

Trip report United Arab Emirates 12th to 19th of February 1998

By Mikael Molin

Introduction

Having planned to go to UAE already last year I was rather satisfied when take-off was finally set to the 12th of February. The many interesting species in the earlier trip reports really fascinated me and now we were finally going to get there...

This report covers a week of hectic birding around the emirates made by me and two fellow birders from Sweden: Olof Hjelm and Marinko Karabatic. Our primary concern was of course to see all the rare passerines and waders (i.e. Crab plover, Great Knot, Grey hypocolius, Eastern pied wheatear, Booted warbler and Plain leaf warbler) regularly wintering in the country. This main concern of passerines and waders also shows up in the list; we're a little short of raptors. Our strategy was to visit a few spots and spend time enough to thoroughly bird through the area rather than visiting many different sites.

Mid february is the month when spring migrants, such as Swallows, Hoopoes, Pied wheatears and Woodchat shrikes start to show up again. The wintering species are still there, though numbers not at their peak. Having actually planned to go earlier this winter (i.e. January) we found the beginning of spring migration exciting well in the country, and since we didn't miss any of our primary species we found our trip a great success.

Preparations, readings and literature

We prepared ourselves for the journey by reading the excellent guide book by Colin Richardson (1), checking up the latest bird records in the country on the Emirates News "Twitchers guide" to be found on the WWW under the address cited below (2). We also contacted Peter Hellyer on the Emirates News by E-mail. Well in the country, we phoned Colin Richardson who kindly gave us information where our pre-researched failed. An excellent map, although not always up to date, was ordered in advance at one of the largest bookstores of Sweden (3).

Field-guides used were the new and old edition of Porter et al. covering the Middle-East (4 a/b), the MacMillan guide covering the region (5) and Lars Jonsson's guide, excellent, however mostly dealing with European birds (6). In some of the more difficult species Alström's and Colston's "...Rare birds..." provided some support (7).

1. Richardson, Colin, 1990, "*The birds of the United Arab Emirates*", Hobby Publications Dubai & Warrington
2. <http://uaeinteract.com/nature/bird/twitch.html>; (the uaeinteract is parts of a book "*Natural Emirates*" and a good starting site to get information about the UAE on other topics as well)
3. GeoProjects. The United Arab Emirates. GeoProjects, P. O. Box 113 5294, Beirut, Lebanon.
- 4 a. Porter, R F; Christensen, S; Schiermacker-Hansen, P, 1996, "*Field guide to the birds of the Middle East*", T & A D Poyser, London
- 4 b. Hollom, P A D; Porter, R F; Christensen, S; Willis, I, 1988, "*Birds of the Middle East and North Africa*", T & A D Poyser Ltd, Calton
5. Harris, A; Shirihai, H; Christie, D, 1996, "*The MacMillan Birder's guide to European and Middle Eastern birds*", MacMillan General Books, London
6. Jonsson, L, 1992, "*Fåglar i Europa med Nordafrika och Mellanöstern*", Wahlström & Widstrand
7. Lewington, I; Alström, P; Colston, P, 1991, "*A field guide to the rare birds of Britain and Europe*", Domino Books, Jersey

Flight, accomodation, car and food

We took a chartertrip organized by Britannica Scandinavia (Fritidsresor) with a planned departure on the 13th. As you can see this was moved back, actually on rather short notice, to the 12th. The price was 5575 SEK (c 700 USD) including flight, hotel and breakfast. We stayed at Vendome plaza in the centre of Deira, Dubai and travelled around the country in a pre-booked car rented from Budget (Price: 1237 DH/305 USD). The car was a Chevrolet Cavalier Sedan from 1997 and safely took us around the country for the whole week. Fuel is cheap: 3,95 DH/gallon (c 0.3 USD/liter) and since we learnt from earlier trip reports that cheap accomodation could be hard to find, we stayed at the above mentioned hotel every night.

We used the included breakfast facility only once; mostly we bought breakfast the night before (stores open 'til around midnight) and had it in the field/on the road. Lunch and dinner we had at various restaurants. Indian restaurants of a simple kind can be found all around the country. The prices for chicken with rice and bread

varied between 20-30 DH (around 6-9 USD) for a three person's meal. Somewhat more expensive, though still cheap, are the Arabian restaurants we dined at in the evenings: between 50-70 DH (15-20 USD) for grilled meat with bread for all the three of us.

Travelling around was rather straightforward once you adopted to the traffic system. You can for example normally not do left turns; you have to pass the turn-off, make a U-turn and then go back to make a right turn at your planned turn-off. Signs can sometimes be hard to follow and the rapidly expanding cities make maps quickly out-of-date. However old, the map recommended above is enough small scale, and furthermore includes city maps of the larger cities; two reasons making it well worth its price of 100 SEK (12-13 USD).

Weather

Being from the rather chilly Scandinavia you would say any weather is better than home in winter, and we found the weather pleasant throughout the trip. The first day we had a short but very heavy shower in the evening while driving back to our hotel, this being the only rain falling. The beginning of the week was rather windy with westerly winds, but the last two days were calm and therefore rather hot. Temperatures ranged from +20-30 °C falling below 20 only at night and in the mountains. Generally these were good conditions for birding although we had hoped for at least one day with winds from the Arabian sea, making seabird watching possible, but we had no luck with that. We spent a lot of time in the field walking around and the light conditions are rather different from what we Scandinavians are used to, at least during winter, this making our eyes tire a bit. The deserts were unusually green this winter because of rather heavy rain earlier on.

