at Umm al Quwain sewage dump, Khor Kalba and Al Ain industrial area (all probably wintering).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Fairly common migrant and winter visitor August to April, with one or two likely in most suitable wetlands. 80% increase over number recorded in 1993. Max. numbers follow:

63 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 37 E.Lagoon 14 Jan, 36 Dhabyiah 14 Jan, 15 at Ramtha tip 15 Jan, 45 Khor al Beidah 20 Jan, 111 Merawah Island 6 Mar, 18 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr, up to 13 at Khor Dubai 2 Sep-28 Nov, 27 Merawah Island 10 Sep, 20 there 6 Oct, 95 Dhabyiah 9 Sep and 20 there 30-31 Dec. Up to 10 at other suitable sites.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Fairly common migrant mid July to April (scarce in winter). Frequent in mountain wadis. Numbers constant most years and following records are representative.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to four most visits to Ramtha tip until mid March, with eight there 31 Mar and two there 7 Apr when last recorded.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Two Ramtha tip 14 Jul, first autumn record. 15 Emirates golf course 6 Aug, exceptional flock, eight Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 15-16 Sep and six Ain al Faydah 2 Oct. Smaller numbers other sites.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Fairly common passage migrant August to May, some overwinter.

WINTER/SPRING: Seven Ramtha 15 Jan, nine Al Ain sewage 17 Jan, 10 still there 28 Apr. Smaller numbers other sites. Last seen at the Emirates golf course 12 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: First record, one Emirates golf course 8 Jul, with seven there 6 Sep. Up to 15 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 14-18 Sep and 10 Al Ain sewage works 1 Nov, largest autumn flocks.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Regular migrant, though rather localised.

WINTER/SPRING: A very healthy total of 118 were at Khor Dubai during the annual mid-winter count 14 Jan, with 70+ there 25 Feb. 20 Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar, c.20 Khor al Beidah 18 Mar, otherwise less than 20 at other sites including UAQ beach, E.Lagoon and Al Jazeera Khor.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 27 Jebel Dhanna-Harmiyah 9 Sep, 60 Merawah Island 16 Oct, 39 Khor al Beidah 4 Nov and 56 there 6 Dec, largest flocks recorded in the second half of the year.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Common and widespread migrant and winter visitor late July to mid May, tends to be solitary.

SPRING: A noteworthy 37 birds at E.Lagoon 14 Jan. Last record, one Abu al Abyadh 14 May.

AUTUMN: First return, one at the Emirates golf course 23 Jul, where up to 15 were present most visits from August. Up to seven at many freshwater ponds and damp areas. 14 at E.Lagoon 9 Sep.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Migrant and winter visitor. Common at sewage ponds and settlement beds August and September, during peak passage.

WINTER/VISITOR: 57 Dhabyiah 13 Jan, 43 Khor Dubai 14 Jan, 626 UAQ beach 7 Feb, 56 Khor al Beidah 7 Apr and 92 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 98 Khor Dubai 9 Sep, 50 Dhabyiah 9 Sep, 71 Merawah Island 10-20 Sep and c.50 Khor Kalba 15 Sep.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Regular migrant March to April and July to November, found at inland freshwater pools on passage, on its way to and from favoured wintering grounds in the Arabian Sea, (mostly off Oman coast).

Rather scarce this spring, but exceptional numbers occurred in autumn.

SPRING: One Al Ain compost plant 14 Mar, eight Al Ghar lake 14-15 May, one Al Jazeera Khor 22 May.

AUTUMN: Three Emirates golf course 6 Aug increased to an extraordinary peak of 40 on 8 Sep, declining to 16 on 22 Sep and two 3 Oct when last seen. One Safa Park 19/26 Aug increasing to 12 by 14 Sep, one Merawah Island 5-26 Sep, seven Dubai Creek golf course 5 Sep, one Khor Dubai 9 Sep, 20 Ramtha tip 9 Sep and up to four there until 26 Sep, one Khor Kalba 15 Sep and four Shwaib pool 30 Sep (SJA). Ones and twos at several other sites.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* Fairly common migrant and winter visitor, reported off all coasts at all times of the year.

Four off Kalba 30 Jan, two at Dibba 3 Mar, 10 off Kalba 31 Mar, three Dibba bay 31 Mar, up to five per day off Abu al Abyadh 7-8 Apr, three off Al Aqqah (Sandy Beach Motel) 1 Jul, two Kalba 14 Sep, and at least three Ras Dibba 22-29 Sep. Rare off Das Island where one seen 29 Nov. Ones and twos, particularly off East Coast and Abu Dhabi, regular January to April and September to November.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* Passage migrant mid March to mid April and mid August to September. A little less common than 'Pom' Skua, although more regular in autumn.

Up to four daily off Abu al Abyadh 7-8 Apr, up to eight regularly off Ras Dibba 22-29 Sep, up to 15 Dibba 8-9 Oct, one at Kalba 3 Dec and 10+ at Ras Dibba 4 Dec. One feeding on road kill (small mammal) on UAQ corniche 6 Dec (NSR). Smaller numbers at other times.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Rare visitor to the East Coast, possibly under-recorded.

One sub-adult and two juveniles off Ras Dibba 22 Sep (S.L.James, J.Buxton), 2nd record.

Skua sp. 20+ off Al Aqqah 30 Jun-1 Jul, one Ras Dibba 15 Sep.

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* Migrant and resident (scarce off mainland coasts November to January). Only locally breeding gull, nests known on only two offshore islands in Gulf.

Passage numbers far exceed local population.

WINTER: 1600 around Qarnein Island 19 Jan (M.Verhage). 216 Sir Abu Nu'air 2 Feb. One at Garhoud bridge 25 Feb had probably overwintered there. 40+ most days off Das Island most of the year, 20-40 in autumn. Otherwise rather scarce January/February, when max. five seen most days East Coast.

SPRING/SUMMER: Becoming common from March, particularly off Kalba, Fujairah and Dibba. Large numbers of immatures on East Coast beaches from May, with up to 1500 counted at Kalba 10-13 May and c.500 there most days 9 May-1 Jul (at least). c.15 pairs at Jazeeraat Dayyinah, plus 2-week-old chick, new breeding site; less than 100 adults, plus 100's of fledged young Qarnein Island 17/18 Jun (SJA, CR). See also page XX.

AUTUMN: 37 lounging on beaches in Dubai creek 5 Sep, noteworthy. One Garhoud bridge from 20 Nov. Common East Coast, becoming scarce from November.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* Common winter visitor December to March, scarce at other times.

WINTER/SPRING: Highest numbers seen - 184 on beaches of inshore islands west of Abu Dhabi 13 Jan, 61 Kalba and 123 Fujairah-Dibba 14 Jan, 46 Abu Dhabi area 24 Jan and 115 seen 10 km. north of Fujairah 7 Feb, 150+ Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar and c.30 at Khor Kalba 16 Mar. Up to 10 most days January, February Das Island, with 17 there 7 Feb and 39 on 18 Feb. One at Ramtha 16 Apr, last spring record.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One was at Ramtha tip 1 Nov. Otherwise up to five at several coastal locations from early December.

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucoptalmus* Vagrant.

One at Kalba on 9 May (S.J.Aspinall, C.Gladwin) was the country's first record. See Plate 10, EBR18 (1994).

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* Very common winter visitor November to April.

Uncommon at other times.

LARGEST CONGREGATION: 3900 at Khor Dubai 19 Jan and 6900 there 28 Jan. 2390 Western Lagoon 14 Jan, 3600 Ras Dibba 27 Jan, 2000+ at Ramtha tip 16 Feb and c.3000 at Fujeirah roost 16 Mar. 500 daily around Das Island January. 1660 Khor Dubai 9 Dec.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus geneii* Common migrant, present all months.

LARGEST CONGREGATION: 1802 were counted west of Abu Dhabi island 13 Jan, 665 Jumaylah 2 Oct, c.350 at Khor Dubai 22 Oct and 4000 Merawah Island, exceptional numbers. Otherwise up to 200 at these and other favoured sites, ie Al Jazeerah Khor, Khor Kalba and UAQ beach.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* Common passage migrant, less common in winter.

Includes darker-backed varieties *heuglini* and *taimyrensis* (which are still giving field observers a headache). Nominative *L.f.fuscus* may also occur and all records listed here. WINTER/SPRING: Up to four on Das Island 1-3 Feb. Ones and twos until March/April. Four UAQ 21 Mar. #c.500 Kalba 27 Mar. 10 at Khor Kalba 10 May and 35 at Ramtha 1 Jun. SUMMER: One was at Zabeel fish ponds 4 Jul. AUTUMN: #Up to three dark-backed *L.f.fuscus* reported together at several locations September to early November.

Note: Some observers report all medium to dark grey-backed gulls (ie *heuglini*, *taimyrensis*) as Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Other observers only report the dark grey to black backed forms (ie *fuscus* if it occurs) as true Lesser Black-backed Gulls, the balance being reported as Yellow-legged Gulls. Conversely there have been some reports of 'Herring Gull', which are lumped below under Yellow-legged Gull (*cachinnans*). Hopefully there will be consensus on this thorny issue soon. See article in this issue pp. 94-103, Large White-headed Gulls in the United Arab

Emirates by Martin Garner.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* Asian and Siberian sub-species, probably *mongolicus* and/or *cachinnans* common September to April. Members of complex difficult to identify or separate with certainty (and immatures are virtually impossible).

Typical counts: Up to 2000 daily around Das Island January. 715 off Abu Dhabi 13 Jan, 400 Khor Kalba 29 Jan. 1100 Khor Dubai 29 Sep and 330 Al Jazeerah Khor 7 Oct.

Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus* Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

ALL RECORDS: Two at Khor Kalba 16 Mar, seven Fujeirah 23 Mar, c.4 Khor Kalba 23 Mar and three possibly this species Fujeirah port beach 3 Dec.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Common late July to early April, mostly immatures occurring.

WINTER/SPRING: 72 Khor al Beidah 20 Jan, 20+ Khor Dubai 25 Feb, 20 Al Jazeerah Khor 18 Mar-1 Apr and 30 Khor al Beidah 18 Mar, c.200 moving north off Khor Kalba 30 Mar, others Dibba Bay and off Kalba beach 30-31 Mar (MAH *et al*), 30 Khor Dubai 5 Apr. One or two only, present in summer.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 40 Khor al Beidah 1 Nov-23 Dec and up to 67 Al Jazeerah Khor 7 Oct-4 Nov, best counts.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Occurs throughout the year as a migrant. Probably also breeds west of Abu Dhabi, but no nests found. Favours sheltered lagoons and rarely seen feeding with other terns on the coast.

Max.numbers: Khor Dubai: 24 on 25 Feb, 30 on 28 Sep and 40+ throughout November.
Merawah Island: 25 on 13 Jan, 38 on 25 Sep, 20 on 15 Oct & 22 Nov. 15 at Dhabiyah 14 Jan.
 Also found in smaller numbers around Abu Dhabi islands, E.Lagoon, Al Jazeerah Khor, UAQ beach and Khor al Beidah.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii* Resident and breeding summer visitor, seldom common on coasts, often pelagic outside the breeding season. Apart from at island nesting colonies it is regular at beach roosts, Umm al Quwain, Kalba and Dibba.

WINTER/SPRING: 40+ Das Island January, February, fewer from March. 14 East Coast-Dibba 26/27 Jan. 17 UAQ beach 5 Apr, otherwise up to eight found together at favoured feeding areas inshore and beach roosts March to May. 1,256 nests Qarnein Island, some with newly hatched young 17/18 Jun (SJA, CR).

AUTUMN: c.30 found around oil installation 15 km. off Hamriyah 5 Aug, seven Al Jazeerah Khor 7 Oct. Up to five regularly off Ras Dibba September to December, with 18 there 31 Dec. c.50 Das Island September to early December. Max. six Kalba beach 3 Dec.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* Fairly common summer breeding visitor, many present throughout the year at favoured beach roosts. Scarce September to January. Highest numbers listed.

WINTER/SPRING: 30 Merawah Island 13 Jan, 205 around inshore islands west of Abu Dhabi 13 Jan, 20 at Kalba beach 21 Jan, 50+ there 2 Mar and c.100 there 28 Mar. 120 Bu Tinah shoals 18 Jan, c.30 on UAQ beach 21 Mar, 75 Khor Kalba 30 Mar, 250 in Dibba bay 3 Apr and c.60 on UAQ beach 5 Apr. c.200 at sea off Abu al Abyadh 7-8 Apr, and up to 20 on UAQ beach throughout the summer.

SUMMER: Large breeding colony discovered on Jazeerat Muhaiyimat 15 Jun, 3,500-4,300 nests all with 1/2 eggs. huge colony on Qarnein Island 17/18 Jun, 19-23,000 pairs on 1-2 eggs (SJA, CR). See also pages 104-111.

AUTUMN/WINTER: A first for the site, two were at Zabeel fish ponds 16 Jul, including a juvenile (first sign of dispersal from Gulf breeding colonies). 20 on Das Island (no nest sites on island) from 18 Aug, c.100 there from 27 Aug-1 Sep and 50 on 30 Sep, 40 Khor Kalba 9 Oct and 80 East Coast sites 11 Nov, becoming scarce in December.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* Commonest non-breeding migrant tern, present throughout the year.

SPRING COUNTS: c.250 Kalba beach 21 Jan, 200+ Ras Dibba 27 Jan, c.30 Das Island January. Up to 250 UAQ breakwater beach 5 Feb-5 Apr. 380 Kalba 2-16 Mar, 1064 Al Jazeerah Khor 4 Mar.

SUMMER: Up to 30 birds, mostly immatures over-summered at favoured locations including Khor Dubai, UAQ beach.

AUTUMN/WINTER: No large numbers noted. 250 East Coast 11 Nov, c.70 at UAQ beach 6 Dec.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Formerly believed scarce, but appears to be common passage migrant March to May and August to October. Care needed to separate this species from *S.repressa* in non-breeding plumages.

SPRING: Kalba: Two 2 Mar, 20 on 16 Mar, c.140 on 23-27 Mar with 320 there 28 Mar, up to 35 from 10-13 May. 46 (mixed with *S.repressa* see below) off Khalidiyah spit 22 May, 3+ at Halaylah Island 22 May and one at Ramtha 1 Jun. 10 Khor Kalba 1 Jul and two at Khor Dubai 25 Jul.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Commonly reported September to November, mostly East Coast. 242 on East Coast 7 Sep and c.200 there 26 Nov. Up to 20 Khor Kalba 14 Sep & 9 Oct. Smaller numbers elsewhere. Three were on Fujeirah port beach 3 Dec.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa* Common summer breeding visitor. Rare November to February.

SPRING: c.30 at Kalba 2 Mar was first sure spring record. Hundreds reported close to shore March to May. c.1000 at Kalba 15 Mar and 530 off Khalidiyah spit 22 May. c.80 Kalba 27-28

Mar. 60 on UAQ beach, including one pair copulating 10 Jun.

SUMMER: Along with *S.anaethetus*, the most widespread breeding tern on Abu Dhabi offshore islands during breeding survey 9-19 Jun. c.150 pairs (plus 5 flying young) on small islet off Ghagha Is. 14 Jun; c.150 birds (plus many young) Umm al Ghumeghin 14 Jun; c.2,100 pairs, many eggs and mobile young Jazeerat Muhaiymat (south) 15 Jun; 6,530 pairs, all with newly hatched young (plus many currently hatching) Jazeerat Dayyinah 16 Jun and 675 pairs Qarnein Island 17/18 Jun. Smaller colonies on Umm 'Cut', Jaz't Khardal and satellite islands of Muhaiymat 13-15 Jun (SJA, CR). See also pages 104-111 in this report.

AUTUMN: Up to 100 seen at several sites August to September. c.1500 off Das Island during seabird survey 27 Aug-1 Sep. 200+ Merawah Island 14-15 Sep, 500 Ras Dibba 22 Sep, 700 Khor Kalba 23 Sep and c.1,000 off Dibba 8 Oct.

WINTER: 70 East Coast 11 Nov and c.100 Merawah Island 22 Nov. 40+ were at Fujairah and 10+ were at Khor Kalba 3 Dec. One was on UAQ beach 6 Dec.

Sterna hirundo/repressa sp. c.1,000 Dibba 8 Oct and c.300 Kalba 9 Oct.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Very common offshore late March to October, but virtually never joins beach roosts and is therefore under-recorded.

SPRING: 911 off Abu al Abyadh 8 Apr and c.20 off Halaylah Island 22 May. 400+ visible from Al Aqqah and Ras Dibba 31 Jun-1 Jul.

SUMMER: Found to be a widespread breeding species offshore mid June. c.1,400 pairs Jazeerat Na'itah 13 Jun; 2,300 pairs on three small coral Jaz't Muhaiymat Islands 15 Jun; up to 10,700 pairs with eggs Jaz't Dayyinah 16 Jun; 12,200+ pairs, most on eggs, Qarnein Island 17/18 Jun. Less than 50 pairs each Umm Cut, Jaz't Muhammaliyah, North Furayjidat, Jaz't Khardal, Ghagha and Umm al Ghumeghin 12-16 Jun (SJA, CR). See also pages 104-111.

AUTUMN: 30 Merawah Island 23 Aug. c.100 off East Coast 14 Sep. c.500 off Dibba 8 Oct and 2000+ there 9 Oct. Up to 30 off Das Island most days in October

WINTER: Two off East Coast 11 Nov and one in Kalba harbour 3 Dec, unusual in winter.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* Rather uncommon, though probably overlooked due to its similarity to Saunders' Little Tern.

SPRING: Two Khor Kalba 23 Mar, one 10 May and two there 23 May. One Emirates golf course and 9 UAQ beach 5 Apr.

No certain autumn records.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi* Generally widespread along sheltered coasts and lagoons February to November. Rare at other times. Nests from February, eggs late March, young from mid May. Some winter reports may be misidentified *S.albifrons*.

WINTER: Rare in January-17 Dhabyah 14 Jan, two Khor al Beidah 20 Jan, three at Ramtha 21 Jan, 38 Abu Dhabi island 24 Jan and 241 (!) counted around inshore islands west of Abu Dhabi 13 Jan.

SPRING - AUTUMN: On breeding grounds Abu al Abyadh late March. 15 adults, eggs and 1-2 young Makhasib 1-2 May (M.Verhage). 70 Al Jazeerah Khor 4 Mar. 80 Khalidiyah spit 22 May. 22 at Ramtha tip 1 Jun, increasing to 30 on 14 Jun and 112 on 2 Sep. 700 Dhabyah 9 Sep, Numbers at Ramtha declined to 30 on 26 Sep. Up to 130 Khor Kalba 14-23 Sep. 100 Merawah Island 15 Oct and 60 there 22 Nov. Small numbers at other sites.

BREEDING: Adult and chick found Abu al Abyadh 8 May (SJA). Three found at remote offshore island of Makhasib 16 Jun, may have nested there. 21, including one juvenile at Zirku Island 17 Jun, suspected of having nested (S.J.Aspinall, C.Richardson).

WINTER: Two each were at Al Jazeerah Khor, Khor al Beidah and Ramtha 5/6 Dec.

Little Tern sp. 151 Kalba 7 Sep

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Passage migrant and winter visitor, most recorded at Ramtha tip and peaking October to March.

WINTER/SPRING: 42 at Ramtha tip 21 Jan and 32 still there 4 Apr, otherwise c.20 most visits January to early June, with a peak of 77 there 5 Mar. Ones and twos at other sites including

Zabeel fish ponds, Emirates golf course, Ruwais, Sir Bani Yas Island, Khor Kalba, Fujeirah dairy farm.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One at the Zabeel fish ponds 11 Jul, increasing to eight on 16 Jul.

Numbers increased at Ramtha tip from August with 20 there 18 Sep, peaking at 50 there 6-31 Dec. Up to four Al Wathba 25 Sep-11 Oct, four Al Ghar Lake 16 Dec and six Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 8 Oct, only other large groups.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* Vagrant, previous records April & October 1993.

One 29-30 Jan Kalba beach (S.L.James), 3rd record.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Migrant, most recorded September to early December, fewer other months.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to four at Ramtha tip 7 Jan-7 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to three at the Zabeel fish ponds 3-15 Sep, one at the Emirates golf course 8-17 Sep, one Merawah Island most days 5-20 Sep, one at Khor Dubai 9 Sep, up to six Abu al Abyadh 13-20 Sep, up to seven Fujeirah dairy farm 15-29 Sep, six probables Safa Park 16 Sep, one Al Wathba camel track 25 Sep-3 Oct and three at Al Habab 30 Sep. Up to two were at Ramtha 1 Nov-6 Dec and two were at Fujeirah dairy farm 4 Dec. Singles other sites.

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* Vagrant.

Two were off Ras Dibba 14-23 Sep, with one remaining until at least 14 Oct (M.Fouquet, O.Girard *et al*), first UAE record.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Mountain breeding resident, difficult to find in daylight. Favours perennial water sources and is often located by its contact call.

Daylight records: One Bithna 21 Jan, 10 Dhadnah 26 Jan, 14 Jebel Hafit/Mezyad 28 Jan, seven flushed from gravel plain Jebel Faiyah outcrop 1 Mar and one Masafi 1 Mar.

Sandgrouse sp. Three pale-bellied birds (Spotted Sandgrouse?) amongst *P.exustus* Al Ain camel track 1 Dec (BL, Nos Oiseaux).

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* A fairly common breeding resident of sand and gravel areas, usually away from main mountain areas.

Khor Kalba: Five 29 Jan, 22 on 25 Oct, 45 on 22 Nov and 62 on 27 Dec.

Ruwayah: c.80 on 27 Feb, 160 on 13 Mar, 36 on 1 Apr, 57 on 19 May and none on 3 Jun.

Thereafter groundwater pool became too saline (through evaporation).

Al Wathba camel track: Maximum of 328 on 24 Jan, 285 on 1 Sep, 550 on 11 Oct, 198 on 11 Nov and c.500 on 9 Dec. 60 at nearby Al Wathba prison pools 4 Feb.

Al Ain camel track: c.300 on 1 Dec.

Other records: Nine including three juvs. Ruwais 11 Jan. Smaller numbers at other sites, plus flyovers of 15+ at many locations, regularly Emirates golf course (up to 30) and Fujeirah National Dairy Farm (up to 60).

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Wild birds resident in mountains and foothills. Feral pigeons widespread in towns and villages.

Most recorded on Jebel Hafit (but includes some feral pigeons), with 63 there 14 Mar.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* Vagrant.

One at Zabeel fish ponds 2 Jan (NSR, CR), 3rd record.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Common resident, with some movements noted in winter.

Sample counts: c.300 Zabeel fish ponds 21 Feb, 900 there 16 Nov and an estimated 1,500 birds came to roost there on 19 Nov.

c.500 Hamraniyah fields 1 Apr, c.300 were at Al Habab 29 Nov, c.200 Ramtha tip 16 Dec and 300+ Al Ain camel track 30 Dec. These numbers are the highest ever recorded and indicate

the exceptional increase in population since the species was first noted in the UAE in the mid 1970's.

Birds on Merawah Island March and on Das Island March & April were noteworthy, showing potential range extension.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Passage migrant late March to May and August to September and thinly spread breeding visitor. Locally common around Hamraniyah and Digdaga fields. SPRING/SUMMER: One Dhaid/Madam 25 Mar and one Das Island 26-27 Mar, first spring sightings. Up to 45 counted on each visit to Hamraniyah fields between 1-19 Apr. One was at Al Habab 3 May. No evidence of breeding Hamraniyah fields and only four found 22 May. One on Das Island 29 May-1 Jun and 16 Aug.

AUTUMN: Five Al Wathba camel track 29 Aug. Up to four Merawah Island 6-26 Sep. Evident passage movement mid to late September throughout the country and on the islands.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Common resident everywhere.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Rare visitor, but predicted as a future breeding species. One at the Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 14 Sep (E.Hirschfeld *et al*) was only the 10th record.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Common breeding resident and spreading rapidly. Four Das Island throughout Jan, Feb, two in April, nine on 1/2 Oct and 14 new arrivals found 18 Oct. Two Merawah Island 5 Mar and 14 there 23 Aug, 5+ flew over Madam Plain (VB26) on 22 Dec, extensions of range.

