

Short Report from a trip to Israel and Jordan 28 Nov – 5 Dec 2004

By Per Forsberg and Jan-Michael Breider.

We travelled by regular flight (KLM and ElAl) since chartertours are no longer available. Arrived late Sunday 28 Nov at Eilat Airport. The weather was fairly warm and sunny most days. Cold nights. The wind was mostly from the east and quite strong. We rented a B-car from Avis at Eilat and another B-car from AVIS at Aqaba.

Main target species; Verraux's Eagle, Oriental Skylark, Long-billed Pipit, Arabian Warbler and Syrian Serin.

Itinerary:

- 29 Nov Visit to Eilat area, Km 19 and 20, Yotvata.
- 30 Nov Aqaba, Wadi Rum and night at luxurious hotel Sofitel south of Petra.
- 1 Dec Petra, Dana, Barra Forest and night at simple hotel in Ma'an.
- 2 Dec Wadi Rum again, Disi and Aqaba beach. Evening back to Eilat.
- 3 Dec Kibbutz Lotan, where we picked up Eran Banker, Shizzafon, Km 49
- 4 Dec Mizpe Ramon, Shizzafon, Yotvata, Km 19 and 20 (again with Eran)
- 5 Dec Early morning plane from Eilat-TelAviv-Amsterdam-Gothenburg

Some of the more interesting species:

- Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis* 1 at Eilat ringing station 29/11
- Cory's Shearwater, *C. diomedea* 1 Aqaba 2/12
- Cormorant *P. carbo* 600 Km 19 4/12
- Great White Egret *E. alba* 10 Km 19 4/12
- Squacco Heron *A. ralloides* 2 Shizzafon 3/12
- Western Reef Heron *E. gularis* 1 North Beach 29/11
- Greater Flamingo *P. ruber* approx. 250 Km 20
- Shelduck *T. tadorna* 4 Km 20 29/11
- Pintail *A. acuta* 25 Km 19 + 20 4/12
- Shoveler *A. clypeata* 200 Km 19 + 20 4/12
- Black Kite, *M. migrans* seen daily in small numbers
- Hen Harrier, *C. cyanus* 1 ad male Yotvata 29/11, 1 ad female Aqaba boarder 30/11 and 1 female Yotvata 4/12
- Pallid Harrier, *C. macrourus* 1 1K Mizpe Ramon sewage pond 4/12
- Goshawk *A. gentilis* 1 male Yotvata 29/11
- Sparrowhawk, *A. nisus* small numbers all days
- Common Buzzard, *B. buteo* only one, Yotvata sewage ponds 4/12
- Long-legged Buzzard, *B. rufinus* 1 Wadi Rum 2/12 and 1 Mizpe Ramon 4/12
- Steppe Eagle, *A. nipalensis* total of 5 during the week
- Imperial Eagle, *A. heliaca* 1 ad and 1 2K at Shizzafon 3/12
- Bonelli's Eagle *H. fasciatus* 1 ad south of Dana 1/12
- Common Kestrel, *F. tinnunculus* single birds almost daily
- Peregrine Falcon, *F. peregrinus* 1 ad Shizzafon 3/12 and 1 ad Km 20 4/12
- Chukar *A. chukar* 1 heard Wadi Dana 1/12 and 15 Mizpe Ramon 4/12

Greater Sand Plover, *C. leschenaultii* 1 Km 20 29/11
 Black-tailed Godwit *L. limosa* 1 Km 20 29/11 and 4/12
 Marsh Sandpiper, *T. stagnatilis* 4 Eilat Ringing Station 29/11 and 1 Km 20 4/12
 Yellow-legged Gull *L. michahellis* 1 1K North Beach 29/11 and 5 1K Aqaba beach 2/12
 Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini* 1 ad North Beach 29/11
 Slender-billed Gull *L. genei* 2 North Beach 29/11 and 12 Km 20 29/11
 Whiskered Tern *C. hybrida* 2 Km 20 29/11 and 3 Km 20 4/12
 Caspian Tern *S. caspia* 1 at Aqaba beach 2/12
 Spotted Sandgrouse *P. senegallus* 30 + 40 along Desert Highway north of Aqaba 2/12
 Ring-necked Parakeet *P. krameri* A few pairs in Eilat and Aqaba
 Pied Kingfisher, *C. rudis* 1 North Beach 29/11 and 1 Km 19 4/12
 Wood Lark *L. arborea* 8 Barra Forest, Dana 1/12, 10 Shizzafon 3/12, 10 Mizpe R. 4/12
 Oriental Skylark, *A. gulgula* 1 Yotvata SE fields 29/11
 Rock Martin *H. fuligula* small numbers all days, maximum 25 Km 19 4/12
 Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica* 5 along sewage canal, Eilat 29/11
 Citrine Wagtail, *M. citreola* 1 female Eilat ringing station 29/11, 1 female Yotvata sewage 4/12
 Richard's Pipit *A. richardi* 1 Km 19 29/11
 Long-billed Pipit *A. similis* 1 Petra approx. 300 m west of entrance on hilly slope 1/12
 Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* fairly common
 Water Pipit *A. spinoletta* fairly common
 Bluethroat *L. svecica* fairly common
 Desert Wheatear, *O. deserti* 7 during the trip
 Mourning Wheatear, *O. lugens* single birds all days, fairly common Petra
 Hooded Wheatear, *O. monacha* 1 male Km 19 29/11, 2 males Petra 1/12, 1 male Shizzafon 3/12
 Blue Rock Thrush, *M. solitarius* 1 male Petra 1/12
 Fieldfare *T. pilaris* 5 approx. 20 km north of Aqaba 30/11, 1 at Shizzafon 3/12
 Arabian Warbler, *S. leucomelaena* 2 at Km 50 south of Yotvata 3/12
 Scrub Warbler, *S. inquit* 3 Barra Forest, Dana 1/12 and 1 Aqaba boarder 2/12
 Palestine Sunbird *C. osea* fairly common
 Masked Shrike *L. nubicus* 1 or 2 1K Ofira Park Eilat 29/11
 Desert Finch, *R. obsoleta* 6 flying north Km 19 29/11
 Sinai Rosefinch *C. synoicus* 5 Petra 1/12
 Corn Bunting *M. calandra* single birds most days, 100 5 km south of Dana 1/12
 Tristram's Starling *O. tristramii* fairly common, maximum 40 Rum village 2/12
 Fan-tailed Raven *C. rhipidurus* 10 a few km north Aqaba 30/11. 30 at Petra 1/12
 House Crow *C. splendens* common Eilat and Aqaba.

Remarks:

Invasion of Locusts (grasshoppers) observed in Eilat area, Yotvata, Wadi Dana and around Kibbutz Lotan. Millions of locusts at the two last places, filling the air! Extraordinary!

Wadi Rum did not produce Verraux's Eagle, maybe because of human climbers now using the steep rock (600 meters!) behind the resthouse?

Barra Forest in Jordan, a well known breeding place for Syrian Serin, but probably the birds disperse in winter.

When in Jordan, don't miss Petra! You can see most of it in four hours!