Itinerary

Thursday 12th of February

Take off from Arlanda at 09.30 and landing at Sharjah airport 18.45 local time. At around 00.30 we were properly installed at our hotel and had our pre-booked rental car standing outside. The Budget rental car offices were to be found in the city centre of Sharjah and at the Dubai airport. Because of our late arrival we had to fetch the car at the Dubai international airport.

Friday 13th of February

We started to bird at the **Ramtha tip**, Sharjah at 07.00. It still has something to give, despite the "filling-it-up" actions in the latest years. We here saw our first *Red-wattled plovers*, *Little green bee-eaters* and *Indian rollers*, species proving to be common throughout the country. Records of *Little grebe*, *Whiskered tern* and *Jack snipe* were to be the only ones during the trip. Among the UAE rarities were some *Ruddy shelducks* and a *Greylag goose*. Feeling rather hungry by 09.00 we headed for a café in Ajman to have breakfast. We then drove to **Umm-al-Qaiwain** where we birded from around 11.00 to 13.00 and managed to get the *Socotra cormorants*, two *Swift* and several *Lesser crested terns* plus a splendid view of an adult *Great black-headed gull* flying past. Lunch at a restaurant just outside Umm-al-Qaiwain. We then headed for Khor-al-Beidah, but the way out to the beach described in Colin's guide book was too wet so we almost got stuck on a mudflat. Somewhat depressed we returned to the main road and drove north to see if we could find another way down to the Khor. We ended up in **the northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah** and saw our first large waderflocks along with some terns. *Black-crowned finchlark* plus *Desert* and *Isabelline wheatear* showed up in the dunes beside the khor. A *Pallid harrier* flew by. A bit disappointed we returned to the hotel and called Colin to find a better road down to the khor the next day. Dinner at a nearby restaurant in Deira.

Saturday 14th of February

Up at around 06.00 heading north towards Ras-al-Khaimah and the Al Jazeerah khor. A stop at **a dump along the road** produced some *Waterpipits* and ... wait a minute now this is actually a *Dowitcher* flying by us! Puzzled we stood there watching the bird fly down to and disappear at the Khor-al-Beidah. This was our afternoon destination so we continued north to the abandoned village of **Jazeerah-al-Hamriyah** where we birded until around 10.00. A *Peregrine* as well as a female *Blue rock thrush* showed up. The **Al Jazeerah khor** was really nice giving us good looks of a couple of *Saunders's terns* and a large flock of adult *Slender-billed gulls* in addition to all the waders present. After a while we headed southwards again towards **Khor-al-Beidah** having lunch at the lunch restaurant of yesterday. This time we found our way down easily by the description given to us by Colin. To get down to the khor you take the turn-off from the Sharjah/Ras-al-Khaimah main road towards Umm-al-Qaiwain and drive for a few kilometres. You should now be able to see an onion-shaped tower striped in beige and white. A turn off to the right leading to a castle is to be found there. Once close to the castle you turn off the road to the right and use the dirt road to drive around the castle down to the water. Well at the spot we scoped through the large flocks of *Crab plovers* as well as other waders from around noon and four hours ahead. Searching for the great knots we found a *Knot* (5th record if accepted) and it took us some time to convince ourselves that we were actually looking at a for us rather ordinary bird. No signs of any dowitcher

though. A male *Black-crowned finchlark* sang nicely for us, but where were the great knots? At around 15.45 we were about to give in but I prompted for a walk, making us see an area we had not covered thoroughly. There we finally found our long-sought *Great knot* standing behind some mangrove along with *Bar-tailed godwits*. Still no signs of the dowitcher though. In Deira on our way back we saw our first *Pale crag martins*.