180 flew over Dubai Creek golf course at dusk 20 Nov (on way to roost).

BREEDING: Two were at nest hole in tree in desert area Ruwayah 13 Mar and a pair were attending nest in old watch tower in UAQ 5 Apr.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Uncommon passage migrant February to May and July to November. Suspected breeding summer visitor to highlands east of Ras al Khaimah.

SPRING: Heard calling GR 4070/28590 near Wadi Sal, inland Shimal/Dhayah 4 Mar (J.Martin, M.Parker). Single migrants were at Emirates golf course 23/29 Apr, 1 May and 12 May.

AUTUMN: Two Emirates golf course 4 Sep, one Al Wathba camel track 9 Sep, one Abu al Abyadh 12-20 Sep and two there 19 Sep, one Khalidiyah spit 16 Sep, one Merawah Island 20 Sep, one Safa Park 22 Sep and two Mushrif Park 30 Sep. One Safa Park 24 Nov, very late.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* Rather scarce and elusive breeding resident (may also occur as a winter visitor). Nesting details rarely recorded in last 10 years. All records follow:

One Ras al Khaimah high street July (P.Brett). One seen at night Jumeirah-Umm Suqeim road 22 Sep (K.Hyland). One Das Island 26 Nov and one during day near Zabeel Palace 28 Nov. One Abu al Abyadh 18 Dec and one possible DhABIYAH 30-31 Dec (JMH).

1993: Two shot in a Zabeel, Dubai garden late Dec'93, (per C.Gross, who has skins).

Bruce's Scops Owl *Otus brucei* Localised breeding resident. Some migration recorded in previous years.

One Al Kharran garden 22 May, two young seen 5 Aug.

Several pairs confirmed resident in Mushrif Park, 3+ seen 2 & 28

Sep. One Wadi Qada'a (off Wadi Bih) 23 Dec (G.Feulner *et al*)

Scops Owl *Otus scops* Rather scarce migrant with usually just one or two records per year. 1994 sightings were up on the norm.

SPRING: Two on Das Island 14 Mar, one Al Wathba wood 25 Mar (P.Edwardes), one Mushrif Park, Dubai, 25 Mar (JRH, MAH *et al*) and one Bateen gardens 12 Apr (EH).

AUTUMN: One Mirfa 17 Sep and one Das Island 7 Oct.

Otus brucei/scops sp. One Scops species flew out of a *Prosopis* tree Hamraniyah fields on 18 Sep.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* Widespread breeding resident of rocky outcrops and larger Ghaf groves. Probably under-recorded. *B.(b.) ascalaphus* occurs, which is sometimes recognised as a separate species Desert Eagle Owl or Pharaoh Eagle Owl. Several dead birds were found this year.

Qarn Nazwa: pair well-watched throughout the year. Pair with three young first recorded 6 Mar, one month earlier than 1993. Rather elusive mid-September to November.

At Khateem (UB25), one adult with three young 30 Mar, one young remaining 25 Apr (others presumed died). Pair in tree observed over last 3 years half-a-mile from Falaj al Mualla road (VB27) 25 Apr (P.Lander, T.Morley). One dead adult Al Wagan 22 Jun (A.Griggs). One found dead near Sweihan 12 Nov. One in Ghaf tree, Ramlat al Hamrah (UB23) 30-31 Dec (G.Feulner *et al*), extension of range.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Fairly widespread breeding resident, found in most suitable habitats including mountains and deserts.

One Hatta-Kalba track 21 May (WA26). Four young Al Kharran garden, RAK 5 Aug. Regular pair: two Jebel Faiyah 5 Feb, 1 Mar, 21 Mar and 5 Apr.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Probably under-recorded.

One on Das Island 13-14 Mar, 27 Sep and 13 Oct, with two there 26 Oct (M.Wood). One Merawah Island 16 Dec (SJA).

Asio sp. One seen in Bateen Gardens late 1994 (S.L.James).

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* Regular passage migrant April, May and September to November, though typically inconspicuous.

SPRING: One on Das Island 17 Apr, one Bateen gardens 29 Apr, one Emirates golf course 29 Apr-12 May with three there 6 May. One was at the Zabeel fish ponds 5 May and five Khalidiyah spit 5 May. One Al Wathba 8 May. Reported RAK airport April. One at Jebel Dhanna 23-24 Jul, was very early autumn migrant.

AUTUMN: First autumn record, one Merawah Island 6 Sep, with two there 11-12 Sep. Two Das Island 2 Oct. One *unwini* race Khalidiyah spit 9 Oct, one *unwini* Dubai 12 Oct and three Al Wathba 13 Oct. Singles Khalidiyah spit 15 Nov, near Abu Dhabi clock tower 15 Nov, Jebel Ali hotel 17 Nov and Bateen gardens 24 Nov, late influx of records. Other singles Bateen gardens, Abu al Abyadh, Merawah Island and Emirates golf course September to early November.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Rare passage migrant February to early May and July to October, only two birds (compared to one 1993).

Two in Al Wathba wood 7 Oct (S.L.James).

Common Swift *Apus apus* Common passage migrant, mostly in spring and often confused with Pallid Swift *A.pallidus*. Rare in autumn, though this year was better than average.

SPRING: One Emirates golf course 20 Feb earliest record. Up to 40 several locations in March and April. 1600 Hamraniyah fields 29 Mar and 400+ there 1 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to four Das Island 7-9 Aug, up to five in Abu Dhabi area 26 Aug-1 Sep, 45 Zabeel fish ponds 3 Sep. Numerous odd records late September to October. 21 Jebel Hafit 29 Sep.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Very common passage migrant and breeding visitor October to June (a few resident in the north). Most birds vacate nesting areas July to October (but rarely in Abu Dhabi until December).

WINTER/SPRING: Very common mid February to April, with following high flock counts: c.1000 Al Ain camel track 24 Jan-28 Mar, a massive 2000-5000 there 5 Apr, 400 at colony on Ras Dibba islet 27 Jan, c.300 Ramtha lagoon 16 Feb, 500+ Hamraniyah fields March to April, with 3820 there 29 Mar. Three Zabeel fish ponds 27 Jun and one in Dubai 26 Jul were last summer records.

AUTUMN: Unusually early autumn passage, with one Merawah Island 19 Sep, up to four Zabeel fish ponds 24-28 Sep and up to 20 several locations (mainly Zabeel fish ponds and Emirates golf course) during October until it became widespread in northern Emirates from November.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Rare migrant, sometimes joins other swifts on spring passage. Two records in 1994, compared to none in 1993.

One was on Kalba plain 31 Mar (M.Hardwick *et al*) and another was near the Al Ain Intercontinental hotel 6 Sep (S.J. Aspinall. O.Wardman), 7th & 8th records.

Little Swift *Apus affinus* Vagrant, February to May, rarely in other months. Single records in 1993 and 1994.

Two Hamraniyah fields 3 Mar (CR/NSR) and one Al Ain camel track 5 Apr (S.J. Aspinall), 8th & 9th records.

White-collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris (kalbaensis)* This endemic sub-species is a sedentary resident of mangroves at Khor Kalba. Only 40+ pairs remain.

Max. counts (results of c.20 observers' visits): Nine 16 Mar, seven on 13/19 May and 10+ on 3 Sep. Fewer at other times.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Common winter visitor mid August to April, though restricted by lack of suitable habitat.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to four reported Khor Kalba during most visits January to April, with one there 1 May latest seen.

AUTUMN: Reported Merawah Island from 4 Sep, with three there 20 Sep. Two Ras Dibba 14 Sep. Up to six Khor Kalba 15-23 Sep, first autumn migrants.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* Common breeding resident, mostly north of a line from Al Ain to Jebel Ali. Numbers increasing due to spread of favourable habitat.

Up to four Al Khateem (Al Ain truck road UB25) 30 Mar & 25 Apr, most south-westerly mainland record. One on Das Island 27 Sep.

100+ counted in fields around Hamraniyah throughout the year.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* Fairly common passage migrant mid February to mid May and, particularly on East Coast, August to October. Localised summer breeding visitor. Nests Fujeirah, Kalba, Al Habab and Al Awir.

SPRING: First spring sighting, seven Khor Kalba 16 Mar. Small flocks on passage from 7 Apr, with nesting activity Al Habab from 3 May and eight birds at nest holes. Four at nest holes in Al Awir 3 May, two at nest site on Kalba plain 10 May and four at holes on bank of Kalba harbour 13 May. Three Al Madam fields 21 May and two on Das Island 1 Jun.

AUTUMN: One Zabeel fish ponds 16 Jul was rather early. Four Zabeel fish ponds 30 Jul, first sign of migration (probably local dispersal). 25, including juveniles, Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 5 Aug, two E.Lagoon 11 Aug, one Bateen gardens 12-26 Aug. Several hundred along east coastal belt 14-15 Sep. Flocks of up to 50 Zabeel fish ponds from late August to late October (less than numbers present in 1993). 40+ Al Habab 30 Sep, highest numbers there following a successful breeding season (c.6 pairs). Up to 10 birds other sites late Aug-early Nov. Six Al Wathba 3 Nov, latest sighting.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Fairly common passage migrant late March to April and mid August to October, breeding very locally around Digdaga, Khatt and Hamraniyah fields.

SPRING: 10 Digdaga 26 Mar with nine in area 22 May, including several at nest holes, and one carrying food.

Small groups on passage recorded throughout April. Peaks of 36 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr and high of 40 Das Island 20 Apr. Two Bateen gardens 12 May latest migrants reported.

AUTUMN: Generally common September to mid October. One Das Island 29 Jul, four 18 Aug and one 24-26 Aug. Up to seven Abu Dhabi 26-30 Aug, 18 Al Wathba camel track 26 Aug, 15

at the Emirates golf course 4 Sep, 31 Merawah Island 6 Sep, flocks of up to 115 Abu Dhabi 26 Sep-9 Oct, examples of largest flocks. Good passage on Das Island August to October, with peaks of 37 on 26 Sep and 47 on 22 Oct. Latest was one Al Wathba camel track 3 Nov.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Regular migrant in variable numbers annually April to early May and mid August to October with some pairs breeding in the Ras al Khaimah area. SPRING: One Bateen gardens 24 Apr-1 May, three Das Island 28 Apr, three at the Emirates golf course 29 Apr, one remaining to 8 May. Ones and twos other sites during period. BREEDING: Two Digdaga including one erupting from nest hole 22 May, adjacent to similar holes in disused well occupied by Bank Mynahs and European Bee-eaters. One carrying food for young same site 5 Aug (JKB).

AUTUMN: One Bateen gardens 5 Aug, earliest record. One on Das Island 9 Aug and 16-22 Aug. Up to three together reported numerous sites from late August to mid-October. One with deformed bill was seen Hamraniyah fields 4 Nov and one very late bird was at Jebel Ali village 29 Nov.

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* Resident and locally common in the Northern Emirates. Similar range to Little Green Bee-eater.

LARGEST FLOCKS RECORDED: 40 together on telegraph wires over Hamraniyah fields 11 Feb. c.80 counted in Hamraniyah fields area 21 Jan & 29 Mar and 102 there 2 Sep. 100+ (occasionally 200!) Fujeirah National Dairy Farm August to December.

Numbers generally down on 1993 figures, due to several successive dry winters and lack of large insects.

One Das Island Jan-4 Apr remaining to March, unusual location for this otherwise apparently sedentary species.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Common passage migrant February to April and August to September. Localised resident in north, apparently increasing.

WINTER/SPRING: Birds calling Emirates golf course 6 Jan and Zabeel garden 16 Jan, new breeding sites for this species. First spring migrant on Das Island 10 Feb. Steady passage from mid-February with eight Emirates golf course 20 Feb, nine Hamraniyah fields 17 Mar, 16 there 19 Apr and 20 on 29 Mar. One leaving nest hole Al Jazeerah Khor dunes 22 May. In June, birds seen Emirates golf course, Zabeel and Al Ain camel track, all assumed nesting in vicinity.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One on Das Island 26-29 Jul, with up to four throughout August. Seven Emirates golf course 4 Sep and seven Zabeel fish ponds on 7 Sep, with up to four seen at most favoured sites late August to October. 14 were at Al Habab 19 Oct. Less common in November. c.20 were in Hamraniyah fields 4 Dec.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Regular passage migrant and occasional winter visitor September to April (rare November to February), c.25 birds reported. Typically elusive and solitary.

WINTER/SPRING: Single birds Emirates golf course 14 Jan & 17 Feb and Al Ain Hilton gardens 28 Feb. Several individuals March-April. Up to two Das Island 12-22 Apr. One Zabeel fish ponds 22 May was exceptionally late.

AUTUMN: Very few reported, all records follow: One Merawah Island 11-18 Sep & 16 Oct, two Bateen gardens 16 Sep, one at the Emirates golf course 4 & 29 Nov.

Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* Breeding resident, mainly coastal dunes and plains, but generally absent from nest sites October to January when it is nomadic, generally favouring gravelly inland areas.

WINTER: Flocks of up to 10 birds several locations, including around Jebel Faiyah 5 Feb, Digdaga plains 11 Feb, Al Habab plains 23 Feb, Qarn Nazwa plains 26 Feb. 50+ Sweihan camel track 8 Feb.

SPRING/SUMMER: Signs of post-breeding dispersal from May with 80+ Ruwayah 3 May, 60+ Al Habab 3 May, 194 Hamraniyah fields 22 May, three Das Island 29 May and c.200 Al Wathba camel track 26 Aug-1 Sep.

AUTUMN/WINTER: c.100 Al Wathba camel track 1 Oct and a noteworthy flock of c.200 there

11 Nov, two on Hulaylah island 4 Nov and 50+ at foot of Qarn Nazwa 22 Dec.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* Probably the most common breeding resident species in the mountains. Up to 10 seen in virtually all suitable mountain locations.

Two on Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr. Isolated population in west, around outcrops of Jebel Dhanna and Sila peninsula.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* Rather thinly distributed breeding resident of dunes and gravel plains.

BREEDING: Nest with 3 eggs near Khor Dubai 27 Mar. No other nesting details reported.

Present on Merawah Island 4-6 Mar. Seven Sir Bani Yas Island, six Al Wathba 5 Aug and 13 Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep, largest groups seen.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* Rather rare and localised winter visitor. Flocks may be annual at Al Wathba camel track and Al Ain camel track. A record 90 birds reported in 1994, compared to 18 in 1993.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to 40 were at Al Ain camel track 9 Jan-28 Feb, three wintering Al Wathba camel track, with one last recorded there 1 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to 35 were at Al Wathba camel track 3 Nov-16 Dec, one Al Ain camel track 10 Nov, increasing steadily to 12 on 1 Dec and 30+ by end of the year.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Fairly common passage migrant February to April and mid August to November, and localised winter visitor, notably Al Ain and Al Wathba camel track. Opportunist breeder in some Gulf States.

WINTER/SPRING: Good passage from mid February to early April. 30 Al Ain camel track 1 Jan with 60 there 1 Feb and 63 Al Wathba camel track 17 Feb. 15 Ruwais 5 Jan. Up to eight on Das Island until 8 Apr. One Das Island 27 May exceptionally late.

BREEDING: Display observed Al Ain camel track 28 Mar & 28 Apr with 20+ seen 7 May and breeding suspected (SJA). Two there 20 May and five still present 2 Jun.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Three Al Ain camel track 30 Aug and one Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep, first reports. Common from mid-September. c.250 most days Al Wathba camel track 18 Sep-3 Nov, 80+ still there 2-16 Dec, 70 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 16-29 Sep. Three Hulaylah Island 4 Nov. 40+ Al Ain camel track 18 Nov-1 Dec and five there 30 Dec.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* Uncommon and irregular migrant. May nest annually (or be resident) in the UAQ, RAK and Ras Ghanada coastal scrub areas. Localised in winter.

WINTER/SPRING: 28 Khor al Beidah 20 Jan, 11 Al Wathba camel track 24 Jan and seven Sweihan camel track 8 Feb. 20+ were at Kalba 1 Mar and up to eight Das Island 6-29 Mar, with 18 there 20-21 Mar.

SUMMER: Two possibly this species heard Ramtha tip 1 Jun (CR/JKB). A pair found at sewage dump near Al Jazeerah 28 Jul (CR). Previously occupied breeding sites not visited by observers.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep and two Al Jazeerah sewage 2 Sep, two on Das Island 2-7 Oct and up to six there 5-19 Dec, eight Al Ain camel track 1 Dec and 13 Khor Kalba 3 Dec, 11 near Jebel Ali hotel 16 Nov, 12+ were at Al Jazeerah sewage 6 Dec and 20+ there 23 Dec.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Ubiquitous breeding resident seen virtually everywhere except arid deserts and mountains. Irrigated grass fields attract large numbers, where populations are increasing. 100+ Al Ain camel track on all visits.

One on Das Island 29-31 Mar & 31 Jul.

Small (Oriental) Skylark *Alauda gulgula* Rare migrant and winter visitor October to April.

WINTER/SPRING: Three Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 4 Jan (EH), one Al Ain camel track 1 Feb (SLJ), one Al Habab fields 26 Feb (V.Dierschke) and two Al Wathba 24 Mar (EH).

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Abu Dhabi race track 26 Sep (ADSP), one Al Wathba camel track 11

Nov, with two there from 2 Dec to end of year (EH, SLJ). One was on Das Island 2-5 Dec (LR, MW), 13th-19th records.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* Fairly common winter visitor November to early March, usually in parties.

WINTER/SPRING: Max. flocks, 35 Abu Dhabi race track 9 Jan, 28 Nadd al Sheba 14 Jan, 12 Ruwais 11-12 Jan, 16 Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb, 14 Al Habab 26 Feb. Latest record, two Bateen gardens/race course area 19 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: Two Nadd al Sheba 5 Nov first autumn report. Greatest flocks included 42 Al Wathba camel track 11 Nov, 92 there 2 Dec and 152 on 16 Dec. 34 Emirates golf course 29 Nov, 66 Al Habab field 29 Nov, 124+ Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 4 Dec, 45 Emirates golf course 18 Dec. Smaller numbers Al Ain camel track, Das Island plus other minor sites (Ramtha, Jebel Ali village and other irrigated grassy areas).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Common passage migrant late March to May and late August to October. Fewer in spring and some overwintering in south (particularly Al Wathba camel track). SPRING: Seven Al Wathba camel track 24 Jan. One Al Habab 12 Mar, was first sign of spring passage becoming common through April. Single stragglers passed through in May until last sighting of one Zabeel fish ponds 22 Jun.

AUTUMN: Two Ramtha tip 14 Jul were probably early migrants. Small passage from late August. Common from September, groups of 5-20 regular throughout the country, with max. flocks of 40+ Zabeel fish ponds 15 Sep, c.80 Al Wathba camel track 21 Sep-1 Oct increasing to 250+ on 3 Oct, 60 Ramtha tip 26 Sep, 100+ Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 29 Sep. Two Al Wathba camel track 11 Nov was last record.

WINTER: Singles Al Wathba camel track 16 Dec and Khor al Beidah sewage dump 23 Dec.

Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta* Generally a mountain resident, spreading to high-rise buildings away from the mountains.

One Sir Bani Yas Island Apr, up to three on Das Island 26 Jun-3 Aug, again noted 25-27 Sep, first records for Das Island. Confirmed breeding in Abu Dhabi city, 2 nests with eggs 7 Jun (SJA). Up to 150 were over Hamraniyah fields for most of December.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Rare spring migrant February to early May, possibly overlooked in mountain areas when easily mistaken for *H.obsoleta*.

One Emirates golf course 4 Apr (MAH *et al*), one Ramtha tip 4 Apr (JRH, MAH *et al*), two Das Island 5-8 Apr one there 12 Apr, six Abu al Abyadh 15 Apr (S.Smith). One near Jebel Ali hotel 22 Apr (CR, SK).

Two Al Wathba camel track 19 Aug (EH), only 3rd ever autumn record.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common passage migrant, some in winter and summer.

SPRING: One Ruwais 11 Jan, one Das Island 24 Jan, two on 26 Jan, two Al Wathba camel track 24 Jan, may have overwintered. 250+ Al Ain camel track 20 Mar. Common to mid May, with last record Hamraniyah 22 May.

SUMMER: Two Al Ain Camel Track 3 Jun, one Hamraniyah 28 Jun and one Kalba 1 Jul. Up to six on Das Island 16-18 Jun.

AUTUMN: One at the Emirates golf course 23 Jul was an early migrant. Regular August, becoming common from mid September, peaking early Oct, with 120 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 12 Sep and c.200 Al Wathba 30 Sep-3 Oct and 250 there 13 Oct. WINTER: Scarce from mid November with two Emirates golf course 24 Nov and up to 11 Al Wathba camel track 14-16 Dec.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Uncommon passage migrant, mostly in spring.

SPRING: One near Al Ain sewage works 25 Feb, two Emirates golf course 26 Feb, three Al Ain camel track 28 Feb, up to four at the Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 3-17 Mar and up to 41 were counted Hamraniyah 3-4 Mar. One Merawah Island 5 Mar, two Bateen gardens area 5 Mar and eight there 17 Mar. Two Abu al Abyadh 20 Mar and one Dhaid 27 Mar. One Hamraniyah 19 Apr and an exceptional five were there 22 May, a very late record. No autumn

reports received.

House Martin *Delichon urbica* Rather irregular spring migrant February to mid April, even fewer in autumn, usually September. Over 60 reported in 1994, about double the average. SPRING: Two Ain al Faydah 3 Feb, first spring record. One Das Island 8 Jun and two Khalidiyah beach 9 Jun. Ones and twos together several other suitable sites.

AUTUMN: Passage exceptional, all records: Two each Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 16 Sep and Jebel Ali 16-17 Sep. Singles Al Wathba camel track 21 Sep, Khor Fakkan 23 Sep and Jazeerah al Hamrah 7 Oct. Up to eight Das Island 26-27 Sep and 12 Jebel Hafit 29 Sep.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Regular passage migrant and localised winter visitor (less than 10 sites). All records follow:

WINTER/SPRING: Up to two Sweihan fields 1-31 Jan, at least one Al Ain camel track 9 Jan-1 Feb, increasing to four 3 Feb, four Abu Dhabi race course 9 Jan and one there 15 Feb, four Al Wathba camel track 24 Jan-13 Feb, up to three Al Habab field 23-26 Feb, with one still there 15 Apr. Four Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 27 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Al Ain camel track 29 Sep, increasing to six from 11 Nov. Singles Das Island 6 Oct and 6-19 Dec, three Hamraniyah fields 4 Nov, up to four Al Habab from 18-29 Nov and one AD race course 22 Dec.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewski* Vagrant or rare winter visitor (though may be more frequent, judging from following records, the result of some presumably being misidentified as *novaeseelandiae* in the past). 1994 was a spectacular year for the species. UAE 4th-11th records listed as follows:

Al Wathba camel track: Up to five 13 Feb-29 Mar (EH, SLJ, MAH *et al*), two 26-28 Sep, three there 13 Oct, two 3 Nov and two from 16 Dec (SLJ *et al*).

Abu Dhabi race course: one 17 Mar (SLJ), one 30 Sep (SLJ),

Fujeirah National Dairy Farm: three 27 Mar (EH), one 18 Sep (ADSP)

Merawah Island: One 17-25 Sep (TS *et al*). See *Plates 4 & 5*.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Common passage migrant and winter visitor September to mid April, though scarce after March.

WINTER/SPRING: Good numbers reported: 22 Emirates golf course 14 Jan, 52 at Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb, c.40 at the Al Ain camel track 28 Feb and up to 63 Bateen gardens area 5-10 Mar were maximum numbers recorded. One on Das Island 23 Jan with two on 26 Jan, suggests early spring passage. Last stragglers, one Emirates golf course 24 Apr and one Al Wathba camel track 19 May.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das island 25 Aug, becoming widespread from mid September. 128 Al Wathba camel track 11 Nov-16 Dec.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Very elusive mountain resident, occasionally on the East Coast plains in winter. Few reported and all records follow:

One on plateau, 300 metres above Wadi Bih plain 2 Apr. Two were in Masafi wadi 1 Mar, singing 23 Mar and three were there 29 Dec. Clearly more work is needed on this species.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Rare migrant March to early May and late September to early December (mostly in late autumn).

One was at the Emirates golf course 8 May (CR), one was Al Wathba camel track 23 Sep (ADSP), one in Bateen Gardens area 15-20 Oct, increasing to two 23-27 Oct (SLJ, ADSP): 12th-15th records.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Common passage migrant March to mid April and September to October, isolated winter records (usually in south).

SPRING: Two on Das Island 14 Mar and two Hamraniyah fields 17 Mar, first spring records. Steady passage, with up to 11 birds at most suitable sites until mid April. One Emirates golf course 24 Apr. One Ras al Akhdar, Abu Dhabi 13 May and one Abu al Abyadh 14 May, very late.

AUTUMN: One Dubai Creek golf club 5 Sep, first autumn record. Single stragglers from late October to mid November. Two Emirates golf course 22 Nov and one Khor Kalba 3 Dec, were isolated winter records.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* Rather localised, late winter visitor October to March.

WINTER/SPRING: 10 E.Lagoon 2 Jan, 20 Ruwais 4 Jan, 14 Bateen gardens area 13 Jan, 16 Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb, three Al Ain camel track 28 Feb, six Bateen gardens area 10-19 Mar. Latest, one Al Wathba camel track on 1 Apr. Fewer at other sites.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One 7 Oct & 18-26 Oct Das Island, two E.Lagoon 14 Nov, one Al Habab 24 Nov and three Emirates golf course 9 Dec.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Locally common passage migrant and winter visitor September to mid May.

WINTER/SPRING: 11 Al Wathba camel track 13-28 Feb, with small numbers Jan/Feb other sites. Main passage mid March to mid April, peak numbers follow: 14 Jebel Ali village 24 Mar, 38 Al Wathba camel track 24 Mar, 16 Emirates golf course 29 Mar and 57 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr. 15 at most grassy sites throughout April, with up to 89 Abu Dhabi race course 28 Mar-2 Apr, declining to one on 29 Apr. Two Abu al Abyadh 15 May, latest report.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Khor Fakkan 15 Sep and one Al Wathba camel track 23 Sep earliest. Three Das Island 17 Oct, earliest. Mostly small groups (less than five) from mid October to early December. 46 Al Wathba camel track 3 Nov. Groups wintering at Al Habab, Al Wathba camel track and Kalba corniche, with seven there 3 Dec.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* Common winter visitor October to March, abundant locally in some irrigated grass (fodder) fields.

WINTER/SPRING: Very common at Ruwais, where 300+ counted at roost 5 Jan. Up to 65 each Al Habab, Al Ain camel track and Al Wathba camel track until end of March. Smaller numbers Nadd al Sheba, Ramtha tip and Fujeirah National Dairy Farm. Four on Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr latest.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Abu Dhabi race course 30 Oct. 150+ Al Wathba camel track from 3 Nov-end December. 50 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 11 Nov, 40 Al Habab 18 Nov, other large concentrations.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* Rather surprising vagrant from Asia. In the Middle East, only recorded Oman once and the UAE four times previously.

One Emirates golf course 10-21 Oct (CR, SJA) and one Merawah Island 15-16 Oct (SJA), 5th & 6th records.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Common passage migrant, late February to May and late August to October, rare at other times. Several sub-species occur, including most commonly *beema*, *feldegg*, *lutea* and *thunbergi*. No detailed studies of migration patterns of races in the UAE has yet been published (but see Hirschfeld (1995) for Bahrain).

SPRING: One Ruwais 11 Jan and one Nadd al Sheba 30 Jan probably over-wintered. One Al Ain camel track 1-3 Feb was earliest spring record. Rather scarce until late March. Eight at the Emirates golf course 21 Mar, with 11 there 5 Apr. 14 Al Wathba camel track 1 Apr, 17 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr. Steady passage to mid April, becoming rare in May. 10-15 on Abu al Abyadh 14-20 May. One Ras al Khaimah 22 May, latest record.

AUTUMN: More common in autumn with steady passage noted from September to mid October. One Das Island 31 Jul and one E.Lagoon 11 Aug earliest migrants. Largest concentrations included 40+ at the Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 16 Sep. Latest autumn records four Al Wathba 3 Nov, singles Ramtha 4 Nov and Emirates golf course 4 Nov.

WINTER: Two Emirates golf course 16 Dec and one Nadd al Sheba 17 Dec.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Regular migrant and winter visitor late August to March.

WINTER/SPRING: Up to five Ruwais 5-11 Jan, up to five Ramtha tip 7-15 Jan (with four still there 5 Mar), 10 E.Lagoon 14 Jan, five W.Lagoon 14 Jan. Ones and twos other sites, including Emirates golf course, Al Wathba prison sewage, Al Ain compost plant and Ramtha

tip, until late March. One Al Wathba camel track 1 Apr latest.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Al Wathba camel track 19 Aug, earliest report. 14 Al Wathba camel track 26 Aug, with 12 there 18 Sep, exceptional numbers. c.10 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 18 Sep. Up to three together several locations Sep & Oct, including Ramtha tip, Al Habab, Emirates golf course, Kalba, Fujeirah National Dairy Farm, Dubai Creek golf club and Abu Dhabi race course area. Further influx from November with 10 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 11 Nov, seven E.Lagoon 11 Nov and 21 there 17 Nov. Nine were at the Dubai Creek golf club 20 Nov, up to six Ramtha from 1-21 Nov. Numbers declining to the end of year.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Fairly common passage migrant February to mid April and late August to October, regularly at running mountain streams in winter.

SPRING: Several individuals reported from 26 Feb, with 10 at the Emirates golf course 29 Mar, a record number in recent years. One Emirates golf course 24 Apr, latest record.

AUTUMN: One Abu Dhabi corniche 6 Aug and one Khalidiyah spit 20 Aug, first records. Few in September, with more passage noted throughout October. One Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 11 Nov and one Bateen gardens 23 Nov. Seven Fujeirah Hilton hotel beach breakwater 3-4 Dec.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Common winter visitor October to early April. Interesting Asian sub-species, *personata* occasionally occurs, though none reported this year.

WINTER/SPRING: Latest records included three at the Dubai creekside park 9 Apr and one Abu Dhabi new corniche 19 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Merawah Island 21 & 25 Sep first records. c.40 came to roost Al Dhaid 14 Oct. Roost of 648 Sweihan park 9 Dec.

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* A rather localised (but spreading) resident, common in parts of Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Jebel Ali, Sir Bani Yas and Al Awir.

Two were at Qarn Nazwa 12 Mar, a sign of their steady range expansion.

Eight Das Island from January, where at least one pair nested for the first time, raising young in May, with 16 birds counted from September.

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygus* Breeding resident of mountains, wadis and adjacent cultivations.

At least one pair resident Bateen gardens; three, including one juv. seen there 16 Apr. No accepted Dubai records.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* Apparently even more localised than *P.leucogenys*.

Restricted to urban green belt in and around Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Jebel Ali and Sharjah.

At least two were at Ruwayah 13 Mar, an extension of range.

Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* Eruptive, though elusive migrant, uncommon and localised. Probably regular and favouring berries of *Salvadora persicus* bush, a species widely planted in Abu Dhabi emirate. 1994 was a good year.

SPRING: 17 Liwa rest house gardens 13-14 Mar (D.Grainger); 10 Liwa 18 Mar (anon.), 60+ in Al Wathba woods 24 Mar-1 Apr. One on Das Island 29 Mar.

AUTUMN: Two were at the Emirates golf course 25 Oct and eight on Das Island 30 Oct.

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes* Common passage migrant March to early May and mid August to September and breeding summer visitor to dense scrubby areas and cultivations in west and inland.

SPRING: One Jebel Ali hotel grounds 21 Jan, odd winter record. One Al Jazeerah Khor 18 Mar, was first reported migrant. Steady passage from early April to mid May. Eight Bateen Gardens 27 Apr and eight Emirates golf course 29 Apr.

BREEDING: Seven singing Sweihan 29 Apr. Individuals reported May were probably breeding visitors. 16+ pairs breeding Sweihan 21 Jun-15 Jul with similar numbers Bateen Gardens.

AUTUMN: One on Das Island 11-19 Aug, first migrant. Regular, up to four Bateen Gardens and Al Wathba camel track, 12 Aug-16 Sep one remaining Bateen until 28 Oct. Some single

birds on passage.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* Rather scarce, skulking winter visitor, November to March. 15 birds recorded (compared to just six in 1993).

WINTER/SPRING: One Ruwais 11 Jan, one on Das Island 12-14 Jan, one Jebel Ali hotel 21 Jan, one Sweihan park 8-16 Feb, one Emirates golf course 17 Feb, one near Abu Dhabi Intercon. Hotel 2-9 Mar and one Zabeel fish ponds 6 Mar and one Das Island and 11-14 Mar.
AUTUMN/WINTER: One Bateen Gardens 26 Aug, with odd monthly sightings of it until end of year. One Jebel Ali Hotel 21 Nov increasing to three by 9 Dec. Two Emirates golf course from 9 Dec to end of year. One Das Island 29 Nov-29 Dec.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* Rather scarce migrant April to mid May and September to mid November. Three recorded in 1994, same as in 1993.
One Abu al Abyadh 14 Apr (S.Smith) and two at the Emirates golf course 8 Sep (SLJ).

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Common passage migrant March to mid May and late August to mid October, mostly in late spring.

SPRING: One on Das Island from 22 Mar, first migrant. Up to six Emirates golf course 11-14 Apr and one straggler remaining to 12 May. One in Bateen Gardens 30 June was unusual. One Qarnayn Island 17 Jun.

AUTUMN: One on Das Island 6 Aug, earliest migrant. One Bateen Gardens 26 Aug, with up to three 12-19 Sep, six 30 Sep and one remaining to 30 Oct. Three Ruwais 9 Sep. Ones and twos several other sites during period.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* Common passage migrant and winter visitor mid October to March. Numbers probably dependant on extent of man-made wetlands (eg. sewage ponds etc.).

WINTER/SPRING: 12 Al Wathba prison sewage lagoons 10 Jan, largest numbers reported, with one remaining to 5 Apr. Otherwise widespread in winter in suitable damp cover.

AUTUMN: One Das Island 23-25 Aug, very early. Otherwise, one Das Island from 2 Oct was beginning of main passage. At least four Ramtha tip from 21 Nov to end of year and five Bateen Gardens 23 Nov. Smaller numbers many other sites.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* Regular but uncommon spring passage migrant late March to early May, variable numbers annually. Six birds recorded, compared to 17 in 1993.

SPRING: Singles were on Das Island 19-20 Mar and 9-21 Apr, Al Wathba camel track 13 Apr, Emirates golf course 29 Mar-14 Apr and 20 Apr, and Zabeel 21 Apr.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* Rare and irregular migrant November to March, mostly in winter months. Four recorded, compared to three in 1993.

One Khalidiyah spit 14-19 Feb (EH *et al*), one Das Island 18-20 Mar (MW), one Zabeel garden 14-15 Nov and one Merawah Island 21 Nov (SJA), 21st-24th records.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* Regular passage migrant, mostly in winter months of red-bellied sub-species *phoenicuroides*.

WINTER/SPRING: 10 were in Mushrif Park 24 Jan, noteworthy numbers. Last mainland records were Madaq (near Masafi) 22 Mar and one in Dubai city centre 25 Mar.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Wadi Qawr 28 Oct was first winter record.

Otherwise ones and twos in stands of trees scattered across dry wadis and plains in winter.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Very common spring migrant mid March to early May.

Scarce in autumn and irregular in winter. Dapper race *samamisicus* occurs in March, *phoenicurus* a little later.

SPRING: Common from early March to mid May. One Das Island 6 Mar was first report. 11 Emirates golf course 14 Apr & 12 May with one straggler remaining to 26 May. Up to four Abu al Abyadh 14-15 May. One Das Island 1 & 8 Jun, latest.

AUTUMN: One on Das Island 26-29 Sep and throughout Oct. Less than 20 birds reported on

mainland from early October to early November. One at the Emirates golf course 9 Dec.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Uncommon and irregular passage migrant March to May and September to October. 18 birds reported compared to 12 in 1993. All records follow:
 SPRING: Up to two Das Island 19-27 Mar, 6 Apr and 17 Apr. Two Emirates golf course 21 Mar and singles Abu al Abyadh 31 Mar, Al Ain camel track 4 Apr, Emirates golf course 5 Apr, Bateen Gardens/race track area 16 Apr, Abu al Abyadh 14, 15 & 17 May.
 AUTUMN: Up to two Al Wathba 18-26 Sep, 3 Oct and one 13 Oct. One Fujairah National Dairy Farm 14-18 Sep and one Das Island several days 27 Sep-3 Oct.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* Fairly common winter visitor September to March, often wintering in 'pairs'. Several races occur, including "Siberian" types.
 WINTER/SPRING: 10+ wintering Al Ain camel track, seen 9 Jan, with ones and twos several other favoured locations until mid March. Four Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb. Two *maura/stejnegeri* males Hamraniyah 3 Mar. Up to three on Das Island 16-22 Mar, with two remaining to Apr. Two Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr.
 AUTUMN/WINTER: Four Sweihan 21 Sep, one Das Island 4 Oct, two 9 Oct and three there 6-13 Dec. Three Emirates golf course 22 Nov, otherwise up to two seen together several other sites from mid October.

Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata* Vagrant from south-east Iran and Pakistan. One previous Arabian record, in Musandam (Oman) in April 1983.
 A male was at the Emirates golf course 6 May (CR), 1st UAE record.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Commonest migrant wheatear, present mid August to April.

WINTER/SPRING: Typical passage numbers, 14 Al Ain camel track 1/3 Feb, 10 at the Emirates golf course 26 Feb, 33 Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb, 41 there 17 Feb and 54 there 24 Mar. Last recorded on mainland, one Al Wathba camel track 19 May (three weeks later than last spring migrant in 1993). One on Das Island 13-14 Jun was very late.
 AUTUMN/WINTER: One at the Emirates golf course 1-2 Aug, first autumn record on mainland. 24 Al Wathba camel track fields most visits 18-26 Sep, with c.12 there in Nov and c.7 to end of year. c.40 Al Ain camel track 29 Sep & 1 Dec, exceptional numbers.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Regular and common passage migrant February to mid April and (less regularly) August to November. Odd records in winter.

SPRING: Singles Abu Dhabi race track 15 Feb and at the Emirates golf course 6 Mar were early, with most passing through late March to mid April. 15 Al Wathba camel track 26 Mar. One Khalidiyah spit 22 May, up to three Abu al Abyadh 14-15 May and one Bu Tinah Island 9 Jun was latest.

AUTUMN: One Abu al Abyadh 1-2 Aug, very early. Limited number of reports late August to mid October. Up to three Al Wathba 23-28 Sep and three there 13 Oct.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Common spring passage migrant mid February to mid April, less common in autumn August to November (peak early October) when mainly in the south and west (ie Abu Dhabi & islands).

SPRING: One Emirates golf course 17 Feb and four Al Wathba 17 Feb, first spring records. Eight Al Jazeerah Khor 4 Mar indicated passage well under way in early March. One of pale-throated form *vittata* at the Emirates golf course 12 Mar. 24 Bateen gardens area 19 Mar. Common to mid Apr, with last migrant seen 19 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to six Merawah Island most days 6 Sep-15 Oct, two Fujairah National Dairy Farm 15-16 Sep, one Emirates golf course 20 Sep (only record in N.Emirates), up to four each Bateen Gardens and Al Wathba 30 Sep-3 Nov and five each Dhabyah and adjacent headlands 1-3 Oct, a peak of five daily Das Island 2-26 Oct. Two or three at a few other sites only in south-west.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* Uncommon spring migrant February to April, rare

in September to November. Paler-bodied race *melanoleuca* regular. All records listed.
 SPRING: One Das Island 8-29 Mar and 2 Apr (c.3 different birds). Singles Abu Dhabi race course 19 Mar, 9 Apr, 29 Apr and two there 28 Mar and 16 Apr. One Emirates golf course 21 Mar & 4 Apr and one there 5 Apr. Singles Al Wathba camel track 29 Mar and Abu al Abyadh 31 Mar.
 AUTUMN: One Merawah Island 12 Sep and one Khalidiyah spit 9 Oct.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Common winter visitor September to April.
 WINTER/SPRING: Main passage noted on Das Island 17 Mar-10 Apr and one Sweihan 26 Apr late records. Even later, singles at Al Wathba camel track 8 May (SJA) and 19 May.
 AUTUMN: Two Merawah Island 30 Aug, very early, increasing to nine by 12 Sep. Light passage Gulf inshore islands and peninsulas (Abu al Abyadh, Merawah, Dhabyah etc.) in September, with main influx to desert areas inland from October. Up to 10 most days Al Ain camel track and Al Wathba camel track mid October-December.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* One of the rare migrant wheatears, not recorded annually and then mostly March to early April.
 One Abu Dhabi race course 17 Mar (SLJ) and one Al Wathba camel track 25 Mar (JKB, CR, PE), 12th & 13th records.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrna* Regular and fairly common winter visitor mid October to early March, favouring mountains, plains, wadis and (oddly) rubbish dumps away from the hills. Occasionally on passage April and September. Pale-throated non-dimorphic race *chrysopygia* occurs.
 WINTER: One on Das Island 17-25 Mar, indicates passage. One Wadi Bih 2 Apr (MAH *et al*), was latest spring record.
 AUTUMN/WINTER: Two Kalba foothills 15 Sep, one Merawah 19-25 Sep with two 26 Sep, and two Tayibah 23 Sep, first autumn sightings. Influx to main mountain areas October. One Das Island 3 Oct and 7 Dec unusual.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* Rather elusive and thinly spread winter visitor September to early March. *O.p.picata* closely resembles Hume's Wheatear. Numbers down from last year. All records listed.
 WINTER/SPRING: One wintered Ramtha tip until at least 4 Feb. One wintered Qarn Nazwa until 26 Feb, when last seen. One Tayibah plain 3 Mar and one Umm al Quwain 17 Mar.
 WINTER: One Qarn Nazwa from 24 Nov, one Masafi 26 Nov and one Khatt 28 Dec.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* Vagrant, previous record April 1987, also on Das Island.
 One Das Island 2-3 Feb (LR, MW), 2nd record.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* Scarce and localised passage migrant, few in winter. Main wintering grounds in Abu Dhabi's Western Region not visited (one bird reported compared to 5 in 1993).
 One overwintered (since October 1993) until mid January Abu al Abyadh (MMcG).

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* Localised breeding resident and rare passage migrant January to March.
 Jebel Hafit records: Up to three most visits, often beside road to summit. One on Das Island 6/7 Mar. Casual and seemingly of erratic occurrence elsewhere.

Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger* Fairly common and widespread mountain breeding resident. Selected records follow:
 Jebel Hafit: 20 on 22 Feb, six seen 14 Mar, fewer other times.
 Adults tending three recently fledged young Wadi Shih 16 Mar. 17 Masafi area 26 Nov.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Common and regular spring passage migrant February to

May. Rare in autumn, mid August to October. Found in most habitats but favours mountains. c.50 reported per year.

SPRING: One Ramtha tip 21 Jan (SLJ), very early. Otherwise one Digdaga 11 Feb, was next arrival. Steady passage through February, March and April. Late individuals Jebel Ali green 12 May, Al Wathba camel track 13 May, Abu al Abyadh 14-15 May and at the Emirates golf course 16 May.

AUTUMN: Scarce, with only a few records: one Emirates golf course 17 Sep, one Wadi Bih 18 Sep and one Merawah Island 27 Sep.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Rather elusive winter visitor September to March, though common on passage in March (*see below*). Usually in mountains, but passage birds can occur anywhere.

WINTER/SPRING: Four on Jebel Hafit 28 Feb, two Merawah Island 5 Mar, two Khalidiyah spit 18 Mar, two Madaq 22 Mar and two Abu al Abyadh 31 Mar a selection only. Last record, one Das Island 14-21 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Wadi Bih 18 Sep, one Das Island 27-28 Sep earliest records. At least one Jebel Hafit 29 Dec.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* Accidental winter visitor. Last record was at Bu Hasa, December 1990.

One Emirates golf course 22 Nov (CR) and one Das Island 11 Dec (LR, MW), 6th & 7th records.

Blackbird *Turdus merula* Rare and irregular winter visitor.

One 14 Jan-22 Feb and another 7-9 Oct Das Island (LR, MW), 10th & 11th records.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Uncommon, with sporadic influxes (of up to 20 birds in a winter season) as last happened in 1982/3, 1984/5 and 1990/1.

One Das Island 13-15 Oct (LR, MW), year's only record.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* Common winter visitor November to March, though rather localised in thickets and parks. Variable numbers annually.

WINTER/SPRING: 21 Bateen Gardens 3 Jan, seven Emirates golf course January to March, with one straggler still present 11 Apr. Smaller numbers other sites.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 17-21 Aug, very early. One heard Emirates golf course 30 Oct, first record, before numbers built up steadily to end of year, peaking at 27 Emirates golf course 9 Dec. Max. of 14-17 on Das Island 7-10 Dec. Smaller numbers Al Wathba wood, Khalidiyah spit and Jebel Ali hotel.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis* Ubiquitous resident *Prinia*, found in all gardens, cultivations, parks and some fertile wadis.

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* Rather scarce and elusive mountain resident. Rather difficult to locate even when it is calling. Less than 10 reports received this year. More study is needed of this delightful little warbler.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* Rather scarce passage migrant previously recorded February to May and July to September (mostly Mar & Apr), probably overlooked.

SPRING: One Emirates golf course 29 Mar & 5 Apr and one Bateen gardens 8-15 Apr.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* Vagrant.

One trapped Merawah Island 29 Aug (TS *et al*), 1st record. See photo *EBR18: Plate 11*.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* Rare spring migrant February to early May (average only one per year). 1994 was well above average, with eight reported compared to two in 1993. SPRING: One heard at the Zabeel fish ponds 6 Mar (NSR), one Jebel Ali hotel 28 Mar (MAH *et al*) and one Emirates golf course 3 Apr (JRH, MAH *et al*).

AUTUMN: Singles on Das Island 15-16 Aug, singles trapped Merawah Island 23 Aug & 5 Sep, Bateen gardens 18-19 Sep (SLJ) and Zabeel 28 Sep.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* Rare migrant or winter visitor. One Ain al Faydah 2 Feb (SLJ) and one Merawah Island 28 Aug (ADSP) the 5th & 6th records.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Uncommon and irregular spring migrant mid February to May (even more rare in autumn). After a trickle in March, there was an unexpectedly heavy passage in mid May and June. 20 records in 1994, compared to 7 in 1993.

SPRING: One Bateen village 7 Mar, one Das Island 11-13 Mar, one Bateen Gardens 12-13 May, one Ras al Akhdar 13-15 May, up to 10 (!) Abu al Abyadh 14-15 May, one Emirates golf course 16 May, one Kafai Island 15 Jun, one Das Island 8-14 Jun with two there 16 Jun.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Vagrant. These are amongst the first records to be accepted in Arabia and suggest that the species has been overlooked as a migrant throughout the region (probably due to the difficulty in identifying it in the field). See *EBR18:113-115*.

Individuals were trapped Zabeel fish ponds reeds 5 May (EH, CR) (*Plate 7*), Merawah Island 23 Aug (EH *et al*), while three more were there (all trapped) 24 Aug and six 28 Aug-11 Sep (EH, TS, SJA *et al*), 1st-11th records.

Also on record: singles reported in Bateen Gardens 26-28 Mar (song heard) (MAH *et al*, SLJ) and 20-23 Oct (SLJ). At least one in song, Ruwais 8-9 Sep (SJA).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* Very common late spring migrant, some in autumn. Often confused with Reed Warbler (and presumably Blyth's Reed Warbler!)

SPRING: One Bateen Gardens 18 Apr. Main passage from early May with up to 15 Emirates golf course 1-16 May. Last reported Das Island 8-14 Jun.

AUTUMN: One Merawah Island 6 Sep, one Bateen gardens 16 Sep and one Emirates golf course 21 Oct (SJA), only autumn records.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Fairly common passage migrant, breeds locally Ain al Faydah, Zabeel, Ramtha and Ruwais reed beds.

SPRING: Up to five Bateen Gardens 7-14 Apr. Otherwise, singles noted on passage March and April.