Sunday 15th of February

Early morning drive to **Masafi wadi** where we started birding at around 06.30. We started to walk somewhat north of the wadi along the hillsides and saw our first *Red-tailed wheatears*, *Desert larks* and *Arabian babblers*. We found a *Long-billed pipit* singing and, all of a sudden, there it was the goldfinch-like *Phylloscopus* song sought for: the *Plain leaf warbler*! A *Hume's wheatear* also showed up and birding for another hour we found two *Sand partridges* and another *Plain leaf warbler*. At around 10.30 we left for Kalba and having some difficulties deciding where to eat we came across fishermen along the **Kalba coast**. Retaining their nets they were surrounded by large amounts of gulls and terns, as well as a couple of *Arctic skuas*. Extremely good views of *Swift* and *Lesser crested terns* and about 250 *Sooty gulls*. Hunger prompting for immediate stilling we drove towards Fujierah to find some food. We bought something at a supermarket and returned to the shore, now also scoping through the large flocks of *Common terns*, this resulting in us finding at least two *White-cheeked terns*. In a hurry to get to **Khor Kalba** we were satisfied with only two of them *White-cheeked* and had to leave. We arrived at 15.00 and started off birding the outer lagoon southwards and saw a *Squacco heron*, but were they really supposed to be here? Well a squacco it was. Trespassing into Oman and seeing nothing but a few ordinary *Common kingfishers* we started to read the guide book telling us that the inner lagoons were the hot spots for the kingfisher. Passing by the plains between the main road to Oman and the northern parts of the lagoon we saw at least 1000 *Sooty gulls*. Once along the inner lagoon we almost immediately located two *White-collared kingfishers* and another *Squacco/Indian pond heron* too far away to be identified. Where were the *Booted warblers*? Walking along the western shores of the inner lagoon we did not hear a sound, and the rather strong winds made us think we would not. We decided to go back to the spot where the two *White-collared kingfishers* were and start birding from there. We drove back but I decided after some driving to get out and walk along the shore. Marinko joined in, Olof to drive back. The engine still running on idle I heard a song recalling a very fast reed warbler proving to be one of the *Booted warblers*. Immediately a *Clamorous reed warbler* showed up as well. A walk northwards along the shore of the inner lagoon resulted in several more of all of the three interesting species recorded so far being found. In the last light we managed to find a *Striated heron* and scope through a flock of *wagtails*, coming in to roost in the northern end of the lagoons, two of them proving to be *Citrine wagtails*. We were rather happy driving home in the dark, the *Indian pond heron* dip the only cloud on a clear blue sky.

Monday 16th of February

We slept until 07.00 and had the breakfast buffet included in our tickets, at 08.00 calling the security guardhouse at the **Emirates golf course** and then Colin, who would show up later at the golf course. From 09.00 we birded the course walking rather quickly down to the northeastern corner where we had learnt the wetland area was. On the way out Olof running ahead of us spotted some *Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse* flying by. At the wetland area a *White-tailed plover* showed up and short thereafter Colin who took us to close-range examine a flock of them sandgrouse watering. Very nice! Afterwards we studied the rather many *Pintail snipes* present. Trying to locate a white-breasted waterhen to be found in the area failed, but in the mean time Marinko disappeared, only to return having seen an *Indian pond heron* at close range, on the course itself. We went over to the pool where he saw it and managed to see it as well along with one of the three or four *Striated herons* he saw as well. At around 14.00 we left the area to head for Qarn Nazwa. Passing by Khor Dubai we saw from the car a juvenile *Spotted eagle* almost flying us down. Eating at an Indian restaurant close to the Khor we arrived at **Qarn Nazwa** at 16.00. Thorough birding in the area produced some *Red-tailed wheatears* and at last light a puzzling bird proving to be a male *Pied wheatear*. No signs of the Eastern pied though. A *Desert eagle owl* circled above us and a *Little owl* was calling as we entered the car to drive back to the hotel.

Tuesday 17th of February

Again an early wake-up, we this morning headed for Abu Dhabi, with **Al Wathba camel race track** as our first destination. Arriving at around 07.30 we first walked through the grove between the parking lot and the racetrack itself and rather quickly found a *Grey hypocolius* and a flock of *Pacific golden plovers* on the lawns at the centre of the track. We started walking the lawns seeing a *Peregrine* with jesses, several *Isabelline*, *Pied* and a few *Desert wheatears*, some *Tawny pipits* and an assortment of larks: *Short-toed*, *Crested* and *Sky-larks*. Wetted down by the watering equipment fittened all over the lawns and starting to show signs of tiredness we continued on walking. A male *Rock thrush* cheered us up and then we split up to cover larger areas. A couple of *Bluethroats*, some *'Siberian' stonechats* and *Water-/ Red-throated* and a *Meadow pipit* showed up as well as a *Quail* was heard. Now we really started to get tired having walked around for four hours. We were almost

giving in when I found a *Richard's pipit* sitting in the long grass. But what was that smaller one? A Tawny? We walked towards it and suddenly it sat nicely on one of the watering sticks. The tail- and bill-length recalled Tawny but undoubtedly it showed pale lores and heavily streaked upperparts. The median coverts showed the characteristic pattern found in *Blyth's pipit*! Flushing it made it utter its characteristic combination of two different calls. Continued pursuits to see it better produced no better looks but more calls and convinced us of our identification. Pursuing the pipit we also flushed a *Lesser skylark*. Now things were really starting to tune up! A last futile effort to see the bimaculated larks produced nothing but extreme hunger and thirst. At 13.30, after six hours on the track, we returned to our car only to see a *Short-toed eagle* passing at comfortable distance. Dinner at the Indian restaurant close to the track. We then drove to Abu Dhabi where we after some trouble could find the Emirates news building. Meeting with Peter Hellyer, Simon Aspinall and some since long needed coffee produced a map to the forest wagtails at **Khalidya spit** and we also inquired of other birds in the region. We parked our car at the spit at 16.30 and started to bird. I found a *Red-breasted flycatcher* and an *Olivaceous warbler* and started to look for the others. Olof came running having located the *Forest wagtails* and soon all the three of us had seen them nicely. Time was approaching dusk and having learnt about a *Pied kingfisher* being possible to see at dusk in the **Eastern lagoon** we managed to get there in time and see it along with a collection of herons. Dinner at a Pakistani restaurant in Abu Dhabi before returning to Dubai.