BREEDING: One in song Zabeel fish ponds 25 Feb (two in song in March 1993) and two birds heard each visit through April, until five, including recently fledged young, 22 May. Song heard again until 1 Jul, some remaining to late July, presumed double-brooded.

One heard Ain al Faydah reeds 28 Feb, at least five in song Ramtha 31 Mar and four present there 1 Jun.

AUTUMN: Up to three most days Abu Dhabi sites, 20 Aug-19 Sep and 30 Sep. One or two other sites late August to late Sep. One Das Island 28-29 Sep.

Acrocephalus sp. (includes possible Blyth's Reed Warblers.) One Kafai Island 15 Jun (SJA), one at the Emirates golf course 8 Sep and 20 Sep.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Locally common breeding resident in mangroves and passage migrant (and/or local post-breeding dispersal) August to May.

WINTER/SPRING: At least two Zabeel fish ponds reeds until 6 Mar, with migrants noted elsewhere March to April. Sings in reed beds in spring but soon moves to coastal mangroves where it breeds.

BREEDING: Healthy population at Khor Kalba. At least two in song at Dhayah/Rams mangroves 4 Mar. One non-breeding bird still in Bateen Gardens 13 May.

AUTUMN: Five Bateen Gardens 26 Aug, up to 11 there 16 Sep-20 Oct, singles other sites to end of year.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Rather scarce passage migrant, with 14 birds reported, compared to 9 in 1993 and 11 in 1992.

AUTUMN: One Merawah Island 23 Aug & 20 Sep, one Jebel Ali 8 Sep and up to six Das Island 26-30 Sep & 1 Oct. Two Emirates golf course 10-11 Oct and one there 22 Nov. One Safa Park 28 Nov.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Common passage migrant late March to late May and late August to mid September. Breeds locally and may be resident Khor Kalba and Bateen Gardens.

BREEDING: Up to eight Bateen gardens Jan-Mar with up to 17 most visits 31 Mar-20 May. Three there 30 Jun and eight on 5 Aug. At least two, maximum six, heard in song on each visit to Khor Kalba 31 Jan-13 May. (Booted Warblers also present during most visits, see below). Three Zabeel fish ponds 6 Jun, with two in song there 27 Jun-22 Jul.

AUTUMN: One Das Island 20 Aug. Common on passage Aug to Oct. Up to 30 Bateen gardens most days to end of Oct, with odd sightings to end Nov and two there 22 Dec. One Zabeel fish ponds 28 Nov.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Scarce migrant March to May and August to November. Sub-species *rama* (may be a separate species Sykes's Warbler *H.rama*) easily found during breeding season Khor Kalba, where it is active Feb-Jun (and may be resident).

BREEDING: at least three Khor Kalba 16 Mar-9 May (18 counted 28 Mar (EH)) and three in song 19-23 May (rather later in season than last year).

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* Scarce passage migrant mid March to mid May and July to early October, in variable numbers annually. Noteworthy records follow:

SPRING: One north of Al Ain (Wadi Sharm) 24 Mar, earliest record. One Al Jazeera Khor 7 Apr. Singles were widespread from mid April. Three Bateen Gardens 18 Apr, 10+ Shwaib plain 4 May. Last seen Das Island 14 Jun and Kafai Island 15 Jun.

AUTUMN: Fairly well reported in south (Abu Dhabi emirate), fewer in north, late August to early October. One Das Island 16-17 Aug, first record, one Bateen gardens 4 Oct, last record.

Ménétries' Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* Common spring passage migrant mid February to March, less frequent all other months September to May.

SPRING: One or two reported January, Al Wathba, Ruwais, Merawah Island, probably overwintered. Common everywhere mid Feb-Mar. Four Al Wathba wood 4 Feb, first migrants recorded. Up to seven birds together Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar and the Zabeel fish ponds 19 Mar. Up to two Das Island until 11 Apr, one Bateen gardens 11-16 Apr and one Jebel Ali hotel 15 Apr, latest reports.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 3 Sep and one Ruwais 9 Sep, otherwise up to four several sites mid Sep to Nov. c. 6 Al Wathba wood 3 Nov-16 Dec.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor mid September to mid April, generally confined to desertic scrub and low bushes in sandy or gravel areas.

WINTER/SPRING: One Al Jazeera Khor 7 Apr was latest spring record. AUTUMN/WINTER: Three Merawah Island 12 Sep and good passage recorded there mid-late September. Common in desert habitat from October. Five Khor al Beidah 5 Oct, nine Bateen/race course area 7 Oct and up to six Das Island 6-26 Oct.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* Uncommon passage migrant December to March, occasionally November and April.

WINTER/SPRING: Singles January to March several locations including Bateen gardens, Jebel Ali hotel, Jebel Hafit, Emirates golf course, the Zabeel fish ponds and Ruwayah. Five each Al Wathba wood 4-13 Feb (two 24 Mar) and Al Jazeera Khor 4 Mar. Last spring record was of three in Bateen gardens 1 Apr and one on Das Island until 8 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 7-9 Dec and Al Wathba wood 8-16 Dec.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* Uncommon late spring migrant April to May. Only in south and west in autumn. 10 recorded in 1994 compared to 9 in 1992 and 12 in 1993. SPRING: Two Al Wathba woods 25-26 Mar and up to two Emirates golf course 11-14 Apr, one Ramtha tip 15 Apr and one Das Island 17 Apr.

AUTUMN: One on Das Island 23 Aug, one Al Wathba 1 Sep, one Merawah Island 18-20 Sep and one Abu al Abyadh 24 Sep.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* Common passage migrant September to November and mid February to mid May. Rare in winter, mostly savannah plains and in the mountains. Siberian races involved may include *blythi*, or perhaps of the little-studied associated forms *telengitica* or *halimondendri* (Vaurie 1959 & Howard & Moore 1984).

WINTER/SPRING: One was at the Emirates golf course 6 Jan and one was in foothills near Digdaga 18 Feb. Ones and twos, until main March passage (from 17 Mar on Das Island) to mid April. Three Bateen gardens 14 Apr and one there to 29 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to two Merawah Island 4/7 Sep. Some passage from mid October, though rather scarce.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula* Usually located by its insect-like call, this small Lesser Whitethroat is a common winter visitor and passage migrant September to mid April. Sometimes regarded as a race of *S. curruca* though treated as a separate species here.

Reports show much difficulty in separating (sub) species.

WINTER/SPRING: 18 Kalba plain 30 Jan, typical numbers. Latest records, up to three each Masafi, Emirates golf course, Jebel ali and Mushrif Park 1-4 Apr (MAH *et al*), two 8/15 Apr Bateen Gardens (EH) and one Ain al Faydah 17 Apr.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 23-26 Aug, with two 25 Aug (very early, possibly *curruca*?). One Bateen gardens 19 Sep and nine Tayibah 23 Sep. 30 around Jebel Hafit 14 Oct and 29 Al Wathba wood 8 Dec, typical numbers.

Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea* Rather scarce migrant, mostly mid March to mid April, but is being more regularly recorded in winter and autumn thanks to more thorough observation.

WINTER/SPRING: At least 13 reliable reports 13 Jan-14 Apr on passage in several locations throughout the country including Das Island.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* Irregular passage migrant February to May and mid August to October, common some years. 1994 was below average.

SPRING: One Emirates golf course 5 Feb, first migrant, then several reported March to early May, mostly on Das. Three Bateen gardens 2 May, one Abu al Abyadh 14-15 May, one Das Island 5-8 Jun, were noteworthy.

AUTUMN: One on Das Island 1 Aug, first record. Commonest late August to mid September, particularly in Abu Dhabi emirate.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* Scarce passage migrant. 6 birds recorded compared to none in 1993.

Singles Kafai Island 15 Jun, Qarnein Island 18 Jun (very late) (SJA, CR), Ruwais 9 Sep, Merawah Island 11 & 26 Sep, and Bateen gardens area 16 Sep.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Regular and fairly common passage migrant, usually mid March to May, fewer mid September to early November, and often in small groups. Very poor 1994 numbers.

SPRING: Three at the Emirates golf course 14-15 Apr, up to four Das Island 21 Mar-25 Apr. Other odd sightings during period.

AUTUMN: One Merawah Island 4 Sep, very early. Up to two Das Island 6-23 Oct, one imm. Abu Dhabi 18 Nov, one Al Wathba 3 Nov-20 Dec.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Vagrant.

One Das Island 16 Jan-23 Feb (MW, LR), 2nd UAE record.

Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus (humei)* Vagrant or rare passage migrant and winter visitor September to late April. Most records come from Das Island. *P.i.humei* reported as follows: One wintered Emirates golf course until 17 Feb and another was there 20-30 Apr (CR, SJA *et al*).
AUTUMN: Individuals Das Island 11-16 Oct, 23 Oct & 23-25 Nov (LR, MW).

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Scarce migrant mid March to mid May and September to mid October, rarely more than five seen per year. 3 in 1994 (none in 1993).
Two Bateen Gardens 30 Sep and one there 7 Oct.

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus* Fairly common winter visitor October to March, to dry mountain plains and wadis, where it favours *Acacia* trees. Easily overlooked and previously under-recorded.

WINTER/SPRING: A particularly good season for the species. Individuals found during nearly every visit to suitable habitat in the mountains until late March. One Masafi wadi 30 Mar-1 Apr.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Two Bateen Gardens 15-18 Nov (C.Pohl), c.9 foothills of Jebel Hafit 1-18 Nov (SJA) and two calling Masafi wadi 26 Nov. Few other reports.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* Common winter visitor and very common passage migrant October to April, particularly strong passage mid to early April. Suspected eastern sub-species *tristis* (and probably *abietinus*) dominate (though no studies published).
WINTER/SPRING: c.20 Emirates golf course 17 Feb and 27 there 5 Apr, 20 on Das Island 26-27 Mar, typical passage numbers. Common to early April, with last Dubai record on 24 Apr.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Three Bateen gardens 7 Oct. 40+ Khalidiyah spit 20 Dec. Common late October to December.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Fairly common passage migrant, mostly April and May. Scarce mid August to October.
SPRING: One Das Island 18-22 Mar, first spring record. Most from mid April with up to 10 most suitable sites to mid May. One of race *acredula* (identified by song) Khalidiya spit 30 Mar (JRH, MAH *et al*). Latest, one Zabeel fish ponds 26 May, two Das Island until 2 Jun and one Qarnein Island 18 Jun.
AUTUMN: One Das Island 18 Aug, with up to four most days until 11 Oct, typical passage.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Fairly common passage migrant, April to May and late August to October.
SPRING: One Das Island 7 Apr was first spring record. Peak in early May, with 22 at the Emirates golf course 1 May and 15 there 6 May. Last record Kafai Island 15 Jun.
AUTUMN: One Das Island 16 Aug, first autumn record. Common September to mid October, with one straggler remaining at the Emirates golf course until 8 Nov.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* Uncommon passage migrant and localised winter visitor October to April.
SPRING: One Bateen Gardens 29 Mar & 9 Apr, possibly same bird.
AUTUMN/WINTER: Up to three Das Island 25 Oct-6 Nov and one there 2 Dec, one Emirates golf course 30 Oct, one Al Wathba wood 3 Nov and up to two Khalidiyah spit 20-22 Dec. One Bu Kushayshah 31 Dec.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* Irregular spring migrant March to mid April, subject to influxes some years and absences in others. Rarely in autumn. 1993 & 1994 were lean years.
SPRING: One Das Island 5 & 15 Apr and one Khalidiyah spit 6 Apr, were only records.

Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps* Breeding resident, dependent on areas with thorny scrub and low cover. Usually in groups of 5-10.
24 Kalba plain 31 Mar and 19 reported Tayibah 23 Sep, noteworthy numbers.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* Common breeding resident, though nomadic and difficult to find outside the breeding season, particularly in mid summer.

The best sites included Ain al Faydah gardens and Hamraniyah fields, where reports of over 30 birds were normal.

Two Bu Kushayshah 31 Dec, was a range extension.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Uncommon passage migrant late April to May and mid August to mid October, though probably under-recorded due to its secretive nature on passage.

Rather scarce this year.

SPRING: Two at the Emirates golf course 8 May. One Das Island 11 Jun, latest migrant.

AUTUMN: Two on Das Island 6 Aug and one there 16-17 Aug. Groups of up to six many locations including the Emirates golf course, Ramtha tip, Digdaga, Khor Kalba, Abu al Abyadh, Khalidiyah spit, Bateen gardens and Das Island, from late August until early October. Smaller numbers other sites. Two Al Wathba 13 Oct, latest report.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* The commonest migrant shrike, widespread on passage, more localised in winter, present September to mid April.

WINTER/SPRING: Four wintering Emirates golf course, with increase in numbers from late Feb when main passage commenced, peaking at 12 on 27 Mar. Eight Safa Park 25 Mar, 10 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 31 Mar, nine Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr. Late migrants noted well into May with one Emirates golf course 16 May and a straggler on Das Island 1 Jun.

L.i.phoenicuroides predominate in winter, *L.i.isabellinus* reported late March, but only *phoenicuroides* thereafter.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 24-25 Jul very early and another from 10 Aug for several days. Widespread, with migrants noted throughout the country September to November, with peak of eight Emirates golf course 8-13 Nov.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Rather localised, sometimes common, passage migrant. Numbers vary greatly from year to year. All reports listed.

SPRING: One Das Island 20-22 Mar was unusually early. Main passage in mid May, with three Jebel Ali 12 May, up to four Abu al Abyadh 14-17 May, one remaining to 18 May and four at the Emirates golf course 16 May.

AUTUMN: Singles reported Merawah Island 30 Aug, W.Lagoon 9 Sep, Bateen gardens 16-19 Sep, Abu al Abyadh 19 Sep, Al Wathba 18 Sep and Mirfa 27 Sep. Two Das Island 2 Oct, with one 9-13 Oct. No autumn records in Northern Emirates.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* A scarce and irregular passage migrant, mostly April and May, but in autumn often common on islands and extreme south west. 5 birds on the mainland (plus 8 on islands), compared to none in 1993. (The main migration route appears to be to the west of the UAE).

SPRING: One Das Island 20-22 Mar early, another there 26 Apr.

AUTUMN: Merawah Island: Up to five 29 Aug-5 Sep, one 18 Sep, two on 20 Sep.

Two Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep, one Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 14 Sep, one Mirfa 27 Sep, one Al Wathba camel track 28 Sep and one 1 Oct Das Island.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* A common and widely distributed breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Sub-species *pallidirostris* ('Steppe' Grey Shrike) is a regular migrant and winter visitor. Resident birds (and some migrants) are of race *aucheri*.

WINTER/SPRING: 55 were counted in Hamraniyah fields area 21 Jan. Other migrants noted Abu Dhabi and Das Island in March. Several of migrant races including *elegans* reported late March. One late bird Das Island 26 Apr.

BREEDING: The well-watched pair at the Emirates golf course produced at least one recently hatched-chick (seen in nest) 6 Mar, while the adults spent most of mid March protecting a further brood from predation by House Crows.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Das Island 31 Jul-3 Aug. Main passage noted from late August with two *pallidirostris* Al Habab on 11 Sep, three on 20 Sep and four on 19 Oct. At least two

overwintered at this site and two were at Al Ain camel track 30 Dec. Up to 16 on each visit to Al Wathba camel track 1-26 Sep, six remaining to 16 Dec, probably migrants. Smaller numbers of migrants were also recorded during the period.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Common and widespread passage migrant February to April and, infrequently, mid August to October.

SPRING: Singles Emirates golf course 30 Jan, Das Island 10 & 17 Feb, Al Wathba camel track 13 Feb (two there 17 Feb) and at the Zabeel fish ponds 19 Feb. Common late Feb to end of March. Three Wadi Bih 2 Apr (including one in song). and one Dubai 23 Apr. One Abu al Abyadh 15 May was the latest ever spring record.

AUTUMN: One Das Island 18 Aug, three there 25 Aug and one 1 Sep. Singles on Merawah Island 5-6 Sep, 18 & 20 Sep.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* Rather uncommon passage migrant mid March to May.

Occurs in autumn regularly in south west and islands only and has overwintered locally (as one did this year in Abu Dhabi). 22 birds found, compared to only 7 in 1993.

SPRING: One overwintered Mushref palace gardens to 15 Feb, with six other single records in the Abu Dhabi area 4 Mar-4 Apr. One Das Island 17/18 Mar and 14-17 Apr, three Emirates golf course 10-14 Apr, one in Zabeel garden 14 Apr. Another was at the Emirates golf course 12-16 May and one Khalidiyah spit 22 May. One on Das Island 1-12 Jun, was very late.

AUTUMN/WINTER: One Merawah Island 13 & 19 Sep, one in Mushref palace gardens 10-17 Sep (two there 30 Sep) and one there 1 Oct to end of year. One Das Island 30 Sep-4 Oct, one Khalidiyah spit 27 Oct and two near Abu Dhabi Hilton hotel 24 Nov.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* An increasing nuisance in the Dubai area as numbers and range expands. Common resident on the East Coast and north of Ras al Khaimah, favouring date palm plantations. See Madge, page 124.

Largest flocks in Dubai area include 52 Zabeel fish ponds 20 Jul and 84 there 2 Oct and 50 Dubai Creek golf club 20 Nov. Three birds Emirates golf course harassing all species (and golfers) during May, probably with active nest/s. 250 Dibba 31 Mar, 90 Hamraniyah 4 Dec, four Abu Dhabi Island 22 Jul, where it is probably now resident.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* Rather localised breeding resident, favouring uninhabited desert and mountain areas. Noteworthy records follow.

30 Ruwayah 27 Feb, a regular area for the species. 24 Medesis-Al Wagan road (VA23, VB24) 13 May (M.R.Khan). c.200 Jebel Hafit 30 Aug. One Sir Bani Yas Island single date in April (PH).

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Uncommon winter visitor November to February and occasional passage migrant. Rather localised and erratic in its movements. Breeding summer visitor (or resident?) Hamraniyah fields.

WINTER/SPRING: 45 Ruwais 5 Jan. Rather scarce this winter with single birds at golf courses in the Dubai area Jan-Mar. Reported at Remah rest house 2 Jan.

BREEDING: At least two Hamraniyah fields 3 Mar. Reported carrying food 12 Apr. 11 there 22 May, again carrying food for young.

AUTUMN/WINTER: 16 including juveniles, in Zabeel palace grounds 7 Sep, unexplained occurrence. Seven Emirates golf course 16 Oct, 55 Zabeel 19 Nov, 30 Ramtha tip 23 Nov and 25 Hamraniyah fields 5 Dec. Up to seven each at two sewage dumps north of Sharjah 23 Dec. Seen in smaller numbers Al Wathba, Bateen gardens, Fujeirah National Dairy Farm, E.Lagoon from mid October.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* Regular autumn migrant (peak passage August & September), scarce at other times and sometimes over-winters. 1994 was a good year for the species.

SPRING: One Zabeel fish ponds 1-13 Feb, at least three Hamraniyah, in mixed flocks with Bank Mynahs and Starlings 3 Mar, four Zabeel fish ponds 30 Mar.

AUTUMN: Up to 18 Das Island 7-22 Aug, declining to three from 23 Aug-3 Sep. Two Merawah

Island 23-24 Aug, eight Emirates golf course 6-8 Sep, increasing to 11 on 17 Sep, with at least two there most of October with a flock of 20 seen most visits 25 Oct to 16 Dec. Six Al Mamzer Park, Dubai 2 Sep, three Jebel Ali hotel 2 Sep, 15 Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 16-18 Sep; ones & twos other sites including Hamraniyah fields and Al Wathba camel track.

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis* Very common introduced resident, locally abundant in Dubai and other coastal cities. The spread of irrigation has greatly helped the expansion of the range inland and northwards to Ras al Khaimah (although still scarce in neighbouring Oman).

Maximum counts: 420 E.Lagoon 15 Feb with 1100 there 27 Sep. c.200 Zabeel fish ponds Sep-Nov. One Dadnah, East Coast, 22 Mar (WB28) was a range extension. Two on Das Island Jan-Apr, four in June, shows insidious extension of species' range.

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus* A rather dispersive resident, probably introduced, recorded breeding in colonies at Dubai and Ras al Khaimah since 1990. May also breed elsewhere, including Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Al Ain where small numbers are regularly reported.

MAX.FLOCKS: Zabeel fish ponds - recorded regularly, with up to 90+ there 28 Jan-30 Mar, though rather scarce to end of December. Large numbers Hamraniyah fields, March-December with 390 there 17 Mar and c.60 on 4 Dec. Nesting activity noted in holes in old wells at Ras al Khaimah in March and April.

OTHER RECORDS: Up to eight Abu Dhabi most months, with 60 E.Lagoon roost 27 Sep, five Ramtha tip 5 Mar, four Emirates golf course 21 Mar, one Ramtha 2 Sep, 30 Al Ain camel market 2 Dec and 27 Tawam Hospital roundabout 30 Dec.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Common and widespread even in deserts and mountains. c.800 Bateen gardens 16 Sep, typical urban numbers. Four Kafai Island 15 Jun, extension of range.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Breeds locally (only in Hamraniyah fields area of Ras al Khaimah) and may be dispersive as it is often absent during the year. Otherwise rare winter visitor, though no inland records away from RAK in recent years.

SPRING: Colony active - eight Hamraniyah 21 Jan, one carrying nest material 1 Apr, with food-carrying noted 22 May. One Das Island 29 May-5 Jun (MW), first Das Island record and one possible Kafai Island 15 Jun. 180 Hamraniyah 4 Dec (CR/Nos Oiseaux).

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* Fairly regular, often numerous migrant February to early April. Rare in autumn, and breeds locally some years particularly after a wet winter. No breeding evidence noted this year.

SPRING: One Al Wathba camel track 17 Feb, very early. Up to six Emirates golf course 1-6 Mar, becoming common from mid March with 70+ Fujeirah National Dairy Farm 17 Mar, 60 Al Wathba camel track 1 Apr, 100+ in Wadi Bih 7 Apr, 31 Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr, representative numbers. One Emirates golf course 1 May was last record.

AUTUMN: One Al Wathba camel track 29 Aug-1 Sep.

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* Regular summer breeding visitor April to August, occasionally on passage though rarely in autumn on mainland. Numbers dropping due to habitat loss *ie* favoured nesting trees *Prosopis cineraria* and *Acacia tortilis* are threatened by lowering water tables and overgrazing by goats and camels.

SPRING/SUMMER: One Mushref Palace gardens 26 Mar. Two Khor Kalba 31 Mar, first report on territory. Influx during April, with up to 20 seen regularly in Al Awir area (probably the most densely colonised area) from 15 Apr.

A pair entering nest hole 13 May at Kalba and a pair in a Jumeirah garden, presumably post-breeding dispersal 27 Jul. One Kafai Island 15 Jun.

AUTUMN: Two Das Island 9-18 Aug and up to six there 26-30 Sep. Passage noted Merawah Island 3-19 Sep, with up to eight there 3-5 Sep. One was at Hamraniyah fields 18 Sep.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* Widespread breeding resident, probably nomadic and easily overlooked.

Recorded virtually everywhere including urban areas, cultivations, deserts and mountains. Flocks of 20 regular, with 75 Al Wathba camel track 3 Oct.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* Rare winter visitor, last recorded December 1990.

One was in the Jebel Ali hotel grounds 16 Sep (SJA) and one E.Lagoon 8-14 Nov (C.Pohl), 14th & 15th records.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* Scarce and irruptive winter visitor, totally absent some years. 16 reported this year, compared to 5 in 1993.

WINTER/SPRING: One Ruwais 5 Jan, four Emirates golf course 26 Feb, two Al Ain Hilton gardens 1 Mar, up to nine at the Emirates golf course 1-12 Mar.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githageneus* A rather scarce and elusive species probably resident, though mostly recorded in Omani enclaves adjacent to Al Ain outside the breeding season.

Three Jebel Hafit 2 Feb (SLJ), two Wadi Bih 2 Apr (MAH *et al*).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Uncommon passage migrant mostly in autumn in previous years. c.20 birds were reported (unusually several in spring), compared to 19 in 1993. SPRING: Two Nadd al Sheba 7 Jan, one Das Island 16 Jan-1 Feb, 21 Feb, 24-30 Mar then odd birds until 20 Apr.

AUTUMN: Up to three Das Island 23-30 Aug & 27-28 Sep, with up to five 3-23 Oct. One Merawah Island on several dates from 30 Aug-25 Sep, one Mirfa 17 Sep and one Al Wathba camel track 9 Sep, 3 & 13 Oct.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* Vagrant.

One on Das Island 8-9 Dec (L.Reaney), was the 1st UAE record.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* Common mountain resident, though subject to local movements when not breeding. Often difficult to find.

Noteworthy records include 16 in foothills behind Digdaga 15 Feb, eight Wadi Shih 16 Mar and c.40 Wadi Bih 2 Apr. Rather elusive July-November.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* Rare spring migrant late March to mid April, and possibly overlooked,

One Abu al Abyadh Island 31 Mar (G.Clarkson, S.Smith), 12th record.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Uncommon passage migrant mid March to mid May, rare September and October (usually). A good year for the species.

SPRING: Two Merawah 31 Mar-1 Apr, up to seven Emirates golf course 5-14 Apr, nine Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr, up to 12 Abu Dhabi race course 9-24 Apr and up to nine together Das Island 9-28 Apr. Up to two other sites during period. One Abu al Abyadh 14 May, last record.

AUTUMN: One or two Merawah Island 5-25 Sep, one Abu al Abyadh 19 Sep and two there 25 Sep-5 Oct. Up to four Das Island 26 Sep-23 Oct, with six there 2-3 Oct and up to five Al Wathba fields 25 Sep-3 Oct & one there 3 Nov.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* Vagrant. Averaging about two birds per year since 1986, when first recorded.

One Das Island 11-18 Oct (MW) and two there 20-27 Oct (L.Reaney), 8th & 9th records.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Autumn passage migrant July to mid September. Rare in spring on mainland (two this year).

SPRING: One Safa Park 20 Mar (P.Edwards). One Abu al Abyadh 14-15 Apr, six on Das Island 17 Apr and one RAK airport April (P.Brett). One Qarnein Island 17 Jun.

AUTUMN: Up to three several sites including Al Wathba camel track, Fujeirah National Dairy

Farm, W.Lagoon, Merawah Island Aug-Sep. Up to eight Das Island 2 Aug-2 Sep, peaking at 11 on 29 Aug. Eight Al Wathba camel track 1 Sep.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* Formerly an irregular winter visitor but an opportunist nesting species (at least, many remain well into late spring, often in song).

WINTER/SPRING: Al Ain camel track: At least six in song January, 20 singing most of February, 29 birds counted 1-3 Feb and at least 10 there in song 13 Mar. Nine 'believed breeding' and six there 24 May. One was disturbed from long grass 3 Jun. Two Al Wathba camel track 24 Jan

AUTUMN/WINTER: Seven Al Habab field 29 Nov with a record 90 there 22 Dec. 12+ Emirates golf course 18 Dec, three Al Wathba camel track 3 Nov, increasing to 12 on 11 Nov and 43 on 2 Dec. 16 Al Ain camel track 10 Nov & 66 there 30 Dec. Smaller numbers other sites from 4 Dec.

INTRODUCED FERAL BREEDERS

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Feral population around the cities of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain appears to be expanding. Significant numbers introduced or escape from private collections. 100+ breeding on Sir Bani Yas Island. Five Ruwais January and 10 Merawah Island 13 Jan. Three were at the Zabeel fish ponds 13 Dec, first record for Dubai.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* Introduced and non-expanding populations exist at least on Abu al Abyadh and Sir Bani Yas Islands, numbering several hundred pairs.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* Small introduced population in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Up to six reported Abu Dhabi area throughout year and two over Dubai city 28 Mar. 20+ Hamraniyah fields 3/17 Mar & 21 May. Up to 10 were at Zabeel Palace/fish ponds noted most visits. Nine seen regularly Jumeirah and Safa Park area. Two Emirates golf course 22 Sep. One or two Jebel Ali hotel 17 Nov.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* Up to five Bateen gardens most visits throughout the year, with six there 15 Feb and seven on 12 Sep.

Brahminy Mynah *Sturnus pagodarum* Feral species, nests locally in Dubai and probably Sharjah (not recorded 1993). One Zabeel fish ponds 1 Feb (where most records have occurred in recent years), one Emirates golf course 3-4 Apr and one Safa Park 14 Sep (J.Hart). Adults nest-building behind Dubai Zoo, Jumeirah 25 Apr (M.R.Khan).

Pied Mynah *Sturnus contra* Introduced resident. Probably only 20-30 pairs in Dubai, Sharjah, Jebel Ali and Abu Dhabi. Present Zabeel fish ponds on most visits, with 12 there 1 Feb, 10 on 30 Mar, 11 on 19 Nov. Otherwise up to four there on average. Two Safa Park 25 Mar, one Creek Park 1 May. Two in Abu Dhabi 15 Feb & 19 Mar, two Ramtha tip 1 Jun, three 26 Sep and 10 there 31 Dec.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* Several at dusk in reeds Zabeel fish ponds 22 May and four there 22 Jul.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Pair in garden behind Dubai Dry Dock 7 Sep (J.Bernardistori) and one Jumeirah garden late Oct (B.McCarthy *per* A.Millar). This species has been reported 'nesting' in other Dubai gardens and may already be a feral breeder.

OTHER SPECIES ESCAPED OR IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* One Ain al Faydah 29 Sep, probable escape from free-flying population at Al Ain Zoo, where three reported in pens 14 Oct.

Common Crane *Grus grus* Four Abu al Abyadh 17 May.
Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Three Sir Bani Yas Island 8 Apr.
Blossom-headed Parakeet *Psittacula roseata* Two Bateen Gardens 26 Mar and up to 10 Emirates golf course 18-27 Dec.
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua* sp. One Khalidiyah spit 20 Aug.
Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* One Emirates golf course 26 Feb, 3 Sep.
Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis* sp. (some reports may refer to Superb Starling *Sturnus Spero*) One Ain al Faydah 1 Apr, two Emirates golf course/Zabeel fish ponds 23 Apr (G.Clarkson).
Scaly-breasted (Chestnut) Munia *Lonchura punctulata* Two Bateen gardens 23 Nov. One carrying nest material Safa Park 14 Nov (F.Amann)
Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar* One male Zabeel fish ponds 22 Jun, one Ramtha tip 21 Nov. One Das Island 1-3 Sep.
Golden-backed Weaver *Ploceus jacksoni* 10+ birds first noted actively nest-building at Zabeel fish ponds 6 Jun.
Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* One Hamraniyah fields 21 Jan, one Jebel Ali Hotel 8 Sep.
Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonostica rhodopareia* One Abu Dhabi race course 9 Apr.
Masked/Red Bishop *Euplectes orix* At least four Safa Park Aug-Sep. One Ramtha tip 21 Nov.

REPORTS FROM OMAN ENCLAVES (enclosed within UAE territory)

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus* Seven Shuwayhah 20 Jan (WA26) (R.Read) and an exceptional soaring group of 12 (presumably over a carcass) near Wadi Sumayni 1 Mar (VB26) (CR *et al*). Two Mahdah/Dubai-Hatta road junction 13 Mar (J.B.Platt)
Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* One imm. Sal Hamdan (north of Wadi Khabb, WA28) 18 Nov (G.Feulner *et al*)
Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinoides* Pair on top of Jebel Hawrah, Mahdah, 19 Jan (CR, DB)
Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* 55 on Dibba-Bayah beach 3 Mar (CR *et al*)
Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* One near Jebel Qatar 9 Dec (G.Feulner). One c.5 km. towards Mahdah 16 Dec (P.Hudson)
Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Three 'cavorting' Sal Hamdan (WA28) 18 Nov (G.Feulner *et al*).
Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* One Wadi Bih UTM 421000, 285800 on 13 Mar (R.Read)
Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* Family group of four Hanging Gardens, Jebel Qatar 5 Mar.
Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githageneus* Five Hanging Gardens, seven Fossil Valley 22 Mar and up to 30 Hanging Gardens 1-22 Mar. Up to eight Jebel Qatar 22 May-10 Jun. (R.Read).
Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* One near Wadi Sumayni 19 Mar (C.Hancock).

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Aspinall, S. 1993. Spring migration of Lesser Kestrel. *Emirates Bird Report* 17:47-48
- Aspinall, S. 1994. Spring migration of Lesser Kestrel through the UAE and northern Oman in 1994. *Emirates Bird Report* 18:96-99.
- Aspinall, S. 1994b. The Birds of Yasat, Ghaghah and Kafai, United Arab Emirates. *Tribulus* 4.1: 5-8. Published by the Emirates Natural History Group, P.O. Box 2380, Abu Dhabi.
- Aspinall, S. & Richardson, C. 1994 Asian Waterfowl Census 1994. *Emirates Bird Report* 18:117-123.
- Hirschfeld, E. 1994. On the status of Booted Warbler in the UAE. *Emirates Bird Report* 18:100-104.
-

Hirschfeld, E. 1995. *Birds in Bahrain - a study of their migration patterns 1990-92*. Hobby, Dubai & Liverpool.

James, S.L. 1994. The Blyth's Pipit Story. *Emirates Bird Report* 18:110-112.

Richardson, C. (compiler) 1987-93. *Emirates Bird Reports: 1-18*. Emirates Bird Records Committee, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, UAE.

Richardson, C. 1990. *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates*. Hobby, Warrington & Dubai.

Richardson, C. & Aspinall, S. 1996. *A Checklist of the Birds of the United Arab Emirates*. Published by the EBRC, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai.

Richardson, C. & Bannon, J. 1991. Prospective new bird species for the UAE. *Tribulus* 1(1):9-13.

Uttley, J.D., Thomas, C.J., Green, M.G., Suddaby, D. & Platt, J.B. 1988. The autumn migration of waders and other waterbirds through the northern United Arab Emirates. *Sandgrouse* 10:58-70.

[Garner, M. 1997. *Large White-headed Gulls in the United Arab Emirates. A contribution to their field identification.*
Emirates Bird Report 19: 94-103, EBRC, Dubai, UAE]
(Full version with photographs in EBR19)

LARGE WHITE-HEADED GULLS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES **A contribution to their field identification**

by Martin Garner

This paper is based primarily on a visit to the United Arab Emirates and gulls watched there in late February/early March 1996, and built on the experience and study of some extralimital forms of the Herring Gull complex occurring in Great Britain (Garner & Quinn 1997.)

NOMENCLATURE

Normal Practice in U.A.E. bird literature is to refer to common English names such as **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* **Yellow-legged Gull** *L. cachinnans* and **Armenian Gull** *L. armenicus*, to cover the forms occurring there. Most recent study however is arriving at quite differing opinions on taxonomic status, and to facilitate study it seems preferable to refer to "forms" primarily by their specific/subspecific Latin names, which should lead to much greater detail about, and recording of, the little known ones.

WHAT TO RECORD

Much literature on large gull identification places high emphasis on upperpart tone and bare part colouration. In the Gulf, initial experience of Large gulls can be very confusing. Many adults appear to have quite dark upperparts (about like *michahellis*/Yellow-legged Gull or darker for western birders), all forms show mostly yellow-legs, with occasional variation, often extensive black in outer primaries with one or two white mirrors, and in varying proportions, dark sub-terminal bill markings and dark to pale iris.

A little searching can reveal a few obviously paler birds, and a few darker ones but otherwise a mass of basically very similar looking gulls. It seems more helpful to focus on three areas often ignored in gull-watching to clarify the picture, *ie*:

- a). Structure b). Wing moult c). Wing tip patterns

a). Structure/Shape/Expression

The complex mix of characteristics that make an individual gull distinctive include some subjective ones but others are real. They are just hard to describe on paper. They are also more useful in the field than in the museum.

Facial expression and head shape (especially in view of the alterations that take place according to posture and actions) are difficult, but most experienced gull-watchers will agree that many species exhibit genuine characters that are of real value in the field. *heuglini* has a distinct neck and body shape, once learnt quite different from *fuscus*; *barabensis* is very round-headed; it is hard to understand how it can be simply lumped with some long-headed "snouty" looking western *cachinnans*.

The head shape, bill proportions, position of the eye, carriage of the head and neck combine to produce a particular "look" which is of prime importance for separating one individual from another.

b). Wing moult

With adults, learning to ascertain the exact state of primary moult, on most "normal" individuals, very quickly narrows choices, *eg* most *heuglini* and *taimyrensis* are 1-3 months later in their moult than *cachinnans*, so an adult gull in Oct/Nov with 2-4 visible white-tipped new outer primaries (beyond tertials) will usually be *cachinnans* types. Those retaining an old worn P10 from October to December will usually be *heuglini/taimyrensis*. See following text for details on other forms.

c). **Wing tip patterns**

As wing tips are subject to such obvious effects of wear and primary moult which disrupt their patterns, and, in flight, tend to be the most mobile parts of the bird, there has been a tendency to ignore the detail of what is one of the most vital areas for field identification. Apart from general descriptions of grey, black and white and basic comparative assessments of their extent, little has been attempted. Yet it is possible to glean vital clues when a gull preens, stretches or droops a wing while standing.

Detailed descriptions of outer primary patterns have been ignored because of the assumption that there is so much variation within populations and overlap between forms that such details have no value. While no single wing tip pattern may be foolproof, many are sufficiently distinct to be crucial clues, especially in combination with other characters, so that a firm identification can be reached.

Other factors

Features such as upperpart tone are still very important to record accurately, always in comparison with other forms present, and aware of the problems created by bright sunlight and altering angles of a bird's body, which affects the appearance of the upperpart tone. Bare part colours and pattern of head/neck streaking too are very helpful, to record accurately and in comparison with other birds.

It should be noted that while it was often difficult to see an individual gull well enough in a large and/or mobile flock, to record enough details to make a firm identification, those individuals that gave sufficiently good/close views, were often assignable to a particular form, using the criteria following:

TYPES AND POTENTIAL FORMS RECORDED

I identified six forms, each with consistent features that could be found on large number of birds seen.

I have used a simple system of Key points rather than continuous prose on a lengthy description. Obviously key points do not cover every variation within a population, nor does it cover intergrades, intermediates or hybrids (the proportion of which is not known).

Nevertheless, by using a simple system it should enable sufficient observers to become more familiar with those forms I have described, thereby:

- a). Clarifying field appearance of these forms further, and
- b). Highlighting odd birds that don't fit, describing them well and working on eventually what they are.

It is difficult not to give a name to a particular type seen, and well described, so I have added my own opinion and suggestions for English name and taxonomy (though incorporating the research and ideas of other current workers in this field). I have opted for the current trend of "splitting", because,

- a). increasingly the evidence seems to warrant this, and
- b). much greater interest is created thereby producing greater abundance of information (eg in the case of Armenian Gull *L.armenicus*).

OVERVIEW

The 6 forms I consider to have occurred in the UAE in February/March 1996 follow:

(1) *heuglini*, (2) *taimyrensis* = **Siberian Gull**

Many are indeterminate due to clinal variation and should be named as "Siberian Gull" with only darkest and paler birds subspecifically assigned.

(3) western *cachinnans*, (4) eastern *cachinnans* = **Steppe Yellow-legged Gull**

Reasonable to say that given current knowledge all should be simply named as *L.cachinnans* and not sub-specifically assigned until eastern birds are further researched, though in a given majority of individuals there are differences warranting separation into 2 forms but with clinal intermediate types and intra-population variation.

(5) *barabensis* = **Baraba Yellow-legged Gull**

Hard to discern in large flocks from some darker (eastern?) *cachinnans*. Often mistaken as *armenicus*.

(6) *fuscus* = **Lesser Black-backed** or **Baltic Gull**

Though not seen by me, the following three forms may also occur, but require very thorough documentation to confirm:

- 1). *armenicus*
- 2). *birulae* (taxonomic position uncertain; may be distinct form *birulae*, or simply paler, flesh-coloured legged *taimyrensis*).
- 3). *mongolicus*

A broader, similar overview of forms occurring is given by Bourne (1996).

Please note the following detailed documentation of forms is meant only as a first step. Much more work is needed to clarify and research into the identification and taxonomy of these birds.

TYPE A

Form: *ponticus* or "western *cachinnans*"

Suggested taxonomy: **Pontic/Steppe Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans ponticus*.

Number present as % of all forms seen in late Feb/March 1996: probably c.20% (though clinal with B (below) and types A & B combined = c.50-60%, so most probably should be identified just as *L.cachinnans*)

Key Points:

- Upperparts palest, often "pearly grey" (though continuous cline of tone from type A to type C)
- Wingtip pattern most different compared to other forms. Including, on many, long white tip (mirror and tip joined) on P10 with only incomplete subterminal black marks, usually not band, and clearly visible long white tongue 50-75% down visible inner web of P10. Sometimes only a little black across whole tip area of outer primaries.
- Structurally often shows longest-looking features: long parallel-sided bill (often thin-looking), long sloping forehead producing "snouty" expression, head long and eye high and forward in face. Legs often obviously long, long primary projection and slender overall long attenuated shape.
- Primary moult complete mid November to early December.
- Underwing most pale often looking pallid with little contrast (as Herring Gull *L. argentus* or paler)
- Bare parts often rather dull in winter. Bill sometimes greenish-toned with dull orangy red gonys spot. Iris variably dark "french mustard" to pale yellow. Legs variable, regularly lead-toned or greyish/yellow, even flesh-coloured. Orbital ring often bright orange. Some have parallel-sided long thin nostril slit.
- Head streaking to December only. Usually quite white-headed looking with streaking usually confined to nape/hindneck.
- Size very variable, some presumed _ can be among largest birds present. Small female can be Common Gull-like overlapping with type C (*barabensis*) structurally.

TYPE B

Form: nominate or "eastern" *cachinnans*

Suggested taxonomy: **Steppe Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans cachinnans*

Number present as % of all forms in late Feb/Mar = approx. 30-40%.

Also overlaps completely with type A, so many birds seen only distantly should be named *L. cachinnans* or *cachinnans/barabensis*. Types A & B combined = 50-60%; types B & C combined = 50-60%; types A, B & C combined = 70-80%.

Key points:

- Upperparts variable, from as pale as type A to many darker-looking birds than type A.
- Wing-tip pattern, usually more black/less white than type A, typically two white mirrors and whitish tongue on P10, shorter on average 50% from visible base, so often just visible at rest on far wing beyond closed tertials.
- Structurally similar to A with rather long sloping forehead, long legs, though bill averages a little shorter looking.
- Moults as type A
- Underwing showing a little more contrast than A, though still overall rather pale, reminiscent of many northern *argentatus* Herring Gulls *ie.* not as contrasting as *michahellis* but more so than *argenteus* Herring.
- Bare parts on average a little brighter than type A with more yellow, though not as vivid as C.
- Head streaking as A.

NOTE: re TYPE A AND TYPE B.

Stegmann (1934) separated *cachinnans* east and west of the Caspian Sea, naming the western population *ponticus*. Differences are clinal, involving much intergradation, but some general differences as indicated are visible on skins and in the field. While most birds may simply be described as *L. cachinnans* because of intermediate appearance, the extremes are fairly obvious, and explain the presence of darker-mantled blacker winged birds quite different to populations seen in *eg.* Israel (S. Madge pers.com.)

It is worth noting that the forms of *cachinnans* described differ in significant ways from the Mediterranean form *michahellis*, including calls, behaviour in mixed flocks, structure, wing tip pattern and possibly breeding biology and chick colour and *michahellis* should probably be considered a distinct species from *cachinnans* (Garner & Quinn 1997).

TYPE C

Form: *barabensis*

Suggested taxonomy: **Baraba Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus (cachinnans/armenicus) barabensis*.

Number present as % of all forms in late Feb/March = approx. 20%.

Key Points:

- Quite close in general appearance to *armenicus* and probably the cause of much confusion and claimed *armenicus* records.
- Structure: This is a small, compact form with a very well-rounded head (including a steep forehead, unlike nominate *cachinnans*), a noticeably small (sometimes very thin) bill, and a rather light body. Some individuals are noticeably flat-chested and slender, they are more stocky but often with a 'straight', deep, flat chest profile. The black looks very flat with no tertial step; primary projection looks shorter and less attenuated than on nominate *cachinnans* and *taimyrensis*. The legs are rather short, noticeably so on some individuals, especially compared with the leggy, sloping-backed *cachinnans*. Overall, the appearance recalls Common or Iceland Gull at times.
- Wing tip pattern overall similar to, or slightly less in extent of black to *armenicus* (though without direct comparison) 1 or 2 white mirrors.
- Underwings show strong contrast between white corners and darkish grey undersides of primaries and secondaries (more contrast than in *cachinnans* types). Pattern of P10 shows clearly marked grey wedge on inner web along 30-50% of distance from visible base. Some showed much narrower white trailing edge to secondaries than on primaries (as per *armenicus*, unlike many *cachinnans*)
- Upperparts a well saturated medium/dark grey, probably close to *armenicus* in tone, so at the darkest end of *cachinnans* types and overlapping with *taimyrensis* (which though variable, usually looks a fraction darker often looking less neat and immaculate). White scapular and tertial crescents variable, though tending to be narrower than in *taimyrensis* and *cachinnans* types, scapular crescent often lacking, emphasising a

smooth flat-backed effect.

- Primary moult, details not fully known. Late February birds fully-winged and slightly worn. Specimen BMNH fully-winged in January. Egg laying reported from mid May onwards, on average later than both *cachinnans* (by about 2 months) and *armenicus* (by 2 weeks). So moult either as per *cachinnans* or completed later *ie* Dec-Jan.
- Bare parts often brightest of all forms, though duller in birds photographed earlier in the winter. Legs and bill vivid yellow or even orange-yellow. Bill with distinct but variable dark subterminal marks, ranging from a bright red gonys spot, black band and white tip to complete red band across both mandibles. Some had both red and black bands across both mandibles, others lacked black and retained only a large, vivid red patch. Filchagov (1993) found that 18 of 29 *barabensis* had dark bill marks in the breeding season. The nostril appeared to be triangular (broader towards the tip).
 - The iris varied from pale yellow to dark mustard or sandy-brown or completely dark. The eye looked noticeably small so colour was hard to detect but probably at least 50% had a pale eye: even then, with a thin red orbital ring, the eye looked small and 'beady'.
- Head streaking: all birds bright white-headed in late February, like *cachinnans* though unlike *heuglini/taimyrensis*. January adult BMNH had fine brown streaking/spotting on lower hindneck (as per *armenicus* and *cachinnans*).
- Behaviour, while sometimes "lost" in large mixed evening gull roosts, small flocks of predominantly *barabensis* found near the coast.

NOTE: re TYPE B & TYPE C

Types B & C are lumped together as constituting 50-60% of birds present. This is because the general appearance and upperpart tone made it difficult to separate these two in large gull flocks, though it was often quite possible on closer views where greater details could be obtained. Some apparent intergrades were seen (e.g. bird with single mirror on P10 but long whitish tongue on inner web, structurally closer to *cachinnans* with bright bare parts.) Their breeding seasons are as much as 1-2 months apart (see Judin & Firsova 1990) suggesting they would only rarely interbreed.

Details of the overlap zone of *barabensis* and *cachinnans* are cited in a reference in Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer (1982). Both types B & C remain poorly studied and full range of characters/intergradation etc. can only be known by study of all breeding populations.

barabensis v. *taimyrensis*

The upperpart tone may at times look identical; *taimyrensis* in direct comparison tends to look a little less smart, but averages a fraction darker. While they may show the same degree of darkness the "colour" of grey is usually different.

On *barabensis* an 'ash' or 'clean grey'; on *taimyrensis* clearly more 'slaty' with more obvious brownish wash/tones at times.

taimyrensis types appear large, long legged and thick-billed with a big Herring Gull or "*marinus*" (Great Black-backed) Gull shaped head and larger looking eye; *taimyrensis* tends to have broader scapular and tertial crescents, more hindneck spotting in spring and duller yellow bare parts; *taimyrensis* normally has grey wedge on P10, 15%-30% from visible base, i.e. more extensively black on P10 than *barabensis*.

barabensis v *armenicus*

armenicus would be very difficult to definitely record given the similarity of some *barabensis*, so great care needed. Most *armenicus* have a dark iris and more extensive black on the bill than *barabensis* but the overlap is complete. The two main differences are bill shape and pattern of P10.