Wednesday 18th of February

Birding from around 07.00 at the mountain **Jebel Hafeet**, south of Al Ain resulted in good views of the numerous *Sand partridges*, *Desert larks* and *Hume's wheatears*. Thorough search of the area produced a pair of *Hooded wheatears* seen by Olof and Marinko. At 10.30 I gave in on relocating them and we went for the **Intercontinental hotel** where we had no luck with the raptors. Lunch in Al Ain before going by the **Zoo** to look for the *Egyptian vultures* coming down from the mountains to circle above the area. Two or three were quickly located. We then decided to drive to **Qarn Nazwa** to look for the eastern pied wheatear again, hoping for assistance from Colin, he having told us he was making a trip there this afternoon. Arriving there at 16.00 we searched the gravel plains finding only a single male *Menetries's warbler*. We saw a party up the hill and decided to go there and inquire about any interesting sightings. Our having just joined in with Colin a wheatear was jerking around up the same steep hillside as the two *Rock thrushes* which caught all our attention at the moment. The wheatear showed the characteristics of Eastern pied and in the excitement of trying to tell the others I lost it. Olof relocated it quickly and Colin soon reassured us that this was indeed a female *Eastern pied wheatear*! Happy we headed back for Dubai and had a look at the Khor in the last half-an-hour of light. After darkness had settled we set off to **Mushrif park** where we arrived at 19.15. Birding for about 45 minutes we located several *Striated scops owls*.

Thursday 19th of February

Birding at **Dibba** from around 07.45 to 09.30 we saw some *Sooty gulls*, *Swift terns* and a very nice male *Pied wheatear* in the harbour. We then headed for the **Digdagger area** where a wealth of *Indian rollers* and a single *Corn bunting* showed up. Tired and also rather satisfied with our previous days of birding we took things easier this last day. We decided to end our journey at the Zabeel fish farm in Dubai to add some more herons and perhaps some of the other mynahs to the trip/life list. Well in the area after getting stuck in some traffic jams, we used the turn-off from the road to Khor Dubai and was immediately surrounded by three police cars blocking our way. We drove to the **Khor Dubai** instead and had good looks of two *Spotted eagles*, a flock of *Spoonbills* and we also located a bird to which none of us had any clue of its species-identity. It was huge and black with a huge open bill, too short legs and also the wrong jizz to be a stork. Well back in Sweden we were able to identify it as a *Southern ground hornbill* (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*), a South-african bird ranging north to Kenya and a poor flyer, this strongly suggesting an escape. Well, it was a fun feeling anyway, looking at a bird to which we had no clues of its identity. At the time by the Khor we told Colin about it and then we had to leave in a hurry for the car-rental company at the Dubai airport. With 20 minutes to go before the transfer bus to Sharjah airport left (16.20), we arrived at our hotel to be taken home to Sweden again. The flight home was by all the three of us spent sleeping, us only being woken up for meal services. Tired but happy we landed at Arlanda airport at 00.20.