- **Bill Shape:** The bill length of *barabensis* varies; some look longer and obviously thin; others shorter and clearly small-billed. The key difference is the bill tip which is less abrupt, less blunt on *barabensis*, with longer gently curving slope towards tip sometimes giving slight drooped effect. On *armenicus* the tip is very blunt, with very steep curve.

- The inner webs of the outer primaries of *barabensis* have longer grey tongues, most marked on P10 which has 30-50% of inner web grey. *armenicus* has about 90% of outer feather normally black (as per *heuglini*).

Also feathering on forehead that extends on to upper mandible is obviously very close to the basal end of nostril on *armenicus*.

TYPE D

Form: *heuglini*

Suggested taxonomy: **Siberian (Heuglin's) Gull** *Larus heuglini heuglini*

Number present as % of all forms in late Feb/March: 20-30% (type D & E combined).

Key Points:

- Upperparts darkest of most regular occurring forms, similar to, or darker than "graellsii" Lesser Black-backed Gull. Only type F is darker and very black. (Though there is a continuous cline from darkest *heuglini* to palest *taimyrensis* (type E). Some show brownish wash with wear.
- Correct assessment of stage of moult can often separate these from other forms. Between 1-3½ months later than others, apart from types E & F. So in October other forms (A, B, C) usually show 2-3 new primary tips visible (P6-P8) & P9 & 10 growing but hidden, *heuglini* shows outer primaries (P8-P10) old and worn. In Dec - Feb while other forms are fully winged and even showing a little wear at tips, *heuglini* are still growing P9 and/or P10.
- Structurally variable, though usually appears more evenly proportioned about the head with longish strong bill, often largish-looking eye, sloping forehead and rounded rear crown, more "Herring Gull"-like (*argenteus/argentatus*), though some recall *L. marinus* in head shape - different to longer-headed *cachinnans* or rounder-headed *barabensis*. Neck often looks long and creating a curved 'S' shape with head and body lines. Body often appears overall rather long and slender, particularly at rear end, and long-legged.
- Wing-tip pattern with most extensive black, 1 or 2 mirrors, P10 usually is 80-90% black with no obvious pale tongue/wedge shape of black on underside of primaries looks different to forms A, B & C. Underwing usually has very dark-looking primaries and secondaries.
- Head streaking variable, sometime quite extensive though regularly white with streaking confined to nape and especially band of dark spots forming nuchal collar around lower hindneck. This streaking often present in February/March unlike types A, B & C.
- Bare part colours usually not especially bright. Various dark subterminal bill markings. Iris often pale, occasionally dark "french mustard" to dark brown. Legs often yellow, occasionally looking flesh-coloured.
- Usually broad white tertial and scapular crescents.

TYPE E

Form: *taimyrensis* (see also *birulae*, page 101).

Suggested taxonomy: **Siberian Gull** *Larus heuglini taimyrensis*

Number present as % of all forms in late Feb/March: 20-30% (types D & E combined).

Key Points:

- Upperpart tone hard to separate from many of similarly dark-looking types B & C. On good comparative views often fractionally darker and less 'smart'-looking, often with brownish wash when worn. White scapular crescents often large.
- Moult as per type D or a little earlier, completed late December, more often January (Kennerley *et al*).
- Structure, similar to type D; sometimes birds of this type are the largest present in a flock (apart from Great Black-headed Gull).

- Wing-tip pattern variable, some as per type D; 1 or 2 mirrors, occasionally long white tip to P10 with broken black marks. Extent of black in P10 variable, some extensively 80-90% as per type D, others longer grey tongue/wedge c. 30-40% down inner web. Under primaries and secondaries tend to look obviously dark.
- Bare parts as type D.
- Head streaking as per type D, sometimes lighter.
- Tertiary and scapular crescent as type D.

NOTE: re TYPE D & TYPE E

Western *heuglini* are the darkest, often with only one white mirror becoming progressively paler eastwards with increasing tendency towards 2 mirrors (A. Filchagov pers.comm.). So the clear variation in *heuglini* alone means that paler birds seem almost impossible to tell from darkest *taimyrensis* and there seems no clear delineation of subspecies, hence many birds seen in the Gulf are indeterminate 'Siberian Gulls'.

Intergrades/hybrids probably occur between *taimyrensis* and *birulae*. See note below re-*birulae* for details.

NB: definition of *taimyrensis* varies according to different authors from rather darker mantled birds usually with yellow legs (as here) from the Yenisey and W. Taimyr (e.g. Pleske 1928), (Stegmann 1934) to all gulls over Taimyr peninsula including birds with similar structure but paler upperparts like *michahellis* and usually flesh-coloured legs. (e.g. Grant 1986). Darker birds were obviously present in the U.A.E. Paler birds may be present but very hard to discern from *cachinnans* (see under *birulae*).

TYPE F

Form: *fuscus*

Suggested taxonomy: **Baltic Gull** *Larus fuscus* (*fuscus*), possibly monotypic whereby *graellsii* & *intermedius* become species *L. graellsii*.

Number present as % of all forms in late Feb/March: c. 1% or less

Key Points:

- Upperpart tone usually obviously very black or jet black (though beware some *heuglini* can look particularly dark). Becomes increasingly brownish with wear.
- Structure and size - on the medium/small side compared to other forms present. Rather small compact head and bill.
- Moults as per *heuglini/taimyrensis* or even later, i.e. not completed until March/April (Cramp *et al*).
- Long wings extensively blackish, hardly any contrast between extensively black outer primaries and rest of upperwing. One white mirror, occasionally a 2nd small one on P9.
- Behaviour - Strann and Vader (1992) described and suggested specific status for '*fuscus*' due to, amongst other things, differences in feeding biology. In northern Norway *fuscus* ecologically closer to Kittiwakes and Terns in its feeding habits than other large *Larids*, spending more time feeding in deep water, more often plunge-diving, less often on the shoreline, and then tending to only pick off the surface; not so much search, move items or dig. These behavioural differences presumably consistent in the wintering areas.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES:

Though not recorded by me in the U.A.E. the following may well occur occasionally.

Form: *birulae*, suggested taxonomy: **Vega Gull** *L. vegae birulae*. (Though uncertain whether pale pink-legged birds over Taimyr peninsula are *birulae* or part of highly variable *taimyrensis* population).

Range: The birds at the western end of the Vega Gull range, "*birulae*" were described by Stegmann (1934), extending as far west as the Taimyr and the east coast of Severnaya Zemlya, and eastwards including the new Siberian Islands as far as Chaunskaya Bay (c. 170°E). Stegmann noted:

The western limit is difficult to define exactly, as numerous intergrades with *taimyrensis* exist. A summer individual from Taimyr Strait is very pale and typical while another from the same region belongs to *taimyrensis*. Specimens originating from Taimyr river, Taimyr Lake and the north of the Khatonga as well as from Yessey Lake vary greatly in colouration but are all between *birulae* and *taimyrensis*. (Translation D. Christie).

Occurrence of *birulae* in U.A.E. is clouded by uncertain taxonomy and the fact that the most likely origin of potential vagrants is from this zone of sympatry where some intergradation/hybridisation occurs between *taimyrensis* and *birulae*. Nevertheless, there is potential for "pure birds" to occur as well as the challenge of grappling with possible hybrids/intergrades.

Key Points:

Description based on Kennerley *et al* (1995) and Stegmann (1934) and Pleske (1928).

- Size large, structurally similar to *taimyrensis*, evenly proportioned head, large bill, rather heavy build.
- Upperparts obviously paler than typical *taimyrensis*, close to *argentatus* or *michahellis*, with slight bluish cast (Kennerley *et al*). Broad white tertial and scapular crescents.
- *taimyrensis* usually has black to bases on outer webs of P10, P9 & P8 at least; BMNH specimen of *birulae* (though Meinertzhagen collection, so origin uncertain) has black only to base of P10 on outer web - feature easy to see on resting bird with drooped wing.
- Streaking fairly light, but occasionally heavy and extends onto upper breast. Streaking present at least to March (unlike most *cachinnans* of similar upperpart tone).
- Molt probably later than most *cachinnans* - complete by late December? (Kennerley *et al* 1995).
- Wing tip pattern - usually 2 obvious white mirrors, sometimes long white tip with broken or no black markings (Stegmann 1934) as per some *cachinnans*. More white, less black than *taimyrensis* with black usually reaching to P5 (most often reaches to P4 on *taimyrensis*). NB. Some *L. vegae vegae* have broken or no black band on P5 (not known on *cachinnans*, though no information for *birulae* either).
- Underwing rather pale, as *cachinnans* (sometimes translucent on inner primaries).
- Legs usually pale flesh, or even pale bluish, occasionally pale yellow.

NB: A large heavily structured gull (different to nearby *cachinnans*?) with head streaking into March, less advanced primary moult, pink legs, bluish tone to pale/medium grey upperparts and possibly only thin black band, or none, on P5 may be worth recording carefully!

1st winter *vegae* are very like *argentatus/argenteus* Herring with paler greater covert bar, pale notched tertials and pale notching over coverts. Most regular Gulf forms in 1st winter plumage show dark-centred tertials, darker greater covert bars and darker centred coverts. Any 1st winter gull closer to *argentatus/argenteus* is worth describing carefully as it could be *birulae* (or *armenicus*, which see next). See Plate 18.

Form: *armenicus*, suggested taxonomy: **Armenian Gull** *L. armenicus*

Key Points:

- Photo of 1st winter from Kuwait (Plate 27.) and a few likely records from Bahrain (per C. Richardson) indicate probably small numbers occurring in the NW part of the Gulf

presumably increasingly less common towards the SE. There may not be any firm U.A.E. records.

- See *barabensis* for very careful separation from this form.
- Some 1st winter *armenicus* are relatively distinct (though 1st winter *barabensis* remains undescribed) and with practice they may be easier to identify than adults. (see Harris *et al* 1996 for description).

Form: *mongolicus*

Suggested taxonomy: unknown at present, should not be presumed to be clinal with *cachinnans*. See below.

Key Points:

- Similarity of uppertone to *cachinnans* and *barabensis* range (BMNH and see Kennerley *et al* 1995) mean it would be very different to gain confirmed sight record and is probably erroneously on U.A.E. checklist (Richardson & Aspinall 1996), though given dispersive abilities of large gulls it could still occur.
- Predominantly a pink-legged form (S. Madge pers.comm.). Kennerley *et al* report vocalisations may be closer to northern forms and to my eyes, photos of *mongolicus* look structurally closer to *vegae* than *cachinnans*. A photo of a juvenile gull which, on range and tail pattern, appears to be *mongolicus* (tail pattern in Stegmann 1934) in Grant 1986, shows paler barred greater and medium coverts and pale notched tertial, similar to some juvenile *vegae*, **not** juvenile *cachinnans*. Thus a juvenile gull looking like Herring, *L. argentatus*, with thin black tail band is worth recording carefully. Apparently Buturlin (1934) (cited in Kennerley *et al* 1995) and Barth (1968) linked *mongolicus* with *vegae*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of this first step in clarifying the forms of large gulls in the Gulf was built on British experience of extralimital forms and many people who generously contributed to that understanding (see Garner & Quinn in press.). Special mention should be made of the following in relation to this paper. First to Mel and Marek Baldy for providing for the holiday of a lifetime. My thanks go also to Mark Adams, David Christie, Hanne & Jens Eriksen, Michael Gallagher, Robert Pryce Jones, Steve Madge, Dave Quinn, Effie Warr, Mike Wilson, Bryon Wright and Pierre Yésou and to Colin Richardson for help, information and encouragement in the Gulf.

Most of all to Sharon, Emily and Abigail.

REFERENCES

For full list of material see Garner & Quinn (1997).

Barth, E.K (1968) The Circumpolar systematics of *Larus argentatus* and *Larus fuscus* with special reference to the Norwegian populations. *Nytt. Mag. Zool.* 15, supplement 1:1-50

Bourne, W.R.P. (1996) The large white-headed gulls wintering around the southern coasts of Asia. *Sea Swallow* 45:86-91. *Journal of the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society.*

Harris, A., Shirihi, H. and Christie D. (1996) *The Macmillan Birders guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds.* Macmillan, London 1996.

Garner, M. S. and Quinn D. (1997). The identification of Yellow-legged Gull in Britain. *British Birds* 90: 25-62, January - February 1997.

Glutz von Blotzheim, U. N. & Bauer, K. M. (1982) *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas. Volume 8.* Wiesbaden.

Grant, P.J. (1986). *Gulls: A Guide to Identification, 2nd edition,* Calton.

Judin, K.A. & Firsova, L.V. (1990) *Larus argentatus*, Silbermöwe. In Il'icev & Zubakin, *Handbuch der Vögel der Sowjetunion. Vol. 6/1: 112-129*. Wittenberg.

Kennerley, P.R., Hoogendoorn, T. and Chalmers, M.L. (1995) Identification and systematics of large white-headed Gulls in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong Bird Report 1994: 127-156*.

Pleske, T. (1928) Birds of the Eurasian Tundra. *Mem. Boston. Soc. Nat. Hist. 6: 111- 485*.

Stegmann, B. (1934) Über die Formen der Großen Möwen ('subgenus *Larus*') und ihre gegenseitigen Beziehungen. *J. Orn. 82: 340-380*

Strann, K. B. and Vader, W. (1992) The Nominate Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*. A gull with a tern-like feeding biology, and its recent decrease in northern Norway. *Ardea 80: 133-132*

Martin Garner, 35 Meeting House Lane, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland BT27 5BY, United Kingdom.

[Richardson, C, SJ Aspinall M Verhage. 1997. *Abu Dhabi Islands Breeding Bird Survey*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 104-111, EBRC, Dubai, UAE]
(Full version with maps and photographs in EBR19)

ABU DHABI ISLANDS BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

Colin Richardson, Simon Aspinall & Maarten Verhage

INTRODUCTION

A survey of islands in the Arabian Gulf, all within Abu Dhabi territorial waters, was undertaken from 9th-18th June 1994. It was timed to census summer breeding species, primarily seabirds. As a consequence, species like **Socotra Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* (which breeds at other times), **Saunders' Little Tern** *Sterna saundersi* (which breeds from March to May) and **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* (early spring) are not documented accurately here. However, the Yasat Island group, Ghagha and Kafai islands were visited and partly surveyed by SJA in spring 1993, when much breeding information on Socotra Cormorant, **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*, Kentish Plover and Saunders' Little Tern was compiled. The findings were published in *Tribulus 4:1* (Aspinall 1994a). In September 1993, SJA undertook another 'voyage of discovery' to several of these and other islands to survey the **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* population. The results, and a summary of all current knowledge of the Gulf population of the species was published in *Tribulus 4:2* (Aspinall 1994b). The reader's attention is also drawn to the standard work of reference on the country's breeding species *Status and Conservation of the Breeding Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (Aspinall 1996), in which much of the information gleaned on this island survey has been combined with historical records summarised. For information on other taxonomic groups, conservation issues and more general descriptions see the UAE entry in Scott (1996). Threats to many islands is the single largest conservation challenge in the UAE.

THE SURVEY

36 islands, islets, reefs and shoals were visited during the survey, each for a few hours or less, but many for longer and in the case of Qarnein Island, for a day and an overnight stay. The route is shown on the accompanying maps. Co-ordinates are given where known. Present on the survey were Simon Aspinall (9-18 June), Maarten Verhage (9-12 June), Colin Richardson (12-18 June) and Kara Rawden (12-18 June).

9th & 10th June 1994

HALAT MUBARRAS (24°13'N, 51°52'E) - Did not land. Modified by dredging and oil installations.

Socotra Cormorant 2 feeding; **White-cheeked Tern** 60+ fishing; **Common Tern** 1 adult; **Saunders' Little Tern** 6 carrying fish to land.

BU TINAH SHOALS (UTM c.2724N, 7070E) - Well-vegetated, shelly shoals on coral platform, coral fringed, some mangrove, extensive seagrass beds and sheltered lagoon. Island 'wardened' to protect fisheries and turtles/birds from egg-collectors. Two falcon trapping stations.

Socotra Cormorant roost 75; **Western Reed Heron** 4+ prs; **Osprey** 1-2 pairs; **Lesser Crested Tern** pr. poss.; **White-cheeked Tern** 1,550+ birds; **Bridled Tern** 185 birds; **Kentish Plover** 14+ (breeds); **Black-crowned Finch Lark**. Other: **Crab Plover** 2; **Little Green Heron** 1+; **Greater Flamingo** 20; **Oystercatcher** 1; **Turnstone** 13; **Whimbrel** 2; **Greenshank** 1+; **Bar-tailed Godwit** 7+; **Lesser Sand Plover** 1; **Redshank** 1; Feral pigeon 20+. Dugong herd 20-60 individuals south-east of islands

10th June 1994

USHSH (268854N, 691038E) - Inhabited, rocky island with tussock grass, joined by bar to sandy island (east). Scrubby cover. Small cliff line. Birds nesting in north-west where irrigation and tree planting scheme planned (since been cancelled after representations were made in favour of the birds).

Socotra Cormorant 20; **Western Reef Heron** 1 nest; **Osprey** 1-2 prs. (3 ads); **Sooty Falcon**; **Kentish Plover** breeds; **White-cheeked Tern** 4,000+ birds; **Bridled Tern** 1,500 birds; **Saunders' Little Tern** 22+ breeds; **Black-crowned Finch Lark**.
Others: Feral Pigeon 100+; **Hoopoe Lark** 1; **Bar-tailed Godwit** 6; **Oystercatcher** 4; **Turnstone** 4; **Grey Plover** 4; **Lesser Sand Plover** 1; Sand Plover sp. 1. Green Turtle possibly still nests.

FATA'IR - (2695N, 687E) - Basically two small, mobile sandy shoals, barely above high water. **Socotra Cormorant** roost site; **Osprey** 1, not breeding.

HOOK ISLAND (2695367N, 678782E) - Small, sandy island with abundant *Chenopods* (Goosefoot) and much bare ground.

Socotra Cormorant 2 birds; **Osprey** Pair & nest; **White-cheeked Tern** 79 clutches; **Bridled Tern** 20 birds. Other: Feral Pigeons 100+.

SIR BANI YAS SATELLITES - The main island of Sir Bani Yas, which is about 9 km. in diameter, and much altered from its original natural state, was not visited during this survey. However three of its neighbouring islands were surveyed as follows:

UMM QASSAR (2698460N, 680353E) - Mostly bare, rocky island, with guano-rich surface and patches of old sparse *Salsola*.

Socotra Cormorant Evidence of a few hundred having bred and roosted in recent season; **Western Reef Heron** 2; **Osprey** 1-2 ads, nest; **Kentish Plover** possibly breeds; **Lesser Crested Tern** 292 pairs; **White-cheeked Tern** 75 pairs; **Bridled Tern** c.850 pairs; **Saunders' Little Tern** suspected breeder. Other: 1000+ Feral Pigeon; **Turnstone** 1; Green Turtle 1.

11th June 1994

UMM AL KIRKUM (2698334N, 679574E) - Rocky island connected to sandy eastern end by shelly bar. Egg collection in progress during visit.

Socotra Cormorant 6 birds; **Osprey** 1 ad, nest; **Kentish Plover** breeds; **White-cheeked Tern** 920 birds; **Bridled Tern** 25 birds; **Saunders' Little Tern** 35+ birds; breeds. Other: Feral pigeon 300+; **Oystercatcher** 1; **Bar-tailed Godwit** 2; **Greater Sand Plover** 2; **Turnstone** 2; **Grey Plover** 1.

GHASHA (2700376N, 667603E) - Rocky, well-vegetated, with sandy coves and small area of intertidal mudflats.

Socotra Cormorant 5 birds, colony site not used in previous winter; **Osprey** 1 ad., active nest; **Kentish Plover** breeds; **Lesser Crested Tern** 161 clutches; **White-cheeked Tern** 4,000-4,500 birds; **Bridled Tern** 9,000-11,000 birds; **Saunders' Little Tern** ? breeds; **Black-crowned Finch-Lark**. Other: 10,000 Feral pigeons nesting under bushes, severely displacing Bridled Terns. **Sooty Gull** 1 ad. Recent Green Turtle nests

YASAT GROUP - Four low rocky islands, mostly well-vegetated, including abundant Sea Lavender, sandy beaches and some low cliffs. Small intertidal area, with excellent fringing coral development. Mangroves planted on South Yasat and Hares introduced. Archaeological finds.

JUDERAH (2671N, 601E)

Socotra Cormorant 12,000+ loafing; **Western Reef Heron** 24 nests; **Osprey** 2 ads., 3 nests 1 active; **White-cheeked Tern** 4+ prs.; **Bridled Tern** 12 birds; **Saunders' Little Tern**; **Black-crowned Finch Lark** 2 males.

SAGHIRAH (2672N, 602E)

Socotra Cormorant 2 birds; **Osprey** nest; **cheeked Tern** c.2,500 prs; **Bridled Tern** breeds; **Black-crowned Finch-Lark**. **Lesser Crested Tern** 24 pairs on eggs; **White-cheeked Tern**

2,000-2,500 prs; **Saunders' Little Tern** 1+ pr.

SOUTH YASAT (2675N, 601E)

Socotra Cormorant roost 15; **Osprey** 4+; **Kentish Plover** breeds, 14 birds seen; **White-cheeked Tern** 40 indiv.; **Bridled Tern** 1,950 indiv.; **Saunders' Little Tern** 1+ pr. breeds; **Black-crowned Finch-Lark**. Others: **Greater Sand Plover** 6; **Lesser Sand Plover** 2; **Bar-tailed Godwit** 2; **Curlew** 3; **Terek Sandpiper** 1; **Hoopoe Lark** 3+; **Sand Martin** 2. Mice & Hares present.

NORTH YASAT (2680N, 603E)

Socotra Cormorant roost 750 (for details of colony here, see Aspinall (1996) & Aspinall (1994a)); **Western Reef Heron** 3 (breeding previously recorded); **Osprey** 11 indiv.; **White-cheeked Tern** 650 birds; **Bridled Tern** 350 birds; **Saunders' Little Tern** 10+; **Kentish Plover** breeds. Hares present.

Sunday 12th June 1994

UMM AL HATAB (24°27'N, 53°22'E) - Visited by SJA & MV only. Also known locally as Bird Island. Sandy hummock, well-vegetated, sandy beaches and coral fringe. Small intertidal area.

White-cheeked Tern c.750 birds; **Bridled Tern** 5,000+ indiv.

JAZEERAT MUHAMMALIYAH - Small rocky islet, with flat surface. c.300 metres diameter. **Socotra Cormorant** Evidence of very old roost and colony, though no nesting in recent years (no dead young). c.4,000 birds arrived to roost at sunset, mostly from south-west; **Sooty Falcon** One pair, no eggs; **White-cheeked Tern** 2-4 birds, including one immature, no nests found; **Bridled Tern** One nest (with one egg), 5 birds in attendance, with 5 more arriving at dusk; **Saunders' Little Tern** 2 flying over the sea nearby; **Black-crowned Finch Lark** One female.

Monday 13th June 1994

JAZEERAT NA'ITAH - Low rocky islet, c.600 x 200 metres.

Socotra Cormorant c.100 birds roosting around edge; **Western Reef Heron** c.8 pairs, several young; **Osprey** 3 nests, one pair present, plus last season's immature; **White-cheeked Tern** c.75 individuals; **Bridled Tern** c.1,400 individuals present (pairs?); **Saunders' Little Tern** 3 seen.

SOUTH FURAYJIDAT - Rocky salt plug, c.300 metres dia.

Socotra Cormorant 6 present, evidence of recent colony (c.20 mummified chicks); **Osprey** One present, no nests noted; **Sooty Falcon** Pair, not yet laid. One dead nightjar sp. near old falcon nest site; **Bridled Tern** >2.

NORTH FURAYJIDAT - Small rocky islet, c.100 metres dia.

Socotra Cormorant 4 birds; **Bridled Tern** c.4 pairs.

UMM 'CUT' - Small scrubby islands on dead coral platform, off Ras Khumays.

Osprey 2 present; **White-cheeked Tern** c.120 pairs, many eggs, chicks, even some flying young; **Bridled Tern** c.50 birds, plus eggs and chicks.

QASSAR HARM - Small rocky island, c.200 metres long.

Socotra Cormorant 2 birds; **Western Reef Heron** 2 nests (2 eggs in each); **Osprey** 2 ads; **Sooty Falcon** Territorial, non-calling pair present, no eggs yet.

JAZEERAT KHARDAL - Coral island north of Ghagha with scrub and small sheltered lagoon/bay. c.1000 x 400 metres.

Socotra Cormorant 2 birds, plus evidence of small colony (several dead, inc. skeletons);

Greater Flamingo 2 birds; **Western Reef Heron** 1 dark, 1 white; **Osprey** 3 birds; **Sooty Falcon** 3 birds, (probably 2 pairs); **Oystercatcher** 2 birds; **Whimbrel** 1; **Slender-billed Gull** 1; **White-cheeked Tern** One pair; **Bridled Tern** One pair.

Tuesday 14th June 1994

GHAGHA - Medium-sized island, halophyte scrub cover, large sheltered mudflats, archaeological finds. c.2,500 x 2,000 metres. No nesting seabirds.

Western Reef Heron 2 birds; **Osprey** At least 8 nests (mostly old), 4 birds present. Others: **Oystercatcher** 4 birds; **Kentish Plover** 12; **Great Sand Plover** 12; **Grey Plover** 2; **Whimbrel** 1; **Curlew** 3; **Redshank** 1; **Greenshank** 4; **Turnstone** 8; **White-cheeked Tern** 3 birds; **Bridled Tern** 4 birds; **Crested Lark** One seen.

JAZEERAT 'north-east' GHAGHA - Small rocky islet, scrub, coral edged. c.200 x 100 metres.

White-cheeked Tern c.150 pairs, 5 flying young; **Bridled Tern** 35 seen, probably nesting though no chicks found.

JAZEERAT 'south-east' GHAGHA - Similar sized islet, 100 metres south of above. No nesting seabirds.

Sooty Falcon 3 birds, (2 nest sites, no eggs).

LITTLE KHUMAYS NORTH (off Ras Khumays) - Small rocky islet, 150 metres dia. **Osprey** one nest, one pair; **Western Reef Heron** Pair. Green Turtle feeding.

LITTLE KHUMAYS SOUTH - Very small rocky islet, c.100 metres dia.

Western Reef Heron 1; **Osprey** One nest, one pair; **Sooty Falcon** One pair (SJA prepared two suitable nest sites).

UMM AL GHUMEGHIN - Rocky coral island, scrub, sabkha plain. c.800 x 500 metres.

Socotra Cormorant 1; **Osprey** 2 nests, one bird; **Sooty Falcon** 2 pairs; **White-cheeked Tern** c.150, many chicks; **Bridled Tern** c.25 birds (no nests found); **Black-crowned Finch Lark**.

Wednesday 15th June 1994

JAZEERAT MUHAIYIMAT (South) - Largest of 3 coral islands in shallow water south of Kafai Island, scrub covered. c.1500 x 1000 metres.

Socotra Cormorant 40 birds; **Western Reef Heron** 4 birds; **Osprey** 7 birds; **White-cheeked Tern** 5 birds, probably >3 pairs; **Bridled Tern** c.450 pairs. Others: **Greater Sand Plover** 1; **Kentish Plover** 2; **Bar-tailed Godwit** 1; **Whimbrel** 3; **Curlew** 1; **Turnstone** 1; **Slender-billed Gull** 1.

JAZEERAT MUHAIYIMAT (Central) - Small coral islet, scrub-covered c.500 metres dia.

Western Reef Heron 2; **Osprey** 2 birds; **Lesser Crested Tern** Big colony. 3,500-4,300 nests, all with 1/2 eggs; **White-cheeked Tern** c.2,100 pairs, many eggs, chicks and flying young; **Bridled Tern** 600 birds (pairs). Others: **Greater Sand Plover** 1; **Whimbrel** 2; **Turnstone** 1.

JAZEERAT MUHAIYIMAT (North) - Small coral islet, access impossible by boat due to shallows. SJA waded ashore.

Socotra Cormorant >30 at roost; **Western Reef Heron** 2; **Osprey** 2 birds, 4 nests; **White-cheeked Tern** c.450 pairs; **Bridled Tern** 600-650 pairs.

KAFAI - Medium-sized scrub-covered island, with lagoons, small port and coastguard station with trees and habitation. 3 km. x 1.5 km. Escorted round the island by pick-up truck.

Socotra Cormorant 22 birds roosting; **Western Reef Heron** 3 birds; **Osprey** >6 nests, 6 birds; **Sooty Falcon** One seen. Others: **Greater Sand Plover** c.55; **Grey Plover** 1;

Turnstone 1; Sedge Warbler 1; Upcher's Warbler 1; Garden Warbler 1; Spotted Flycatcher 1; Yellow-throated Sparrow 1; House Sparrows and a possible **Spanish Sparrow**.

Thursday 16th June 1994

MAKHASIB - Low sandy coral island, c.800 x 300 metres, currently being planted with 300 date palms, in rows. Whole surface bulldozed. 6 portacabins, a generator and 6 big GRP water tanks located at one end. 12 chickens and several introduced Palm Doves. Evidence of Turtles nesting on beach. Saunders' Little Tern probably breeds (M.Verhage *pers.obs.*). **Socotra Cormorant** 6 birds lounging; **Osprey** Pair and nest on top of steel post; **Kentish Plover** 1; **Lesser Crested Tern** 1, no nests; **White-cheeked Tern** 4, no nests; **Saunders' Little Tern** 3 birds, possibly nested (MV saw 15+ birds here in March). Others: **Greater Sand Plover** 1; **Palm Dove** 7 including juvenile, in open cage.

DALMA ISLAND - Developed island, formerly c.7 km. dia., now with 5 km. extended spur from dredged littoral to south of island, where fast growing township is located. Mountains rising to 200 metres in central part. No breeding seabirds.

Socotra Cormorant >5; **Sooty Falcon** one bird, known breeding site; **Kentish Plover** Several; **Common Tern** 1; **White-cheeked Tern** >30 birds, no nests. Others: Palm Doves, 2 **European Bee-eaters** (breeding?), Crested Larks, 1 Hoopoe Lark, 1 **Yellow Wagtail**, several House Crows, House Sparrows. Feral cats present.

ARZANAH - Island taken over by oil industry, petroleum processing factories and pipelines. Small deep water quay. Approx 4 km. dia. No breeding seabirds. Previous records of breeding Red-billed Tropicbirds and Sooty Falcons, though none found during our visit. Access limited and visit lasted only 2 hours.

Socotra Cormorant c.40 seen lounging on beaches; **Osprey** 4 nests, 2 birds seen. Others: Palm Dove >1 and Common Mynah >1 at port. Feral cats present.

JAZEERAT DAYYINAH - Located on Qatar sea border; spectacular low, sandy, scrubby, coral bird island. Two large, private dhows present when we arrived late afternoon (presumably weekenders). Egg-collecting of White-cheeked clutches going on, but eggs ready to hatch and unsuitable for eating. One character on a dune buggy driving through colony. Otherwise uninhabited. Protection of this island should be a priority. Full survey done on morning of 17 June.

Socotra Cormorant c.12,000 came to roost evening of 16 June. Recent breeding colony, estimated 15,000, with c.2,000 dead chicks lying around from recent season; **Western Reef Heron** one pair; **Osprey** 4 nests, 5 adults; **Sooty Gull** c.15 pairs, plus 2 week-old chicks; **Swift Tern** 2 flew overhead; **White-cheeked Tern** c.6,530 pairs. Nearly all with eggs or newly hatched young, many eggs hatching as we watched. No flying young yet; **Bridled Tern** Huge numbers - c.10,700 pairs! Mostly with eggs, also many newly hatched chicks in nests. Others: **Whimbrel** 1, **Turnstone** 1. Mice ubiquitous, falcon trapping station, turtle nest site.

Friday 17/18th June 1994

QARNEIN ISLAND - 2.5 x 1.5 km. Spectacular bird island, where colonies of seabirds remain unaffected by development. However, Socotra Cormorants ('Lohar') are unwelcome and discouraged. Island owned by Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed al Nahyan, whose house is situated between two hills near the end of the island. Desalination plant, marina, stables, airstrip and Decca Racal radio station also on island. Refer Hellyer (1989) for related April 1989 survey. Surveyed on 17 June.

Red-billed Tropicbird one only seen, entering 'nest hole' in western hil; **Socotra Cormorant** c.200 birds, main roost on north-west hill, facing sea; **Osprey** 2 birds; **Sooty Gull** difficult to count, many young about to fly. Probably less than 100 adults; **Lesser Crested Tern** Spectacular colony, c.19-23,000 pairs all on 1/2 eggs; **Swift Tern** 1,256 nests, some with

newly hatched young; **White-cheeked Tern** c.675 pairs; **Bridled Tern** after careful survey of nesting density, we estimate 12,200 pairs, most on eggs, some chicks found. Others (migrants): 1 Nightingale, 1 **Garden Warbler**, 1 Willow Warbler, 1 male **Black-headed Bunting**. Green Turtle nest site.

Saturday 17th June 1994

ZIRKU ISLAND - An oil-related inhospitable island for birds. Rocky, mountainous c.4 km. dia. Little original seabird nesting habitat remains although cliffs still appeared habitable for tropicbirds. Mountains criss-crossed by roads, tracks, radio stations and a sewage works. Narrow seaward plains occupied by oil pipes, storage facilities and a rubbish dump.

Osprey 1 nest; **Saunders' Little Tern** amazingly 21 birds together on a sandy breakwater, including 1 juv and may have nested. Other birds seen: 1 Grey Heron, 37 Socotra Cormorants, 3 **Cream-coloured Courser**, 5 Greater Sand Plover, 3 Whimbrel, c.80 Sooty Gulls feeding at rubbish dumps and in harbour (former colony abandoned), 2 Herring-type Gulls, 2 White-cheeked Tern, 1 Crested Tern, Palm Doves and House Sparrows.

We returned to Abu Dhabi on 18th June 1994.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This 10-day voyage was made possible with the kind permission of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan who not only sanctioned access to all the islands, but placed at our complete disposal his private dhow, its facilities and crew for the voyage. We are very grateful for the encouragement of Mohammed al Bowardi, Managing Director of the National Avian Research Center who supported the expedition and we would also like to thank Khalid Hamedain who organised much of the logistics.

REFERENCES

Aspinall, S. 1994a. *The Birds of Yasat, Ghaghah and Kafai, UAE*. Tribulus 4.1:5-8. Published by the Emirates Natural History group, P.O. Box 2380, Abu Dhabi.

Aspinall, S. 1994b. *Sooty Falcons in the United Arab Emirates*. Tribulus 4.2:14-20.

Aspinall, S. 1996. *Conservation and Status of the Breeding Birds of the United Arab Emirates*. Hobby, Dubai & Liverpool.

Hellyer, P. (Ed.) 1989. The Qarnein Expedition. *Bulletin* 39. Published by the Emirates Natural History Group.

Scott, D.A. (Ed.) 1995. *A Directory of Wetlands in the Middle East*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and IWRB, Slimbridge, UK.

Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, UAE.

Simon Aspinall, National Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Maarten Verhage, P.O. Box 4134, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

[Pitt, M. 1997. *A Visit to Merawah Island*. Emirates Bird Report 19: 112-114, EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

A VISIT TO MERAWAH ISLAND - 31 May/1 June 1990

Martin Pitt

This ornithological account was made following Martin Pitt's visit to Merawah Island in 1990 with other naturalists from the Emirates Natural History Group (Hellyer *et al* 1990), by kind invitation of the owner H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan. It was the first in a series of visits and surveys by ornithologists, amateur naturalists and archaeologists in succeeding years. Martin's account is historically important and laid the groundwork for other studies of the island and in particular the study of the exceptional numbers of migrant shorebirds which are now known to occur there (Abu Dhabi Shorebird Project in press.). A September 1996 *Commentary* is appended. - *Ed.*

INTRODUCTION

Merawah Island lies some 15 km. from the mainland, 100 km. west of Abu Dhabi (itself the third largest island in the UAE). It is basically a rectangular island approximately 10 x 3 km. in size, lying on an east-west axis. As far as the avian species are concerned there is a lack of diversification of the basic habitat types to make the island a really attractive one. The major proportion of the island is sabkha (nearly-saturated saltflats) with scattered Halophytes (salt bush). It appears that some of this is saturated and the ground water level is at or just below the surface.

Around the perimeter of the island is a band of coarse shell sand rising perhaps 1-3 metres Above High Water level. There is a spine of higher ground, running east-west, reaching perhaps 10-15 metres AHWL comprising of well-weathered sandstones. The four corners of the island were marked by their stands of mangroves. The other habitat type is the extensive mudflats and inlet pools which are particularly developed off the NE, NW and SW corners of the island.

HABITATS

Sabkha flats:

This is a particularly harsh environment and the only resident species appear to be the **Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes*. This was found in reasonable numbers throughout the island especially in this habitat type and the coastal salt bush.

Although no nests were found it appears likely that a few pairs of **Saunders' Little Tern** *Sterna saundersi* were breeding on the flats. Birds were observed carrying food, generally associated with breeding behaviour, but there did not appear to be any site preference shown. Odd pairs of terns were found all across the central section of the island. The only other species to be found here was **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*. It probably breeds but no evidence of chicks or nests were found here.

Perimeter Shell Sand:

The vegetation of this zone is little different from the Sabkha areas with salt bush predominating. Hoopoe Lark and Kentish Plover were assumed to breed and the only evidence of the latter breeding was of a bird giving a full distraction display in the NW section of the island. It appears that at the western end of the island this habitat type may support a population of **Black-crowned Finch Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps*.

Sandstone ridge:

The vegetation along this ridge shows the only variation from the salt bush pattern of the rest of the island. Rushes and Broom were found in this area. It appears that this habitat is the centre of the Black-crowned Finch Lark population, but numbers are low with maybe 3-4 pairs being involved.

Mangroves:

The mangroves found were obviously the major attraction to the birdlife of the island. as well as attracting migrant species they hold breeding species and act as roosting sites. all of the larger stands of mangroves had singing **Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus*. From the numbers of singing birds the island's population is probably between 15-20 pairs. the Eastern side of the island also has breeding **Graceful Warbler** *Prinia gracilis* on the landward side of the mangroves, probably 5-6 pairs.

Two species of heron, **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* and **Little Green Heron** *Butorides striatus*, were identified as roosting in the mangroves. It is likely that both species breed although little supporting evidence was found. A platform was found in the south-eastern mangroves, but was considered not to be related to this year's nesting activity. from movements, the mangroves to the SW corner would appear to be the most likely place for breeding of Western Reef Heron.

Mudflats

Although the visit was outside of the migration period, a surprising number and variety of waders were found to be using the extensive mudflats, especially on the northern side of the island. See species list below for details.

There were three small fishing communities on the island. The fish traps were an attraction to both herons and terns, and the waste tips, with their resultant insect life, attracted hungry migrants.

SELECTIVE SPECIES LIST

Socotra Cormorant Resident breeder on neighbouring islands? Individual birds, both adults and juveniles seen on the edges of the mudflats on both days.

Little Green Heron Resident/breeder? Seen singly in and around mangrove areas on the NW & SE corners of the island. No evidence found, but a potential breeder on the island.

Western Reef Heron Resident/breeder? Commonest heron on the island. Max. 18 NW of island. Nesting likely in SW mangroves.

Osprey Resident/breeder? At least two seen all coasts.

Crab Plover Maximum 45 in NE of island 31.5.90. Small flocks of this species were encountered along the north coast of the island. There is no evidence of breeding, but these birds may represent feeding visitors from the recently discovered colonies on neighbouring islands.

Kentish Plover Resident breeder. The mudflats support a large population of this species. All evidence points to them breeding in reasonable numbers although neither nests nor young were found. A bird giving full distraction display was found on the NW of the island.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Resident? Max. 21 NW of island around fish trap. Two showed barring on scapulars typical of young birds (1st summer). Singles seen on most coasts 31.5.90 and 1.6.90.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa* Migrant breeder to neighbouring islands. c.150 seen from the boat to the island 31.5.90. Ones & twos along coasts.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* Migrant breeder to neighbouring islands. One seen on boat trip to island 31.5.90. Four on NE of island 1.6.90.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi* Migrant breeder: Max. 14 NW island 1.6.90; pairs in the centre of the island.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Resident/breeder?: Present around areas of human habitation.

Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* Resident breeder: 3-4 pairs on territory on the ridge in the NW of the island.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* Resident breeder: commonest breeding bird in the sabkha flats and perimeter shell sand.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis* Resident breeder: 5-6 pairs breed in the landward side of the mangroves.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Resident breeder: 5-6 pairs appear to be breeding in the mangroves around the island from a count of the singing birds.

OTHER BIRDS RECORDED

Greater Flamingo	Common Snipe	Terek Sandpiper	Isabelline Wheatear
Oystercatcher	Bar-tailed Godwit	Slender-billed Gull	Willow Warbler
Lesser Sand Plover	Whimbrel	Feral Pigeon	Spotted Flycatcher
Grey Plover	Curlew	Swallow	Golden Oriole
Curlew Sandpiper	Redshank	Redstart	Lesser Grey Shrike
Dunlin	Greenshank	Whinchat	Ortolan Bunting

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My grateful thanks are extended to H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan for facilitating our visit to the island.

REFERENCES

Hellyer, P. (Ed) 1990. The Natural History of Merawah Is. ENHG *Bulletin* 42: 2-20.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY (received September 1996)

The idea of the visit was to establish the importance of Merawah as a typical "undeveloped" Gulf island in terms of the breeding population of shore/seabirds. The emphasis on breeding determined the timing of the visit and the core objective of the visit was to establish the habitats and the typical breeding species.

In that respect the visit showed little real surprise. The island was inhabited and thus not as attractive to ground-nesting terns as the neighbouring reefs and smaller sand islands. Merawah has greater habitat diversity than many of the smaller islands solely by virtue of the mangroves. These provided nesting sites for the herons and Clamorous Reed Warblers and increased the quantity and variety of other organisms especially insects.

The timing of the visit was not as good for breeding as was expected. There were no colonies of sitting birds, so when do they breed? Also the choice of island for breeding may not be static over time, but the criteria for choice for different species is not understood and the disturbance of an island not currently in use may have an impact in the future as it removes an element of choice.

The biggest surprise for me, so much of a surprise that it is still (six years on) the single item that sticks with me, was the question of migration and what were those migrant species doing there? Redstart, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher, Golden Oriole, Lesser Grey Shrike and Ortolan Bunting were all seen on the Emirates' mainland on the last day of May and first day of June. Looking at *Emirates Bird Reports 4, 8 & 12* nearly all records for these species run to mid May at the latest, except for the other records from the Gulf islands (e.g. Golden Oriole on Das Island, 3rd June 1989).

Birds migrating at this stage will probably be too late to breed successfully in the palaeartic season. So are these birds really migrants? Are they failed breeders, inexperienced first summer birds that do not attempt to breed? If so then maybe they do not go the full distance to the breeding grounds and the Gulf islands with their mangroves and the southern side of Iran is an important habitat for the species as a whole. Who knows? Perhaps a few more visits at the "wrong time" could prompt a few answers and if the answer is "yes" then these islands could be a lot more important than people have realised.

Martin Pitt, 24 Foxtail Drive, Dibden-Purlieu, Nr. Southampton, Hampshire SO45 4NZ, United Kingdom.

[Wood, M & R Western. 1994. *Breeding Colony of White-cheeked Terns Sterna repressa on Das Island*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 115. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

BREEDING COLONY OF WHITE-CHEEKED TERNS *Sterna repressa* ON DAS ISLAND

Mike Wood & Rob Western

On 4th July 1996 a breeding colony of White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa*, consisting of three distinct, but close sites, was found on the shallow slopes to the seaward side of the finger flares on the north-west coast of Das Island. The largest of the three sites was a rectangle measuring roughly 12 X 8 metres. Nests were very close together, sometimes just centimetres apart, and consisted mostly of shallow scrapes in the sand and gravel, sometimes slightly built-up with flakes of thin stone. There was no lining material of any kind. Most nests were on open ground, occasional ones were in the lee of rocks and ledges. At our approach all the birds flew off, but circled close around us making a noisy din. They were not as aggressive as we had expected.

The individual nests containing eggs/chicks were counted over the entire site, which came to a total of 253 nests. The vast majority contained one egg, 45 contained two eggs and five contained three eggs. Less than 15 nests contained single chicks, usually with one or two eggs. One egg was hatching. We counted around twenty older chicks wandering around the site in ones and twos. Some were close to fledging and at least two swam into the sea at our approach. These returned to the pebbly shore after we had passed.

There were numerous obvious nest scrapes which were empty, but these were not counted. Presumably these were earlier nests from which chicks had fledged. With the severe rains of last winter and spring, no 1995 nests would have survived.

In addition, there were numerous broken eggshells lying around, some of them well away from the main breeding area. These had probably been blown away by the wind. A few eggs looked stained or discoloured and some had broken. All of these may have been abandoned.

We made a conservative estimate that a minimum of 250 nests (and probably in excess of 300) had been built and produced eggs in the 1996 season. The number of birds occupying the site during our visit was estimated at 150-175 individuals, but it was difficult to make a more accurate count since birds were circling continuously and others were perched on slopes and rocks beyond immediate range. Some nests with eggs may have been abandoned.

It is possible that a colony of White-cheeked Terns moved to this site on Das Island from a previously-known breeding site, Berth No.1 off the south-east side of Das, after this structure was demolished, following the 1991 nesting season.

Rob Western, ADMA-OPCO, T&D Das, P.O. Box 303, Das Island, Abu Dhabi
Mike Wood, Das Island Maintenance Dept, P.O. Box 303, Das Island, Abu Dhabi

[Hellyer, P & SJ Aspinall. 1997. *An Introduction to the Birds of Jazirat Balghelam, Abu Dhabi*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 116-119. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIRDS OF JAZIRAT BALGHELAM, ABU DHABI

Peter Hellyer & Simon Aspinall

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLAND

The island of Jazirat Balghelam and the adjacent island of Jazirat Umm al Barak (to which it is now connected by a causeway of approximately 800 metres in length), lie on the north side of the Khor al Jile'ah and to the south of the island of Ras Ghurab, approximately 20 km. north-east of Abu Dhabi. They fall within square UB26, a mapping grid used by the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA). Together they are approximately 8 km. long, with Jazirat Balghelam being up to 1.5 km. wide from north to south at its widest point. The highest point is about 5 metres above sea level in the centre. A sandstone ridge, partly planted with trees, runs on an east-west axis in the western half of the island, while a smaller, lower limestone ridge and other limestone outcrops, some less than a metre above the surrounding land surface are found in the eastern end of the island.

The northern shore is largely open and sandy, interspersed with rocky stretches where natural stone outcrops occur in the intertidal zone. The southern shore is primarily low and sandy, with extensive areas of mangroves, *Avicennia marina*, at the eastern end, just south of Jazirat Umm al Barak, and along the western end. The area between the central ridge and the western mangroves is an extensive tract of land-filled *sabkha*, which is now being colonised by salt-tolerant plants like *Salsola* sp.

Off the southern shore is a single rock outcrop Qassar 'Afij, with the intervening sandy bay drying at low tide, which also uncovers extensive sandy areas off the south-eastern and south-western ends of the island.

Natural vegetation is primarily mangrove *A.marina*, around the southern coastline with salt-tolerant vegetation inland. The main halophytes noted included *Salsola baryosma*, *Sueda vermiculata* and *Arthrocnemum macrostachyum* as well as *Halopeplis* and species from the goosefoot (Chenopod) family. A number of artificially watered plantations have been created, particularly around and near the two rest-houses, especially that at Ras Yah, about half-way along the southern coast of the main island. Trees planted include *Prosopis* species, date *Phoenix dactylifera* and a number of fruit trees as well as herbaceous plants and shrubs around the rest-houses.