Complete list of recorded species

1. **Little grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) 1 at Ramtha tip on the on the 13th.
2. **Black-necked grebe** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) 5 moulting from winter plumage at Emirates golf course on the 16th.
3. **Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) Recorded off the East coast (Kalba and Dibba) and at Khor Dubai in low numbers, highest count c 50 Ras Dibba on the 19th.
4. **Socotra cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*) 43 at Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 13th.
5. **Striated heron** (*Butorides striatus*) 1 adult at Khor kalba on the 15th, 1 adult + 2-3 juv Emirates golf course on the 16th. Rather scarce resident of mangroves.
6. **Squacco heron** (*Ardeola ralloides*) 1 in winter plumage Khor Kalba on the 15th. Occasional winter visitor.
7. **Indian pond heron** (*Ardeola grayii*) 1 in winter plumage Emirates golf course on the 16th. Regular winter visitor to Khor Kalba (5-10 birds annually), very rare outside this area, but a single bird seen earlier this winter at the golf course.
Squacco/Indian pond heron (*Ardeola* sp) 1 in winter plumage Khor Kalba on the 15th.
8. **Cattle egret** (*Bubulcus ibis*) 7 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th, c 50+ Eastern lagoon, Abu Dhabi on the 17th.
9. **Western reef heron** (*Egretta gularis*) Most common heron, recorded in inland wetlands as well as coastal mudflats.
10. **Little egret** (*Egretta garzetta*) Smaller numbers than Western reef heron and higher than Great white egret on several inland and coastal spots.
11. **Great white egret** (*Egretta alba*) 1 each at the following sites and dates: Ramtha tip on the 13th, 1 at Eastern lagoon, Abu Dhabi on the 17th, 1 at Khor Dubai on the 18th.
12. **Grey heron** (*Ardea cinerea*) Somewhat less common than Western reef but still seen in almost all the wetlands visited. No counts performed.
13. **Spoonbill** (*Platalea leucorodia*) c 6 at Southern part of Khor al Beidah on the 14th, 26 at Khor Dubai on the 19th. Regular winter visitor, 26 a rather high count.
14. **Greater flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) Common. Seen on inland as well as coastal wetlands, most numerous in Khor-al-Beidah and Khor Dubai.
15. **Greylag goose** (*Anser anser*) 1 at Ramtha tip on the 13th. An uncommon winter visitor.
16. **Ruddy shelduck** (*Tadorna ferruginea*) 5+ at Ramtha tip on the 13th. Rare winter visitor with 12 records up to and including 1994.
17. **Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*) 1 at Khor Dubai on the 19th. Uncommon migrant and irregular winter visitor, two records made in 1994.
18. **Gadwall** (*Anas strepera*) 2+ at Ramtha tip on the 13th. Irregular winter visitor.
19. **Teal** (*Anas crecca*) 50+ at Ramtha tip on the 13th and noted at Khor Dubai on the 18th and 19th.
20. **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Common, large flocks seen in Ramtha tip and in Khor Dubai.
21. **Pintail** (*Anas acuta*) Common but less numerous than Mallard seen on the same spots.
22. **Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*) c 30 Ramtha tip on the 13th.
23. **Pochard** (*Aythya ferina*) <10 at Ramtha tip on the 13th.
24. **Tufted duck** (*Aythya fuligula*) 2 at Khor Dubai on the 18th.
25. **Egyptian Vulture** (*Neophron percnopterus*) 2 adults circling above Al Ain zoo on the 18th.
26. **Marsh harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*) Noted at several of the birding sites including Khor-al-Beidah and Khor Dubai.
27. **Pallid harrier** (*Circus macrourus*) A first-year bird at Western parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th.
28. **Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*) 1 just north of Al Ain on the 18th, 1 at Ras-al-Khaimah airport on the 19th.
29. **Greater spotted eagle** (*Aquila clanga*) 1 at Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 1 adult at Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 1 first-year bird at Khor Dubai on the 16th, 1 first-year and 1 second-year bird at Khor Dubai on the 19th.
30. **Short-toed Eagle** (*Circaetus gallicus*) 1 at Al Wathba camle race course on the 17th. Uncommon migrant.
31. **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) 1 at Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 1 off Kalba on the 15th, 1 Khor Dubai on the 18th and 1 off Dibba on the 19th. Resident breeder in the country.
32. **Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*) Recorded at Umm-al-Qaiwain, breeding at Qarn Nazwa (two pairs?) and several at Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
33. **Peregrine falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*) 1 ad (with unusually rufous tinged underparts suggesting race *brookei*) Jazeerah-al-Hamriyah on the 14th, 1 juv bird showing obvious signs of captivity at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
34. **Sand partridge** (*Ammoperdix heyi*) 2 Masafi wadi on the 15th, c 25+ Jebel Hafet on the 18th.
35. **Grey francolin** (*Francolinus francolinus*) Common, heard almost everywhere and sometimes flushed in the lowlands.

36. **Quail** (*Coturnix coturnix*) Two birds heard calling at Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
37. **Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*) 1 at Ramtha tip on the 13th and 1 Emirates golf course on the 16th.
38. **Coot** (*Fulica atra*) 1 at Emirates golf course on the 16th. Regular winter visitor in low numbers and at regular sites.
39. **Oystercatcher** (*Haemantopus ostralegus*) Recorded at Al Jazeerah khor, Khor-al-Beidah and Khor Dubai in small numbers.
40. **Black-winged stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*) 2 Ramtha tip on the 13th, c 20 Emirates golf course on the 16th, c 50 Khor Dubai 18th and on the 19th.
41. **Crab plover** (*Dromas ardeola*) This most wanted species was seen at the southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah where about 250 birds showed up on the 14th.
42. **Little ringed plover** (*Charadrius dubius*) observed at Ramtha tip on the 13th.
43. **Ringed plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) Less numerous than Kentish but showed up on most wetlands in small numbers.
44. **Kentish plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) The most common of the ringed plovers, seen on all types of mudflats, inland as well as coastal.
45. **Lesser sand plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*) Observed at Khor-al-Beidah, Al Jazeerah Khor, Khor kalba and Khor Dubai in large numbers.
46. **Greater sand plover** (*Charadrius lescaenaultii*) As Lesser but in lower numbers.
47. **Pacific golden plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*) 2 at Ramtha tip on the 13th, 1 moulting into summer plumage northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 35 in winter plumage Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
48. **Grey plover** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) Common at mudflats.
49. **Red-wattled plover** (*Hoplopterus indicus*) Rather common, seen at Ramtha tip (c 30), Khor Kalba and Emirates golf course.
50. **White-tailed plover** (*Vanellus leucura*) 1 at Emirates golf course on the 16th.
51. **Knot** (*Calidris canutus*) 1 in winter plumage with some red feathers showing at belly, Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th. Fifth UAE record if accepted.
52. **Great knot** (*Calidris tenuirostris*) 1 in winter plumage Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th. We managed only to find one of the seven great knots present in the area at the time.
53. **Sanderling** (*Calidris alba*) Seen in small numbers at Al Jazeerah Khor, Khor-al-Beidah and Khor Dubai.
54. **Little stint** (*Calidris minuta*) Common on inland wetlands (i e Ramtha tip, Emirates golf course) as well as coastal flats.
55. **Temminck's stint** (*Calidris temminckii*) 5 at Emirates golf course on the 16th.
56. **Curlew sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*) Observed in flocks of Dunlins at several coastal sites.
57. **Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*) Rather common and numerous on coastal mudflats.
58. **Jack snipe** (*Lymnocyptes minimus*) 1 at Ramtha tip on the 13th.
59. **Common snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*) c 20 Emirates golf course on the 16th.
60. **Pintail snipe** (*Gallinago stenura*) c 10 Emirates golf course on the 16th together with the Common snipes. Regular winter visitor at the golf course, rarer elsewhere.
Dowitcher sp (*Limnodromus* sp) 1 was seen flying from a dump east of Khor-al-Beidah (a few kilometres south of the Al Awafi café and petrol station) on the 14th. Probably a Long-billed, and definitely no Asiatic. This is the first UAE record (if accepted) and only the second dowitcher ever to be seen in Arabia, the first being a Long-billed in Oman.
61. **Black-tailed godwit** (*Limosa limosa*) Common on coastal and inland mudflats.
62. **Bar-tailed godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*) Common, sometimes in large flocks on coastal mudflats.
63. **Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*) Common but not numerous on coastal sites and also on fields.
64. **Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*) Seen in the northeastern part of Khor-al-Beidah (1) on the 13th and several in the southern part on the 14th.
65. **Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*) 2 at Emirates golf course on the 16th.
66. **Redshank** (*Tringa totanus*) Very common on wetland sites.
67. **Greenshank** (*Tringa nebularia*) As for Redshank.
68. **Marsh sandpiper** (*Tringa stagnatilis*) 3 at Emirates golf course on the 16th. Occasional in winter.
69. **Terek sandpiper** (*Xenus cinereus*) Common wintering wader seen at Khor-al-Beidah, Al Jazeerah khor and Khor Dubai.
70. **Common sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) Common at Khor Kalba and Khor Dubai.
71. **Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*) Observed in low numbers at Khor-al-Beidah and Al Jazeerah khor.
72. **Arctic skua** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) 2-3 off Kalba on the 15th. Pomarine skua is usually the more regular wintering of the skuas.
73. **Sooty gull** (*Larus hemprichii*) c 250 off Kalba on the 15th, 1000+ at Khor Kalba on the 15th, c 70 Dibba on the 19th. Normally rather scarce January and February (<5 at a time reported Jan/Feb 1994).

74. **Black-headed gull** (*Larus ridibundus*) Large flocks seen both on inland and coastal mudflats but also at drier sites.
75. **Slender billed gull** (*Larus genei*) Common, highest number at Al Jazeera khor on the 14th with 500+ adults.
76. **Great Black-headed gull** (*Larus ichthyæetus*) 1 ad at Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 13th, c 6 ad and 1 first-year southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 1 ad off Kalba on the 15th, 2 adults Khor Dubai on the 18th, 3 along the coast between Jazeera-al-Hamriyah and turn-off to Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 19th.
77. **Lesser black-backed gull** (*Larus fuscus*) Individuals of the race *heuglini* seen at several places, first noted on the trip at Umm-al-Qaiwain harbour.
78. **Yellow-legged gull** (*Larus (argentatus) cachinnans*) Common.
79. **Gull-billed tern** (*Sterna nilotica*) c 30 northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah, 'many' at Al Jazeera Khor, southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah and at Khor Dubai.
80. **Caspian tern** (*Sterna caspia*) 1 at southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th and c 10 Khor kalba on the 19th.
81. **Swift tern** (*Sterna bergii*) 2 Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 13th, 3 off Kalba on the 15th, c 10 Dibba on the 19th.
82. **Lesser crested tern** (*Sterna bengalensis*) Strictly coastal, noted at Umm-al-Qaiwain, Al Jazeera khor, Khor-al-Beidah and off Kalba in up to around 10 birds at a time.
83. **Sandwich tern** (*Sterna sandvicensis*) Common at coastal sites.
84. **Common tern** (*Sterna hirundo*) c 200 off Kalba on the 15th. The eastern race *longipennis* winters in the region.
85. **White-cheeked tern** (*Sterna repressa*) 1 adult and 1 first-year bird, both in winter plumage, seen in a flock of Common terns off Kalba on the 15th. Probably there were more of them if had we scrutinously searched the flocks of Common terns. Common breeder, scarce November to February.
86. **Saunders's tern** (*Sterna (albifrons) saundersi*) c 10 Al Jazeera khor on the 14th, 1 at Khor Dubai on the 18th. Widespread along sheltered coasts and lagoons February to November, rare at other times.
87. **Whiskered tern** (*Chlidonias hybridus*) 2 at Ramtha tip on the 13th.
88. **Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse** (*Pterocles exustus*) 5 seen flying by and 36 watering at Emirates golfcourse on the 16th, 62 at Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
89. **Feral pigeon** (*Columba livia domest*) Common.
90. **Collared dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) Common.
91. **Laughing dove** (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) Most common dove, seen almost everywhere.
92. **Ring-necked parakeet** (*Psittacula krameri*) Common around human settlements in the lowlands.
93. **Striated scops owl** (*Otus brucei*) 5 at Mushrif park on the 18th.
94. **Little owl** (*Athene noctua*) 1-2 at Qarn Nazwa on the 16th.
95. **(Desert) Eagle owl** (*Bubo bubo ascalaphus*) 1 eagle owl of the desert form Qarn Nazwa on the 16th.
96. **Pallid swift** (*Apus pallidus*) Common and seen at many spots. Highest numbers around a cliff off Kalba on the 19th where 1000+ birds circled.
97. **White-collared kingfisher** (*Halcyon chloris*) c 10 Khor Kalba on the 15th.
98. **Common kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*) c 10 Khor Kalba on the 15th.
99. **Pied kingfisher** (*Ceryle rudis*) 1 female Eastern lagoon, Abu Dhabi on the 17th. Rare winter visitor, not averaging one record a year.
100. **Little green bee-eater** (*Merops orientalis*) Common in the lowlands. Also several at Qarn Nazwa apparently nesting on the mountain.
101. **Indian roller** (*Coracias benghalensis*) Common, most numerous in the Digdagga-area and on the East coast.
102. **Hoopoe** (*Upupa epops*) 1 Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 13th, c 5 Jazeera al Hamriyah on the 14th, several at the Emirates golf course on the 16th, 1 at Qarn Nazwa on the 16th and on the 19th as well (now in song), 1 in the grove between the parking lot and the race course of Al Wathba on the 17th and 1 at Khalidyah spit, Abu Dhabi on the 17th.
Southern ground hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) 1 male at Khor Dubai on the 19th. Since this is a South and East African species and a poor flyer this is most certainly an escape.
103. **Black-crowned finch-lark** (*Eremopterix nigriceps*) 1 northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 2 southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th.
104. **Desert lark** (*Ammomanes deserti*) c 10 Masafi wadi on the 15th, 50+ Jebel Hafeet on the 18th.
105. **Hoopoe lark** (*Alaemon alaudipes*) 5 northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 1 at southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 1 at Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
106. **Short-toed lark** (*Calandrella brachydactyla*) c 5 at northeastern shores of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, c 50 Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
107. **Crested lark** (*Galerida cristata*) Very common, found almost everywhere. Most numerous on the Al Wathba camel race course, where 200+ observed.

108. **Small skylark** (*Alauda gulgula*) 1 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
109. **Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*) c 25 Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
110. **Sand martin** (*Riparia riparia*) 2 at Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
111. **Pale crag martin** (*Hirundo obsoleta/Ptyonoprogne fuligula*) Seen in Dubai on the 14th, Masafi wadi, Qarn Nazwa, Jebel Hafeet and Dibba in low numbers (<10 at a time).
112. **Barn swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*) 3+ at Jazeerah-al-Hamriyah on the 14th, c 15 at Khor Kalba on the 15th, several at Emirates golf course and at Al Wathba camel race course.
113. **House martin** (*Delichon urbica*) 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th.
114. **Richard's pipit** (*Anthus richardi*) 2 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th. Localized winter visitor.
115. **Tawny pipit** (*Anthus campestris*) 1 at northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 1 at southern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 1 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, c 25 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
116. **Long-billed pipit** (*Anthus similis*) 1 singing in the Masafi wadi on the 15th. Elusive mountain resident.
117. **Meadow pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*) 1 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
118. **Red-throated pipit** (*Anthus cervinus*) c 50 Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
119. **Blyth's pipit** (*Anthus godlewskii*) 1+ at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th. One showed up well sitting on a watering stick, allowing characteristics to be recorded while two other possible did not permit closer studies and had to be left unidentified. Vagrant or rare winter visitor, possibly overlooked earlier.
120. **Water pipit** (*Anthus spinoletta*) several at dump east of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 100+ Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
121. **Forest wagtail** (*Dendronanthus indicus*) 2 at Khalidyah spit, Abu Dhabi on the 17th were the thirteenth and fourteenth UAE records; another was discovered in Mushrif Palace gardens (also in Abu Dhabi) during our visit in the country.
122. **Yellow wagtail** (*Motacilla flava*) c 10 at dump east of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 1 of race *feldegg* Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th.
123. **Citrine wagtail** (*Motacilla citreola*) 2+ at Khor Kalba on the 15th, 1 first-year female Emirates golf course on the 16th.
124. **White wagtail** (*Motacilla alba*) Most common wagtail, highest number at Al Wathba camel race track where c 75 showed up on the 17th.
125. **Grey hypocolius** (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) 1 female in grove between parking lot and camel race course of Al Wathba on the 17th.
126. **White-cheeked bulbul** (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) Common in the West coast Cities, not recorded in the mountains.
127. **Yellow-vented bulbul** (*Pycnonotus xanthopygos*) Mostly recorded in the mountains, where the only bulbul present. Common in the Masafi area.
128. **Red-vented bulbul** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) Rather common in the West coast cities, many seen at the Emirates golf course.
129. **Bluethroat** (*Luscinia svecica*) 2 at Emirates golf course on the 16th, 3 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
130. **Black redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) 2 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, 2 at Khalidyah spit, Abu Dhabi on the 17th and 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th were all males of the races *semirufus* or *phoenicuroides*.
131. **'Siberian' Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*) 3 (2 males 1 female) of eastern race group *maura/stejnegeri* at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
132. **Isabelline wheatear** (*Oenanthe isabellinus*) Rather common in low numbers, 1 each at western parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, Masafi wadi on the 15th, Khor Kalba on the 15th, 2 at Emirates golf course on the 16th and c 25 at the Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
133. **Northern wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) 3 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th. Common passage migrant.
134. **Pied wheatear** (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) 1 at Qarn Nazwa on the 16th, c 5 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th, 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th and 1 at Dibba harbour on the 19th were all males. Common passage migrant peaking March.
135. **Desert wheatear** (*Oenanthe deserti*) Most common wintering wheatear outside the mountains, together with Isabelline. c 10 northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 13th, 1 at Jazeerah-al-Hamriyah on the 14th, 3 at northeastern parts of Khor-al-Beidah on the 14th, 2 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
136. **Red-tailed wheatear** (*Oenanthe xanthopygma*) c 5 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, 8 at Qarn Nazwa on the 16th, 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th all of the the non-dimorphic race *chrysopygia* wintering in the region.
137. **Eastern pied wheatear** (*Oenanthe picata*) 1 female of the *picata*-morph rediscovered after a fortnight's absence Qarn Nazwa on the 18th. Our hard work to find it on the on the 16th gave no result, possibly because of the rather strong winds at the time. The bird was not found in its traditional habitat, the gravel plains, but higher up in a steep slope with shrubberies and small caves where to seek shelter.

138. **Hooded wheatear** (*Oenanthe monacha*) 1 pair at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th. Rather elusive.
139. **Hume's wheatear** (*Oenanthe alboniger*) 1 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, c 20 Jebel Hafeet on the 18th.
140. **Rock thrush** (*Monticola saxatilis*) 2 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th, 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th and 2 at Qarn Nazwa on the 18th were all males.
141. **Blue rock thrush** (*Monticola solitarius*) 1 female at Jazeerah-al-Hamriyah on the 14th, 3 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, 2 at Qarn Nazwa on the 16th and on the 18th, 1 at Jebel Hafeet on the 18th.
142. **Song thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*) 1 at Emirates golf course on the 16th, 1 at Khalidyah spit on the 17th.
143. **Graceful prinia** (*Prinia gracilis*) Common, its rattling song heard almost everywhere in the lowlands.
144. **Clamorous reed warbler** (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*) c 5 (several singing) Khor Kalba on the 15th, 1 singing at Emirates golf course on the 16th.
145. **Olivaceous warbler** (*Hippolais pallida*) 1 at Khalidyah spit on the 17th.
146. (**Sykes's**) **Booted warbler** (*Hippolais caligata rama*) 5 singing at Khor Kalba on the 15th and possibly another 2-3 seen catching insects at dusk, in the manner of flycatchers.
147. **Menetries's warbler** (*Sylvia mystacea*) 2 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, 1 at Emirates golf course on the 16th, 1 at the grove beside Al Wathba camel race track on the 17th, 1 at Qarn Nazwa on the 18th were all males.
148. **Desert lesser whitethroat** (*Sylvia curruca minula*) c 10 Masafi wadi on the 15th, 2 Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
149. **Plain leaf warbler** (*Phylloscopus neglectus*) 2 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, one was located singing and the other by its "tch...tch..." call somewhat reminiscent of house sparrow.
150. **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*) Rather common. Recorded as follows: 1 at Masafi wadi on the 15th, c 10 Emirates golf course on the 16th, 3 in the grove beside Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th, 2 at Khalidyah spit, Abu Dhabi on the 17th.
151. **Red-breasted flycatcher** (*Ficedula parva*) 1 female/immature at Khalidyah spit on the 17th. Uncommon and localised winter visitor.
152. **Arabian babbler** (*Turdoides squamiceps*) c 8 Masafi wadi on the 15th, 2 in Kalba on the 19th and one along the road between Manama and Ras-al-Khaimah on the 19th.
153. **Purple sunbird** (*Nectarinia asiatica*) Common, its persisting call echoing almost everywhere in the lowlands.
154. **Isabelline shrike** (*Lanius isabellinus*) Rather common. 1 each at Ajman city and Umm-al-Qaiwain on the 13th, 1 at Masafi wadi, 2 at Khor Kalba on the 15th, 2 at Emirates golf course on the 16th, 1 at Al Wathba camel race course on the 17th.
155. **Great grey shrike** (*Lanius excubitor*) By far the most common shrike, especially in the desert around Qarn Nazwa where flanking the roads. Seen almost on every spot. The subspecies breeding in the country is *aucheri*.
Steppe great grey shrike (*Lanius excubitor pallidirostris*) 3 at Masafi wadi on the 15th.
156. **Woodchat shrike** (*Lanius senator*) 1 at Ramtha tip on the 13th and 1 at Masafi wadi on the 15th.
157. **House crow** (*Corvus splendens*) Seen in Dubai, Fujierah and Dibba. Common only in Dibba.
158. **Brown-necked raven** (*Corvus ruficollis*) Rather common.
159. **Common mynah** (*Acridotheres tristis*) Common, almost across the line of being a nuisance.
160. **House sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*) Common.
161. **Indian silverbill** (*Euodice malabarica*) First seen in Umm-al-Qaiwain and Khor Kalba but once we learnt its call we saw it on almost everywhere. Especially common on the Al Wathba camel race course.
162. **Corn bunting** (*Miliaria calandra*) 1 singing at the fields and cultivations east of Ras-al-Khaimah airport on the 19th. Irregular winter visitor that may breed opportunistically.