BIRDS

As will be apparent from the details of bird recordings in the Systematic List which follows, most observations on the island have been made during the winter months, although the first two visits to the island, on 22 October 1993 and 23 September 1994, coincided with autumn migration. More species can be expected to occur during peak migration periods, in particular in the spring, while further study during the summer would permit a more accurate assessment to be made of the resident and migrant birds breeding on the island. Despite this however, over eighty species have now been recorded on Balghelam, and, taking all the records together, it is clear that the island is an attractive spot, as could be expected, for migrant birds, both waders and passerines.

The introduction of a number of species (e.g. **Grey Francolin** and **Egyptian Goose**), is unlikely to have a major effect on natural habitat or the availability of food for naturally-occurring birds, provided that numbers are carefully regulated. Supplementary feeding for these species, together with the creation of new gardens and plantations, has, in contrast, improved the attractiveness of the island to resident and migrant bird life.

On all visits the largest number of birds present were of wading and waterfowl species, the

majority of which were noted in two distinct areas, at the south-eastern and south-western end of the island, on sand bars and nearby mangrove clumps and shallow bays. Over a thousand waders were present during the September and December 1994 visits and over 1,600 on 12th and 19th January 1996, and it is reasonable to assume that substantially more than a thousand waders may be present during major peaks of migration. Only 375, however, were counted during the April 1995 visit, after the peak of the spring migration. Details of wader counts on the island were incorporated in the January 1996 UAE submission to the annual Asian Waterfowl Census for the first time. In order to permit continued assessment of the island's importance as a wintering ground for waders, it is recommended that similar counts are conducted annually.

The shallow mangrove-lined bay to the south of the adjoining island of Umm al Barak is also an attractive site for waders at low tides. The southern shore of the island, in particular the mangroves and the land-filled *sabkha* at the western end of the island, was found to be of special interest. On the later was a falcon trap in use during the October 1993 visit. One **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* had been captured a week or so before the visit. The land-fill area also provided a safe open roost site for wading birds at high tide, and a roost of over 800 birds was found and examined in 1993, with several hundred more birds using the same area in December 1994 and January 1996, despite increasing colonisation by salt-tolerant vegetation.

The gardens and tree groves, (mainly *Prosopis* sp.), provide good cover for migrant birds, and would be worth studying in more detail during the spring migration season. Fresh water for migrating birds is available through seepage from irrigation and from the drinking tanks for gazelles, while the strategic location of the island and the presence of isolated tree groves should make Balghelam an excellent site for migrant birds resting during their spring and autumn migration.

Noteworthy on all trips was the absence of introduced **mynah** species (common in Abu Dhabi) and the scarcity of **tern** species until early February. The latter can probably be explained by most of the terns having left the Arabian Gulf by late autumn. However **White-cheeked Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucogenys*, not previously recorded on the island and a common introduced Abu Dhabi resident, was first seen on 1st February 1996, indicating this species may now be colonising the island. One was seen carrying food on 29 February 1996.

Jazirat Balghelam, together with the associated area of mangroves and islets to the east of Abu Dhabi island, has already been designated as an 'Important Bird Area' in the list of IBAs for the Middle East prepared by BirdLife International.

SELECTIVE CHECKLIST OF BIRD SPECIES

The order of this list follows that of Voous 1977. The Balghelam Island bird list stands at 80 species, including introduced and feral species.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis* Not seen in 1993. Singles and occasional dead individuals Sep 1994, Dec 1994, Apr 1995, Jan 1996 and Feb 1996. Offshore movement noted 29 Dec 1994 and 'several hundred' near Ras Ghurab 8 Feb 1996.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus* One 17.4.95.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* Up to seven most visits. Breeds in mature mangroves at Khor al Jile'ah.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Introduced. At least three present 1993, two 23.9.94 & 29.12.94, four in January 1996, with one in February 1996. No breeding (yet) recorded.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Two recorded 1993, one present most other visits. Active nest on adjacent islet.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* One reported caught by trapper 'one week' before 22.10.93 visit.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* Introduced. Single birds only seen December 1994, January 1996, February 1996.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* Introduced and common all over the island.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* c.30 in western wader roost 1993. 75+ in west and east of island 23.9.94. 100+ on 29.12.94. 10+ on 17.4.95 when confirmed breeding. c.30 on visits January & February 1996.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* c.200 in western roost in 1993. 650+ on 23.9.94. 350+ on 29.12.94, 230 on 17.4.95, 283 on 12.1.96 and 295 on 16.2.96.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* c.150 in western roost in 1993. Otherwise less than 30 on subsequent visits.

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi* Observed in June 1993 between Balghelam and Qassar al Jile'ah where one pair bred (PH).

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Feral population only; abundant and increasing.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Common in gardens and groves in 22.10.93 and 23.9.94, but less than 10 in January 1996, 25+ in February 1996. Presumably breeds.

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* As Collared Dove. Abundant with local flocks of up to 30 most visits.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Up to two 29.12.94 and January & February 1996. Introduced or natural extension from mainland.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* One over scrub in west of island 12.1.96.

Nightjar sp. *Caprimulgus* sp. Reported by workers to occur occasionally.

Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* 2+ pairs seen with distraction display noted 9.5.96. Absent in winter.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* Up to 10 seen 1993 and c.5 most other visits. One displaying 23.2.96, 5+ pairs on 9.5.96.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Up to three seen 1993 and 1996. Not seen 1994. Probably breeds but no evidence obtained.

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* One first seen 1.2.96, up to 10 on 8.2.96. One carrying food 29.2.96.

Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis* One or two birds present most visits, presumably breeds.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* One in mangroves 29.12.94, possible migrant. Breeds in mangroves around Khor al Jile'ah.

Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea* One singing in southernmost *Prosopis* grove in 22.10.93.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* One or two near Ras Yah rest house. Pairs seen Feb'96.

Probably breeds.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* Three seen 1993, one 23.9.94, three 29.12.94, 2/3 on 17.4.95. One *pallidirostris* 16.2.96, one 9.5.96. Could possibly breed.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Common. Max. 35 birds seen together. Presumed breeding.

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* One suspected 29.12.94.

INTRODUCED SPECIES

Besides the commonly present Grey Francolin, several species of game-birds have been introduced., including Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Peacock, Common Pheasant (first seen in September 1994 and still present February 1996). Helmeted Guineafowl were first seen February 1996. Provided that sufficient food is made available, and in the absence of predators, these are likely to survive. One free-flying White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis* was seen on several occasions in February 1996. The owner later advised that he had introduced five birds caught in Somalia several years earlier, with this sole bird surviving.

OTHER SPECIES RECORDED

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*
Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Curlew *Numenius arquata*
Redshank *Tringa totanus*
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*
Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*
Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*
Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrma*
Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*
Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*
Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*
Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*
Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

Full details of all records are held by the National Avian Research Center and the Emirates Bird Records Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is an edited version of one of several island reports being prepared by the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey Project and the National Avian Research Center to summarise the available information about the archaeology and natural history of the islands

of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The unedited version of this report has been submitted to the owner of the island, Sheikh Surour bin Mohammed al Nahyan, to whom we are grateful for facilitating our visits. The authors also thank Erik Hirschfeld and Steve James, who kindly provided us with their records and other useful data following many independent visits between 1993 and 1996.

Peter Hellyer, P.O. Box 791, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Simon Aspinall, National Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

[James, SL & J Norton. 1997. *Mediterranean Gull* *Larus melanocephalus* at *Ramtha Tip*. *The First Record for the United Arab Emirates*.

Emirates Bird Report 19: 123-124, EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus* AT RAMTHA TIP The First Record For The United Arab Emirates

Steve L. James & John Norton

On 20th January 1995, John Buxton and the authors were birding Ramtha tip. Many species were present and we had to split up to cover as much of the area as possible, in the limited time available. JN was searching the many Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* on the water, when he found an adult **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*. He checked the important identification features and then called SLJ, who was the nearest observer to him. Both authors watched the bird for a few minutes and then JN went in search of JB who was out of sight, about a hundred metres away. SLJ walked around the edge of the pit and fell into some treacherous mud and started to sink! Just then, the gulls took flight in response to a passing Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* and SLJ was not in a position to look at the flying gulls! Consequently the bird was not seen in flight and it could not be relocated, despite searching. The bird was observed on the ground using 10x binoculars and 20x telescope.

The following features were noted:

General appearance and structure: Slightly larger than Black-headed Gull, which was available for direct comparison. It was bulkier in build, being thicker set than Black-headed Gull. Although the wings were folded, the primaries were seen well and were broader-tipped.

Upperparts: The bird was an adult in winter plumage, overall white with a paler grey mantle than Black-headed Gull. Wing tips (primaries) all white.

Bare parts: The bill was dark red with a black tip, being slightly thicker and bigger than that of Black-headed Gull. However, the bird lacked the typical drooping tip of Mediterranean Gull, a fact which JN thought might indicate the bird was a hybrid. All the other characters were perfect for this species; a hybrid would presumably show some other plumage features consistent with this hypothesis. The legs were very dark, almost black.

Head/Eye: One of the key features contributing to the jizz of the bird was the large dark eye (accentuated by black feathers around the eye). The top of the eye was a flatter shape - the bottom was rounded. This gave the bird a 'bolder' expression than Black-headed, Slender-billed or Common Gull (The illustrations in Lars Jonsson (1992) are perfect).

DISCUSSION

Mediterranean Gull is confined to Europe. However, in recent years it has been expanding its range, both eastward and westward. Although the species breeds mainly in colonies around the Black & Aegean Seas, the range has extended eastwards to include the northern Sea of Azov and to western Kalmytskaya. In the west, extensions of range have been sporadic, but of increasingly regular occurrence in Germany, Hungary, France, Belgium and Britain.

The species is migratory, some birds wintering around the Crimea, but the majority of the population moving to the Mediterranean Sea. Small numbers enter the Gulf of Suez and it is a vagrant to eastern Iraq, Kuwait and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. It is therefore not too surprising that one should turn up in the United Arab Emirates in winter. With increased observer coverage, this species would be expected to be found more often in the Arabian Gulf in winter.

REFERENCES

Cramp *et al.* 1983. *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol.3.* Oxford University Press.

Harrison, P. 1983. *Seabirds: an identification guide.* Helm, Bromley.

Jonsson, L. 1992. *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East.* Helm, London.

Steve L. James, c/o ADNOC, P.O. Box 898/13, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

John Norton, 17 Holmefield Avenue, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 1EF, United Kingdom

(Another bird was reported at Ramtha on 22 January 1996 by a group of Swedish birdwatchers. - *Ed.*).

[Madge, S. 1997. *The Sub-species of House Crow Corvus splendens in the UAE*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 124. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

THE SUB-SPECIES OF HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens* IN THE UAE

Steve Madge

During March 1996 Colin Richardson and I accompanied a group of British birdwatchers on a short tour of the UAE. During the visit I was struck by the remarkable difference in colour saturation between the two populations of **House Crows** *Corvus splendens* that were encountered (at Dubai and Fujairah). Although there is a degree of intergradation between them, five subspecies were recognised by Madge & Burn (1994). House Crows seen well along the Gulf of Oman coast at Fujairah were so pale a grey on the neck that I considered them to be of the palest race *zugmayeri* of Pakistan and north-west India (as suggested by Aspinall 1996). By complete contrast those at Dubai were so dark that they seemed best referred to *protegatus* of south-west India and Sri Lanka. It would be interesting, and quite easy, to compare the dark Dubai birds with those established elsewhere along the shores of the Persian Gulf to see which type, pale-necked or dark-necked, is involved and to note how long these dark-necked birds remain viably dark in view of future colonisation of Dubai by the pale *zugmayeri*.

REFERENCES

- Aspinall, S. 1996. *Status and conservation of the Breeding Birds of the United Arab Emirates*. Hobby, Liverpool & Dubai.
Madge, S. & Burn, H. 1994. *Crows & Jays*. Christopher Helm, London.

Steve Madge, Seawinds, Lower Treieve, Dowlerry, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 3LZ, UK.

[Frost, D. 1997. *Behaviour of Winter-plumaged Purple Sunbird* *Nectarinia asiatica*.
Emirates Bird Report 19: 124. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

BEHAVIOUR OF WINTER-PLUMAGED PURPLE SUNBIRD *Nectarinia asiatica*.

Darren Frost

During a trip to the United Arab Emirates between the 4th-18th October 1995, while at Ramtha Tip and the Emirates Golf Course, I made the following observations on the winter plumage display of male Purple Sunbirds *Nectarinia asiatica* in the presence of females and other males.

The winter plumage pattern was used in threat display towards other males. In the presence of females it was used to attract them to the same bushes and flowering plants. The presence and defence of territories was not observed, though when the birds were visiting plants to obtain nectar (species not known) they defended it against intruders.

It appeared that Purple Sunbirds travelled around in small groups of up to eight birds. The larger groups consisted of a dominant male, a varying number of females, and one or two males which may have been sub-adults. They were certainly subordinate to the dominant male. The dominant males were identifiable, firstly by their bright distinctive plumage, secondly they were seen displaying regularly to birds within the group and intruders. The subordinate males were less well-marked and duller, they also only displayed occasionally, to other subordinates, females and intruders.

The display appeared to have evolved to emphasise the yellow and black underparts. The bird used prominent parts of *Acacia* sp. bushes and flowering plants from which to display, particularly bare branches on dead plants or beneath the canopy of living ones, within c.10 feet and in full sight of the bird to which it was displaying. The bird would point its beak vertically into the air and stretch its neck. As it did this it would also sway from side to side with its wings held slightly away from its body. It also continued to move from branch to branch turning in whichever direction required, to face the bird it was displaying to, so the yellow and black underparts were always shown to full effect. Intruding males would be warned off, while females would investigate further and subordinate males would keep their distance. It appeared from my observations that the length and width of the black stripe together with brightness of the yellow and contrast between the yellow and black appeared to be important in determining dominance.

Those males with bright yellow contrasting with a long broad jet black stripe extending from the base of the bill to the undertail coverts, the upper parts were a steel blue-grey, were dominant. In contrast, the female plumage lacked the patterned markings and was very plain when compared to the dominant males, while the subordinate males' plumage had the main patterning but with the sombre appearance of the females.

Further study would be needed to confirm the theory behind these observations. It would be particularly interesting to confirm whether the winter plumage of the Purple Sunbird plays a primary role in the species courtship display. The inter-relationships between birds within the group, between groups, and details on territories still need to be researched to gain an understanding of the ecology of this specialised species.

Darren Frost, 1 Shakespeare Road, St.Ives, Cambridgeshire PE17 4TR, UK.

[Frost, D. 1997. *Observations on the territorial behaviour of Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus at Khor Dubai*. Emirates Bird Report 19: 126, EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR OF KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus* AT KHOR DUBAI

Darren Frost

During a short visit to Dubai, the area of shallow tidal mudflats known as Khor Dubai was visited for two nine-hour periods between 07.00h and 15.00h on 12th and 14th October 1995. The weather conditions were bright and sunny, dry and hot. The following observations were made on the territorial behaviour of adult breeding-plumaged Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* on the mud flats exposed at low tide. The status of Kentish Plover is that of common breeding resident, with resident birds joined by others from south-east Russia, Turkey and the Balkans.

Kentish Plovers were seen vigorously protecting feeding territories against other Kentish Plovers during low tides at the Khor. Other species of bird were not threatened. Most of the territories appeared to be held by a pair of birds. The male undertook most of the defence, particularly against other males. The female contributed, on occasions when another female was encountered or when there was more than one intruder. The defence comprised of the occupier running and chasing the intruder out of the territory. The distance run chasing an intruder varied, and flight towards an intruder was rarely used. There was no visual display using plumage or posturing. The size of the territories varied markedly depending on the distance from the shoreline. Those birds nearer to the water's edge appeared to have smaller territories than those higher up nearer the drier areas. Single birds seemed to have smaller territories than the pairs and tended to be found nearer the shoreline. At high tide Kentish Plover roosts in groups with other species and territorial behaviour was at a minimum.

The reason for the territorial behaviour being restricted to chasing an intruder off may be because the time used up displaying and posturing reduces the time available for feeding, especially in an area where the food source is only exposed for a limited period of time. The territories being held by a pair were not confirmed in all cases observed. The explanation for shared territories could only be hypothesised, possibly the birds were ready for the breeding season, or a pair could defend a proportionately larger area than a single bird. The changing size of territories depending on distance from the shoreline may be due to a higher density of food items nearer the water, with the birds needing only to defend a smaller territory to protect an adequate supply of food.

These are only theories and research is needed to confirm them. Other questions have been left unanswered such as: do the same birds go back to the same areas? What is the relation between the birds sharing territories? What do the birds use as boundary markers and why do single birds occupy the territories nearer the shoreline while pairs are found higher up the shoreline?

A major benefit of further research would be to evaluate the productivity of Khor Dubai for migrating, breeding and wintering. The information gathered could be used to set up a monitoring scheme. The health of what is a prime Nature Reserve in the United Arab Emirates should be monitored for variation and any changes noted could be assessed and if necessary managed for the benefit of the avian fauna.

I have not observed this behaviour from Kentish Plover seen in Cyprus where it is also a breeding resident. I have however observed similar behaviour in **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* in winter coastal habitats. Although there is some mention of behaviour similar to that noted here in BWP Vol.3, there is limited explanation for the behaviour. Benefit would be gained from further research with the potential for using the species and a biological indicator to the health of the habitat.

Darren Frost, 1 Shakespeare Road, St.Ives, Cambridgeshire PE17 4TR, UK.

[Aspinall, SJ. 1997. *Just how important is the UAE for Visiting Passerines?*
Emirates Bird Report 19: 127-129. EBRC, Dubai, UAE]

JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS THE UAE FOR VISITING PASSERINES?

Simon Aspinall

There are just over 400 species on the official UAE bird checklist, of which 104 (including naturalised introductions) are known to have bred, while a further 100+ have occurred solely as vagrants. Clearly then, some 200 are known as visitors (about 30 UAE breeders are migrants too), most being of regular and predictable occurrence, with about half being passerine species. These can further be subdivided into passage migrants which visit in spring and/or autumn and winter visitors. Some of our breeding species are migrants too (eg many of our seabirds,

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* and **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus*). Only passerines will be considered any further here. Pigeon-holing different species into single category is not always feasible as certain species may actually qualify for several. Nonetheless, most passerines fit into a single category with a minority found in two or exceptionally three. Breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visiting populations of **Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* and **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* are all known from the UAE, for example. The numbers found in one particular category will always be numerically superior to those in the one or two others eg migrant **Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* and **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* vastly outnumber their respective UAE breeding populations.

WHY PASSERINES?

Passerines probably do not get sufficient attention when it comes to either regional censuses (partly due to logistical problems) or to major international conservation initiatives, especially outside Europe. This has been the case even at a national level for safeguarding breeding populations. One consequence of the lack of monitoring is that trends are not automatically appreciated. A large scale decline may have occurred without us being aware that there was even a problem. Partly this is due to many such species being dispersed. Conventional reserve areas are generally inadequate to retain a meaningful percentage of individual populations of most species, even though small, but viable populations could be maintained. Continuous long term attrition has reduced the numbers of some species from their original level to one whereby the entire national population might be housed in protected areas, so that at least the statistics would look commendable. Major land-use policy changes are the only way to guarantee a long term future for these species in the 'wider countryside', whilst assisting many other species at the same time of course (and not just birds either!).

Waterfowl, seabirds and gamebirds are generally (but not invariably) rather well-catered for in those countries where conservation issues have been addressed, with birds of prey slightly more complex in this respect, whilst lowly passerines have barely got a look-in until now. Sophisticated analysis and data collection methods in Europe in particular have demonstrated some very real and alarming declines over the last thirty years - 50-75% in some instances (eg some resident seed-eating finches and buntings). Migratory passerines are dominantly insectivorous, hence their need to migrate, but they too have been hit by large scale declines even if invoking different explanations.

Using a small number of species, the following account is an attempt to redress the balance and give creditable reasons why passerines deserve due representation. Keeping up, or catching up, with the efforts already in place to conserve non-passerines certainly needs to be attended to. The value of some species is easy to appreciate (eg ducks and gamebirds) but why should a wader be deemed any more important than a warbler when neither is 'consumed'. Any bird may have a value as a bio-indicator of the health of the environment. Many species can be singled out as suitably 'sensitive' subjects of monitoring studies designed to detect changing environmental conditions.

POPULATION ESTIMATES

Winter surveys conducted by the National Avian Research Center have provided density estimates of wintering passerines found in various parts of the Abu Dhabi desert (see Osborne *et al* 1996). In 180,000 ha. of Baynunah, for example, mid-winter population estimates suggest there to be 15,000 **Desert Wheatears** *Oenanthe deserti*: 12,000 **Desert Warblers** *Sylvia nana* and 1000 Great Grey Shrikes (see Evans 1994). Using the known densities from here and the other areas surveyed and an estimate of the area of suitable habitat available *ie* by extrapolation, their respective populations in Abu Dhabi emirate alone would be around 120,000+, 140,000+ and 15-20,000 individuals. These numbers are not negligible, although, as estimates, they should be treated with caution at present. Further surveys are required to detect any annual variation. Unravelling such variation from a distinct population trend, which introduces a confusion factor, is problematic, especially in any short term interpretation. Long-term monitoring studies will thus need establishing.

To switch habitats briefly, the same exercise can be repeated for wintering passerines found in the *Acacia*-clad plain west of the Hajar Mountains, around Dhaid and Madam (Sharjah), for example. **Desert Lesser Whitethroat*** *Sylvia minula* also certainly numbers some tens of thousands. The area of the plain is about half that of Baynunah but the density of Great Grey Shrikes is double that of these sandy desert areas and thus the overall number present will be about the same. Many shrikes are in fact resident breeders in the UAE but their ranks are supplemented by passage and wintering immigrants. In spring **Upcher's Warbler*** *Hippolais languida*, a species which breeds in Asia but winters in Africa (from Somalia southward to Tanzania), is a common migrant and a provisional estimate suggests several thousand use the plains as a stopover after crossing the Empty Quarter (Wardman & Aspinall *unpub.obs.*).

Other species for which data are sparse at present but which are known to occur in substantial numbers either in winter, or passage, or both, and for which the UAE may be a vital stopover area, include **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*; **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*; **Ménétries' Warbler*** *Sylvia mystacea* and **Pale Rock Sparrow*** *Petronia brachydactyla* in particular, although many other species might well have been singled out. All arrive in the UAE from their winter quarters in Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere in East Africa.

Certain of these species (as marked with an asterisk *), are known to be of 'restricted range' which, due to habitat changes, in part of or throughout their entire range, may be at risk. Even where the species is not considered at risk presently, is there still not good reason to manage these arid lands sustainably and responsibly? These birds are all important components of the ecosystem and, as stated previously, are excellent bio-indicators of the health of the environment. Additionally, monitoring their populations here, once the habitat is 'sorted out', will indicate any problems occurring in either or both the breeding grounds or other wintering areas.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PROSPECTS?

Desert areas of the UAE are badly in need of restoration, so too is the native *Acacia* savannah. A major landuse offensive is required, although this may be a bitter pill to swallow. Fortunately for deserts there is every reason to think such action will come. **Houbara** is the 'flagship' that may make this happen. Traditional hunting with falcons may be the very reason the desert may finally be restored to its former glory. Even so, an improvement of the grazing alone would surely be a sufficiently good reason.

For *Acacia* savannah there is perhaps a less immediate prospect. The willingness to accept any regulation on the numbers of grazing stock is a thorny issue to say the least. Finding an acceptable solution to this well-known 'commons' problem (where any gain is to an individual whereas the losses are shared equally) needs some imaginative intervention.

To simply protect only our breeding bird populations, be they passerines or non-passerines, is not enough. It is time to consider international travellers the same way as we might expect another nation receiving 'our' non-resident breeding species to do. This international imperative is a reciprocal arrangement that we cannot ignore. Although we are nowhere near sorting out marine, coastal or mountain issues in the UAE, our deserts should not be allowed to take a back seat.

* restricted range species (Evans 1994)

REFERENCES

Evans, M.I. 1994. *Important Bird Areas of the Middle East*. BirdLife International, UK.
Osborne, P.E., Norton, J. & Aspinall, S.J. 1996. Desert Birds of Abu Dhabi: pp96-121. In: Osborne (Ed.): *Desert Ecology of Abu Dhabi*. NARC, Abu Dhabi.

Simon Aspinall, National Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi.