

# Oman

November 30<sup>th</sup> -  
December 13<sup>th</sup>  
2008

Endless deserts, gull-packed beaches,  
wild Wadis, and high-quality birding  
among the Sultans



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## Oman, November 30th - December 13th 2008

### Front cover

Greater Spotted Eagle, *Aquila clanga 'fulvescens'*, Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

### Participants

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### General information - When to go - Where to go

Located at the eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman is geographically at the center-point between Europe, Africa and Asia. This is also reflected in the varied birdlife with representatives from many zoo-geographic regions. The around 115 breeding species is a low number compared with the 495 species recorded in total. There are also big differences in the composition of the birdlife between northern and southern Oman. In the north there is a more Indian touch to the birds whereas in the south there are more Arabian endemics and Afro-tropical species.

Oman is a large country (around 1200 km between Muscat and Salalah), and there are around 2.5 million people, a third of these live in the capital Muscat. Most people are Arabs but there is a large Indian population as well, mostly in the south.

The best time to visit is probably around October, the rainy season is at its end and most Khawrs still hold fresh water and the Dhofar trees are green. Most Dhofar specialties are still around, Sea-birds are numerous and migration is peaking, it could though be too early for some wintering species. A winter-visit seems like a fair alternative (although fewer migrating species should be expected), with nice temperatures. Few birders seem to go for the spring migration. By then the dry season is at its end and Muscat could probably be ridiculously hot at that time. Sea-birds are most abundant in August and September, although many linger into November.

Two weeks are essential to cover both the north and the south. Many use flight connections between Muscat and Salalah to avoid the long drive. Only few make it to Barr Al Hikman and Masirah, after our trip we would regard these places as the true stars of Oman. Barr Al Hikman as one of the Worlds premier shorebird sites with around 1.000.000(!) birds wintering. And Masirah, the desert island where just about anything seems likely to turn up. Birdquest call it the Happy Island of the Middle East.

### Literature

- \* Birdwatching guide to Oman, 2nd ed., D Sergeant, H and J Eriksen (2008)
- \* Collins Bird Guide, L Svensson, K Mullarney and D Zetterström (1999)
- \* Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World, D Onley, P Scofield (2007)
- \* The Raptors of Europe and the Middle East - A Handbook of Field Identification, D Forsman (2007)
- \* Birds of the Middle East, RF Porter, S Christensen, and P Schiermacker-Hansen (1996)
- \* The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World, 6th ed. (2007)
- \* Many trip-reports from the web including: Vermeulen 2008, Hottola 2007, McIvor 2007, Olausson 2006, Occhiato 2006, and the Birdquest-reports.

## Car rental

Many different car rental alternatives are available at Seeb Airport (all listed in Eriksen *et al.*), both well-known international brands like Avis and Hertz and less-known local ones. We chose Sixt. They had a good internet-booking system and better prices than Avis, Hertz and Budget. All companies charge extra (around 150 OR) to pick up the car at Muscat and leave it at Salalah. We went for a 4WD all the time. At most places it is not necessary, although at some, it was indispensable. Sayq isn't allowed to visit without a 4WD. Barr Al Hikman would be impossible to fully explore without the jeep. Also at Wadi Hashir for Hume's Owl you wouldn't make it with a regular car. One possibility is to hire a jeep for some days and a regular car for some days, we looked into this alternative but it only turned out maybe 1-200 USD cheaper and would be more circumstantial. All in all we paid 18000 SEK = 2200 USD = 950 OR for a Nissan Pathfinder 4WD 13 days. The car was perfect in any sense. Petrol is embarrassingly cheap (almost the same price as water!). 0,130 OR/liter. The conditions on the tarmac-roads are often perfect making the long drives bearable.

## Flight and money

The domestic flight tickets between Salalah and Muscat were easily booked on internet at [www.omainair.aero/wy/](http://www.omainair.aero/wy/) and cost us something like 600 SEK = 80 USD = 35 OR one-way. The international flight was with Lufthansa from Stockholm, then from Frankfurt further on to Abu Dhabi and finally Muscat. At Seeb there is a counter where you pay for your tourist visa, it's possible to pay with card as well as cash USD. ATMs are widely available in the country otherwise (e.g. Masirah). 1 Omani Rial (OR) is fixed to 2.60 USD.



*Ras Abu Rasas, the southern tip of Masirah, is potentially good for sea-birds. We recorded Great Black-headed Gulls, Bridled and White-cheeked Terns here, before the car got stuck in sand and a friendly guy pulled us out.*

## Accommodation

Only three nights were spent on hotels: At Masirah Hotel (20 OR/3p), at Hotel Bamsir in central Salalah (25 OR/3p), and finally at Hotel Al Nile at Al Sa'ada, east of Salalah city (20 OR/3p). The rest of the nights we were camping in the wild. This worked perfect, one night's sleep was disturbed by barking stray-dogs at Ayn Razat, otherwise it was always pleasant to wake up on site meaning few pre-dawn transports.

## Acknowledgments

Prior to the trip we made contact with some people we would like to thank for valuable information these are: Anders Blomdahl, Jan Vermeulen and Jens Eriksen. During the trip we exchanged daily reports with Mattias Ullman who birded southern Oman at the same time as us, most appreciated. Finally, a big thank you to all birders who put their reports out on travellingbirder.com for public reading.

## Map of Oman



*Our route. Started off with two and a half days along Al Batinah, continued for two days to Jabal Al Hajar. From the mountains we drove to Barr Al Hikman on the east coast and the island of Masirah. Two days in the Rub Al Khali before we headed off to the last part of the trip at Dhofar Mountains and the coastal Khawrs around Salalah.*

## Itinerary

|       |             |                       |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 29/11 | 07.00-      | Flight from Stockholm |
|       | 23.30-      | Arrival at Seeb       |
| 30/11 | 06.20-10.30 | Khatmat Milahah       |
|       | 11.00-13.30 | Shinas                |
|       | 14.15-17.30 | Sohar Sun Farms       |
| 1/12  | 06.30-09.30 | Liwa                  |
|       | 10.00-17.00 | Sohar Sun Farms       |

|       |             |   |
|-------|-------------|---|
|       | 17.00-      | Driving east  |
| 2/12  | 06.30-12.00 | Ras As Sawadi   |
|       | 12.00-14.30 | Drive to Jabal Al Hajar   |
|       | 14.30-15.30 | Wadi Muaydin  |
|       | 16.00-17.00 | Al Ayn / Sayq plateau   |
| 3/12  | 06.30-11.00 | Wadi Bani Habib, Hayl Al Yaman, Al Manakhir                         |
|       | 11.00-12.00 | Wadi Muaydin  |
|       | 12.00-15.15 | Drive south   |
|       | 15.15-17.30 | Filim, Ghubbat Hashish  |
|       | 17.30-      | Driving to Shannah and car-ferry to Masirah, night at Hotel Masirah |
| 4/12  | 06.30-11.00 | Hilf  |
|       | 11.30-14.30 | Sur Masirah   |
|       | 15.00-16.30 | Ras Abu Rasas   |
|       | 17.15-17.45 | S of Ras Al Ya  |
| 5/12  | 06.10-09.15 | Hilf  |
|       | 09.15-13.00 | Car-ferry to Shannah  |
|       | 13.00-15.30 | Khawr Barr Al Hikman  |
|       | 16.00-17.15 | East Coast of Barr Al Hikman  |
|       | 17.15-      | Drive to the desert   |
| 6/12  | 06.00-11.00 | Muntasar  |
|       | 11.30-14.30 | Qatbit resthouse  |
|       | 14.30-15.30 | Qatbit oasis  |
|       | 16.00-20.00 | Muntasar  |
| 7/12  | 06.30-07.00 | Dawkah  |
|       | 07.30-12.00 | Al Beed Farm  |
|       | 12.30-14.30 | Haykat Ar Rakah   |
|       | 15.00-18.00 | Wadi Rabkut   |
|       | 18.00-      | Drive to Dhofar   |
| 8/12  | 06.15-12.00 | Ayn Hamran  |
|       | 12.15-13.30 | Khawr Taqah   |
|       | 14.00-14.45 | Tawi Attayr   |
|       | 15.30-16.00 | Wadi Baqlat   |
|       | 16.15-18.00 | Ras Janjari   |
|       | 18.00-      | Drive to Salalah, night at Hotel Bamsir                             |
| 9/12  | 06.00-12.00 | Khawr Al Mughsayl   |
|       | 12.00-13.30 | Road to Yemen   |
|       | 14.00-15.00 | Raysut Waste Disposal Site  |
|       | 15.00-16.00 | Raysut Sewage Works   |
|       | 16.30-16.45 | Al Mughsayl Blowhole  |
|       | 17.30-19.30 | Wadi Hashir   |
|       | 19.30-      | Drive to Ayn Razat  |
| 10/12 | 06.15-08.30 | Ayn Razat   |
|       | 08.45-11.30 | Ayn Hamran  |
|       | 12.00-13.30 | Khawr Sawli   |
|       | 14.00-15.15 | East Khawr  |
|       | 15.30-18.00 | Jarziz Farm   |
|       | 18.00-      | Drive to Ras Janjari  |
| 11/12 | 06.30-09.00 | Ras Janjari   |
|       | 09.00-10.00 | Wadi Baqlat   |
|       | 10.00-11.15 | Wadi Stimah   |
|       | 12.00-15.00 | Wadi Darbat   |
|       | 15.30-18.00 | Khawr Rawri   |
| 12/12 | 06.50-08.30 | Ras Janjari   |
|       | 09.00-11.30 | Pelagic Tour from Mirbat harbour                                    |
|       | 12.00-12.45 | Wadi Darbat   |
|       | 12.45-14.00 | Road to Tawi Atayr  |



|       |             |   |
|-------|-------------|---|
|       | 14.30-15.00 | W of Taqah  |
|       | 15.30-17.45 | Sahnawt Farm                                      |
|       | 17.45-      | Night at Hotel Al Nile                            |
| 13/12 | 07.15-07.40 | East Khawr  |
|       | 08.00-10.00 | Jarziz Farm                                       |
|       | 10.00-16.00 | Flight to Muscat from Salalah (approx 1h15min)    |
|       | 16.00-17.15 | Al Qurm Park, Muscat                              |
|       | 23.30-      | Flight back to Sweden via Abu Dhabi and Frankfurt |



Scrub Warbler, *Scotocerca inquieta grisea*, breeding resident in Jabal Al Hajar moving altitudinally during the winter months. We worked hard before we stumbled upon two of this charismatic cocky little warbler at Wadi Muaydin 3/12.

## Daily log

### 30<sup>th</sup> November

After leaving a cold Sweden on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> it was a relief to step out of the aircraft at Seeb and feel the classic warmth and humidity. The pre-rented car was quickly collected at Sixt 24-hour desk in the arrival hall. Leaving Seeb at midnight we drove the 300 kilometers all the way to Khatmat Milahah where we got a few hours sleep in the car before sunrise.

We soon with ease found our first Eastern Pied Wheatear and Plain Leaf-Warbler, the main targets. It was a nice walk among the acacias, with rocky hills in the surroundings. Many Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flew by and we also flushed a female Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse at close range. On the way back to the car for breakfast we localized a different wheatear which we soon recognized as a female Pied Wheatear. A Little Owl sat in a tree. Many rattling Lesser Whitethroats of the desert subspecies were found, also one shy Wryneck.

After a few hours we continued to the coast and made a midday brake at Shinas. Here we soon found two Collared Kingfishers and an all too brief Syke's Warbler. The first raptors of the trip turned out to be a juvenile Bonelli's Eagle and a light-coloured Short-toed Eagle. Terek Sandpipers on the beach and two lone Great Black-headed Gulls flew by.

From early afternoon until dusk we searched the birdy farmlands at Sohar. We were kindly let in by the guard at the gate. At the sewage pools we had some waders including two Pacific Golden Plovers. One Whiskered Tern and two White-winged Terns were hovering above the surface. Three Masked Wagtails (ssp. *personata*) and a few Citrine Wagtails. Out on the fields we had an Oriental

Skylark calling with an electric "beez". A few Pallid Harriers including a fine male. Biggest fortune was close to a circular field where active watering was going on. Here many birds gathered including pipits and larks. The star bird was a Buff-bellied Pipit together with many Water Pipits. A 1st-year 'Steppe' Grey Shrike (ssp. *pallidirostris*) posed for a short while on top of our car. All too soon it was time to leave before the farm was closing for the night. We drove to Liwa to put up our tent for the night.

### 1<sup>st</sup> December

In spite of almost three fine morning hours we failed to connect with any Syke's Warbler at Liwa, however three White-collared Kingfishers were showy. A Squacco Heron walked along a canal in the mangroves and the first Isabelline Shrike of the trip was found. Maybe tape-recordings can lure the Syke's Warblers out of the dense vegetation.

The rest of the day we re-visited the Sun Farms and saw much of the birds from yesterday. New findings included a Quail, a Namaqua Dove, impressive four Richard's Pipit at a grass field (in the southern part of the farm), a Meadow Pipit (rare in Oman!), a male Northern Wheatear and an Asian Desert Warbler. At the sewage pools three juvenile Bonelli's Eagles soared for a short while. Two afternoons seemed enough to cover Sohar and we felt confident to continue the journey eastward. After dusk we drove half-way back to Muscat and stopped at Ras As Sawadi for another camping night.



A reasonably large patch of mangroves still survives at Shinas.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> December

At the mangroves at Ras As Sawadi in early morning a few waders and gulls had gathered among them both Greater and Lesser Sandplover and a 2y Great Black-headed Gull. A juvenile 'Steppe' Grey Shrike was found. We drove to the very point with some impressive rocky islands off shore. Here we found two immature Socotra Cormorants. Soon a man approached us and asked us if we were interested in a boat-trip. After a short discussion we decided to visit the largest of the rocky islands off shore for a couple of hours. Surely one would have a good view over the surroundings from the temple at top. We negotiated the prize to 10 OR for the return trip for the three of us (over-prize since the boat-ride took around 2-3 minutes!). Anyway we had three nice hours out there seeing a few Arctic Skuas and one Pomarine dito. The first Persian Wheatear and a male Blue Rock Thrush was also on the island. Some 30 minutes before the return trip we eventually found three fast-flying Red-billed Tropicbirds with characteristic flapping wing-beats. Although a bit distant it was still a great



find. Earlier in the season a colony of Sooty Falcon should breed here, but in December unfortunately they're all gone. After the island we quickly drove by the hotel complex at As Sawadi Beach Resort to find the three bulbuls side by side; Red-vented being the rare one.

At least two hours driving followed to take us further south into the Jabal Al Hajar Mountains. We approached the Sayq plateau (where you're only allowed to enter with a 4WD-vehicle (although the paved roads are impeccable)). First stop at a lower impressive canyon Wadi Muaydin. Here two parties of Sand Partridges, a friendly Persian Wheatear and a few Plain Leaf Warblers were found. Up at Sayq temperature was cooler at Al Ayn village we tried without any luck for Mountain Bunting. Bird activity was slow at higher grounds. We had a good dinner at Al Jabal Al Akhdar Hotel before we put up our tent close to Wadi Bani Habib. It was cooler at this altitude but still comfortable in the sleeping bag.



Wadi Muaydin at the lower Sayq-area. Good for Sand Partridge, Plain Leaf Warbler and Scrub Warbler. Magnificent landscape.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> December

It took a while for the rising sun to reach the bottom of the wadi. But until then we had still seen some Plain Leaf-Warblers, one Song Thrush and a flock of the local Woodpigeons. The activity was high during the first hours and the small wadi was filled with birds. Finally Johan found the first Mountain Bunting to our enjoyment, and soon 4 birds were seen together. Both a few Hume's Wheatears and Persian Wheatears were found roadside. We left the upper Sayq plateau and started to descend, we did one final stop at yesterday's Wadi Muaydin for a final attempt to find Scrub Warbler which had eluded us so far. We stopped at many sites 1-2 km into the valley. Within an hour we eventually found two funny-looking, loud little masterpieces. We suspect the Scrub Warblers are easier here than up at Sayq at least during the winter months. Then it was time to leave for a couple of hours driving to the coast.

In the late afternoon we arrived at Filim at the large bay of Ghubbat Hashish. This bay which is connected with Barr Al Hikman hold the largest numbers of shorebirds in the Arabian peninsula. Approximately 1.000.000 birds are said to winter in this area. It feels impossible to describe the scenery that met us at Filim. Vast mudflats stretched out in every direction you looked with only small patches of mangrove in between. And shorebirds everywhere. Where to look!? It was Crab Plovers up close, distant flocks of Flamingos and sandpipers and plovers. Terek Sandpipers abundantly, single Broad-billed Sandpipers and three Marsh Sandpipers. Soon the first Great Knot was found, in total 6. At a small pumping station some drops of fresh water was enough to bring two Red-throated and one Tree Pipit for a short stop-over. A juvenile Citrine Wagtail also hanged around. Some of the waders



gave fantastic photographic opportunities. The island of Mahawt was clearly visible from here. On that mangrove island a small population of Oriental White-eyes breed. It's only possible to go there on high tide. It would have been interesting to go there. All too soon the day was at its end and we packed up and went on further east. Originally we planned to sleep at Shana Tourism Rest House. But when arriving at Shannah (where the ferry to Masirah leaves) we couldn't find the hotel. Instead there was a queue at the ferry terminal. After talking to some guys we realized there was one more car-ferry going to Masirah tonight. So we took a chance and placed the car in back of the line. When the ferry from Masirah finally arrived there was complete chaos when all cars tried to board the ferry at the same time. As it turned out, we actually got the very last spot; we could barely fit into the small pocket of space that remained on the insanely packed ferry. Strong western winds made the journey splashy and our car had its share of salty water, leaving large brown spots all across the hood and windows. It was a thrill to slowly see the lights at Masirah Island appear closer and closer. The 20+ something kilometers across took around 90 minutes. We had a nice Indian style dinner before we went to sleep at the Masirah Hotel.



Sunset at Filim. Extensive mudflats with many Crab Plovers. Ghubbat Hashish.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> December

After a pre-dawn check-out we were keen to start birding. A few kilometers south of Hilf, we reached the orchard and the sewage works. This is THE place for birdwatching on Masirah. The island is covered with sterile stony desert. So this patch of wood is a true magnet for migrating and wintering birds. We climbed the fence to the orchard and walked in among the rows of trees. A few Red-throated Flycatchers called and amazingly we soon found an obliging drongo! At that time we didn't consider Ashy Drongo as an option and gladly called it a Black Drongo (much later, months actually, when Mattias was looking through his pictures from the trip he started suspect the drongo actually being an Ashy Drongo, meaning the first record in Oman (see picture below))! Where would this end? Many Chiffchaffs called in the woods. We continued searching every bush of the area. A Pacific Golden Plover stood at a garbage dump close to the new sewage works. To reach the pools of the old sewage works we had to climb a wall. Here Flamingos, herons and many ducks were found. A few dead White Storks and Grey Herons were found. We flushed a Pintail Snipe from beneath a tree and found two dead Eurasian Rollers before we found a worn live one. The first Greater Spotted Eagle of the trip soared over the pools. One Bimaculated Lark flew over and a few Corn Buntings sat in a tree. On our way back to the car ready to start going south we found an Asian Koel, known to be regularly wintering here.

Around noon we stepped out of the car at the beach at Sur Masirah on the west coast of

Masirah. The western wind had increased by now. It was high tide and most waders had gathered in larger flocks along the beach. Some 400 Bar-tailed Godwit in one flock and 260 Whimbrels in another. At one place there were over 500 Ruddy Turnstones at one spot together with 1000's of *calidris* sandpipers and *charadrius* plovers. A flock of Saunder's Terns at the same place. Out at sea a Jouanin's Petrel was found gliding south, between the waves. Impressed by the Petrel we decided to head further south to Ras Abu Rasas, the southern tip of Masirah. Not before long some Bridled Terns were found flying back and forth along the shoreline. Also White-cheeked Terns were seen. Two difficult terns at one stop! Out at sea things were more moderate. The show of the afternoon was the incredible jumping and somersaulting rays. Some Persian Shearwaters and Masked Boobies were also seen. A nice flock of six Great Black-headed Gulls flew north and landed on the beach.

Before sunset we turned north again going along the eastern route back toward Hilf. At a place south of Ras Al Ya halfway to Hilf there where a few palm trees at the beach. We pulled over and searched among the palms finding a perched Eurasian Roller and a Black-crowned Night Heron. We decided to camp on the beach close to the orchard at Hilf.



Juvenile Bridled Tern, *Sterna anaethetus* at Ras Abu Rasas 4/12.



First-winter White-cheeked Tern, *Sterna repressa* at Ras Abu Rasas 4/12. Note the uniform grey back, rump and tail.



It was a long walk across the 'sabkha' to reach the birds at Khawr Barr Al Hikman. But, boy, was it worth it!

**5<sup>th</sup> December**

Another great morning at Hilf. We started at the run-off where waders posed at close distance. Yesterdays Black Drongo made a brief appearance before we walked through the forest and sewage works in the same manner as the day before. More or less the same birds were present. Today we counted seven different Red-throated Flycatchers. At the sewage pools Indian Pond Herons and Pintail Snipes before the star of the day was found. A small rufous-naped swift-flying Streak-throated Swallow! Since we didn't bring any Indian Bird Guide on the trip we were initially a bit confused but I had seen this species on a trip to India recently and recognized the field characters. The bird showed itself at close distance and we were able to get some decent record shots (see below).

We had to wait in the harbour for about one hour before we could board a returning ferry to Shannah. During this time the harbour itself had quite some gulls present including a Great Black-headed Gull, also White-cheeked Tern, Common Tern and Bridled Tern. Nothing special was seen during the boat-ride. The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent exploring the enormous areas of Barr Al Hikman. We started north from Shannah at Khawr Barr Al Hikman and ended up at the east coast of Barr Al Hikman. Both places are impossible to reach without a 4WD vehicle.



*And when we finally reached the mudflats it was ankle-to-knee deep with mud and hollows. When standing still barefoot for just a short while, one could feel tiny shrimp-like creatures crawling between the toes. No wonder this place was packed with waders. Photo: M. Gerdin.*

We drove as far as we could north from Shannah. We parked the car and walked a kilometer west to reach the water at Khawr Barr Al Hikman. A 2y Bonelli's Eagle resembling a Long-legged Buzzard soared overhead. In the large lagoon it was almost indescribable numbers of waders. 400 Flamingos, 1000 Great Cormorants, 50 Crab Plovers, 50 Great Knots, 30 Terek Sandpipers, 20 Spoonbills, and thousands and thousands of sandpipers and sand plovers. As far as one could see small dots was running back and forth along the shore. After some hours we were back at the car and headed south to the east coast of Barr Al Hikman. It was not easy to find the right path to follow with the car once leaving the tarmac. Fortunately two Landcruisers passed us and drove south. So we just followed them (they seemed like they knew what they did!). Without the GPS it would have been quite risky not to say dangerous to go here. The track was decent enough and finally we reached some shelters mentioned in Eriksen. Once again the mudflats were jammed with



sandpipers. We were overwhelmed. Incredible 1000 Crab Plovers were counted here, also single Great Knots and a fly-by White-winged Tern. The sheer numbers of birds make it very difficult to pick out something extraordinary. After sunset we started the long journey to the Empty Quarters. It was just past midnight when we reached Muntasar oasis where we camped.

### 6<sup>th</sup> December

As expected it was a bit cooler in the desert morning-time. It took a while for the birds to wake up. And the first circuit walk around the oasis didn't give much. We tried to flush Egyptian Nightjar without luck. A suitable Desert Warbler was found. Suddenly another jeep pulled up at the oasis and it turned out to be three Swedish birders, what a coincidence! They had seen an Olive-backed Pipit close to the water tank yesterday, but despite hard work we couldn't relocate it today. Instead Johan found another Siberian vagrant namely a Hume's Leaf Warbler which initially called within the reeds before it showed itself to everybody's enjoyment. At morning went by Sandgrouse came flying in for a drink. It peaked at 10 o'clock and in total we believe 150 Spotted Sandgrouse and 4 Chestnut-bellied were involved. A final walk-about produced an out-of-range Oriental Skylark. We drove to Qatbit planning to return to Muntasar later during the afternoon.

At Qatbit resthouse there is active watering supporting a little plantation which during migration attracts flocks of birds. In three hours we felt like we had seen most of the birds. Best bird was an obliging Ménétries's Warbler, most unexpected a White-breasted Waterhen found in a dense tree! The second Hume's Leaf Warbler of the day was also located. A fine male Mountain Bunting, a showy Red-backed Shrike, a Clamorous Reed Warbler together with a presumably late Barred Warbler.

A short stop at the very dense Qatbit oasis gave a European Nightjar, and strangely a Reef-Heron! But now it was time to get back to Muntasar. We really wanted Hypocolius although we had heard that there were no certain observations this winter, how unfortunate. The Small Skylark still lingered and walking along a ditch we flushed a Little Cuckoo. Inspired by Hottola 2007 we waited until dark hoping to see nightjars. At 7 o'clock in the light of his powerful flashlight Johan suddenly spotted a nightjar flying above the reeds close to the water-tank. We could then watch the bird for almost an hour as it persistently hunted for insects above the reed and at ground. We soon recognized it as an Egyptian Nightjar. The contrast between the dark head and light body was prominent. When on ground it looked large-headed. The tail was clearly short and during a few times it gave a short low-voiced 'kok'. What a feeling! After Muntasar we met Mattias Ullman for a short while at Qatbit resthouse sharing some information, he and Magnus had arrived from Salalah during the evening for a two-day trip to the desert.

### 7<sup>th</sup> December

Early morning as usual. We started at Dawkah which didn't produce much of interest and therefore went directly to Al Beed Farm. The farm and surrounding fields are a vast area difficult to overview. We started at a short grass circular field in the south where soon a male Pallid Harrier swept by. Many larks in the short dry grass, a hundred Great Short-toed Larks, 10 Hoopoe Larks, 30 Tawny Pipits and a Pintail Snipe. An adult and a juvenile 'Steppe' Grey Shrike were also seen. Back at the car the three Rose-coloured Starlings of the trip made a swift appearance. Throughout the day we counted something like 70 Desert Wheatears and 10 Isabelline Wheatears. The most impressive movements were the around 500 Spotted Sandgrouse flying across the fields. We continued south to Haylat Ar Rakah, but never went as far as Shisr and the World Heritage Site at the excavations of Ubar. Birds were fewer here and we had a hard time finding anything good. Hard work didn't give the hoped for Dunn's Lark. Instead we went toward Thumrayt and ended the day at the magnificent scenery at Wadi Rabkut: a well-wooded Wadi which is supposed to be one of the last places in Oman for MacQueen's Bustard which we failed to find, though. Some Desert Larks and Warblers, Sand Partridge and Arabian Babblers were found. After dark we drove the final 200 kilometers to Dhofar and put up our tent on the tarmac (too many rocks everywhere else) at the roundabout at Ayn Hamran (not the best for your back...).





*Puff Adder, Bitis arietans: a venomous and aggressive snake; Infamous for killing more people than any other snake in Africa. The Arabian Puff Adders are usually smaller than the African ones, measuring less than 80 cm. Ayn Hamran 8/12.*

### 8<sup>th</sup> December

First morning in Dhofar and it seemed like we were in a new country, every bird was new. The White-breasted White-eyes, Rüppell's Weavers, Shining Sunbirds, African Paradise-Flycatchers and Cinnamon-breasted Buntings were abundant. We were happy to find two Golden-winged Grosbeaks, a difficult species at this time of year. Long-billed Pipit and Arabian Warblers were added to the list. At one point I noticed two Blackstarts constantly giving alarm calls from a thicket. They were quickly joined by a bunch of noisy Bulbuls and an exaggerated White-eye. I immediately thought that something must be in there and called for the others. Very carefully I tried to get closer, lifting dead branches and roots. And there it was: A LARGE VIPER! It was still early morning and the snake looked deadly for sure but rather lazy at the moment. I reached for my camera and took some record-shots. At home I contacted some friends who know more about herpetology and they confirmed the snake as a Puff Adder, one of the most feared of all snakes! What a thrill. As temperature rose raptors were on the move and soon Mattias howled: "Klippörn! (Verreaux's Eagle!)". A beautiful adult bird slowly and majestically glided along the cliffs.

A short stop at Khawr Taqah gave two Little Pratincoles and a quick lunch at the famous sinkhole in Tawi Atayr produced the hoped for endemic Yemen Serin. It was a scenic drive through Wadi Hanna and the baobab trees before we reached the gravel road toward Ras Janjari (Omans premier sea-watching site). Leaving Mirbat you pass to small rivers both ending in under-watched birdy lagoons, barely mentioned in Eriksen, we did stop at the second one (eastern one) called Wadi Baqlat. A Sociable Lapwing and a Pacific Golden Plover stood by the car. And three Black Storks soared. The evening sea-watch from Ras Janjari was a bit slow with tough light conditions: A few Persian Shearwaters and Masked Boobies and a single Bridled Tern. Just before sunset a dark-rumped, swift, steady-going storm-petrel suddenly appeared distantly. It could be followed for half a minute before it was out of sight going east. A Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel! What a first day in the south. Night at Hotel Bamsir in western Salalah and a highly-wanted shower followed.



A first-year Imperial Eagle, *Aquila heliaca*, Raysut 9/12.

### 9<sup>th</sup> December

A full day west of Salalah. Morning at Khawr Al Mughsayl was more than excellent. Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Cotton Teal (or Pygmy-Goose), Intermediate Egret, another Black Stork and an adult Barbary Falcon perched on a wire. At the very lake three rare Lesser Whistling-Ducks was seen (these had been present for at least a few weeks and forms the second record in Oman of this species), told from Fulvous Whistling-Duck on the brown upper-tail coverts rather than white. Also a few Ferruginous Ducks. From the hide at the eastern bank one has a marvelous view of the Khawr and it was a Crakes galore! Unbelievably we scoped one Spotted Crake, two Little Crakes, ten Baillon's Crakes, and one White-breasted Waterhen. Among the raptors there was one 'fulvescens'-type Greater Spotted Eagle together with an ordinary young one and a juvenile Imperial Eagle. In a reed bed we found a juvenile Yellow Bittern. At some palm trees in the northern end of the Khawr a Masked Shrike hanged out since at least a week back. Here also a Northern Wheatear.

After the morning hours we drove the scenic drive toward Yemen. Not so many birds beside a pair of South Arabian Wheatears but great landscapes. After that we did the opposite going for great bird but dreadful landscape. Namely the Raysut waste disposal site and sewage works. At the dump there were hundreds of Steppe Eagles, a few Imperial and Greater Spotted and hundred of White Storks. But the foul smell and disgusting flies made the visit anything but pleasant. At the sewage works there was 17 Marsh Sandpipers, four Red-wattled Lapwings and a very interesting-looking wagtail, closely resembling the *taivana* subspecies of eastern Siberia, however a hybrid Citrine x Yellow Wagtail seems more plausible (see photo below). Before we went for owls in Wadi Hashir we stopped for half an hour at the beach at Al Mughsayl seeing 60+ Socotra Cormorants in a tight flock and a fishing Brown Booby.

Once again the 4WD paid off, it would have been impossible to reach the inner parts of the wadi without our jeep. As we reached the plateau mentioned in Eriksen we were a bit concerned since there were two guys shooting high-speed rifle, with explosions echoing between the cliffs. But to our relief they stopped at dusk. We walked another kilometer into the deep gorge and sat quietly waiting. The full moon made visibility rather good, and as the wind calmed completely a magic still evening in the desert began. We waited. And finally, at 7 o'clock a clear: 'ooooohh ouh-ouh ouh-ouh' was heard from cliffs opposite from where we sat. We held our breath, not a heartbeat... and there it was again. A Hume's Owl! What a fulfillment. What an end to an already smashing day.

**10<sup>th</sup> December**

One Dhofar endemic still lured us, the Arabian Partridge. We started at Ayn Razat seeing some but not all of the species previously seen at Ayn Hamran, we walked the valley upwards but no Partridges were found. We decided to make another try at Ayn Hamran where it should be easier. South Arabian Wheatear and Long-billed Pipit were found before we left. At Ayn Hamran we ran into the Ullmans and also another team of birdwatchers, off course also from Sweden! The morning was running late, no Partridges called and we had to start climbing the slopes. It took maybe one and a half hour before Mattias flushed a bird. After that we made a joined effort before everybody got decent views of a flock running away on the floor. Hard work pays off. Better up we had an adult and a juvenile Verreaux's Eagle above, also Short-toed Eagle and Imperial Eagle.

A short stop at Khawr Sawli for a dark-legged young Spoonbill (of still unknown origin) massive gull flocks on the beach and a very distant greater skua that went by unidentified. Then further on to East Khawr where an adult African Spoonbill had resided for some weeks. Also Broad-billed Sandpiper and in the northwest some soaring raptors. When they got closer we saw that they were honey buzzard, actually Crested Honey Buzzards! There were five of them, two adult males with diagnostic tail-pattern and three female/juvenile types with shortish broad wings and distinctive tail pattern.

The rest of the afternoon was spent at Jarziz Farm (we were kindly let in by the guard after leaving one passport as insurance...). At the far northwestern end of the fields was the place to be. There were hundreds of Yellow Wagtails of many subspecies (e.g. *lutea*) and a supreme flock of 19 Sociable Plovers. At one point the flock of plovers had to take a short flight as an Eastern Imperial Eagle swept by, at the same time a male Pallid Harrier passed closely by forcing hundreds of doves take off. We were breath-taken. At a dry circular field more to the north there were quite some Singing Bush-Larks around and at evening some Montagu's, Western Marsh and single Pallid Harriers came in to roost. Unfortunately the flock spread out at distant and there weren't more than 15 birds altogether, others had seen almost 50 birds at this roost. After dark we went along the road to Shir, a classic drive-in to hear African Scops-Owl call. At a few different stops we had at least two birds calling. Happy we drove all the way to Ras Janjari to put up our tent on the beach dreaming about the coming sea-watch.



*African Spoonbill, Platalea alba, East Khawr. Arabian Warbler, Sylvia leucomelaena, Ayn Hamran.*

**11<sup>th</sup> December**

As usually it was more or less calm, but still there were good movements on the sea. Early on we found some darker shearwaters, soon identified as Pale-footed Shearwaters. And suddenly again a Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel, but this time a bit closer, and everybody connected with it. Good start. Persian Shearwaters were abundant, I counted 177 in 10 minutes and we guess that at least 800-1000 passed from west to east during the morning hours. Also large flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes covered the sea. At least 2000 birds! Before the light conditions went too bad three fast-flying Red-billed Tropicbirds appeared at some distance, then closer and finally going east into the hot sun.





*Especially the first and to some extent also the last hours of the day at Ras Janjari the light condition is reasonably good. Many birds are distant. It's also possible to see dolphins, sea-turtles, flying-fish, and rays.*

Today we explored the two wadis between Janjari and Mirbat. Great places both of them. At Wadi Baqlat the Sociable Plover was still around and at Wadi Stimah we found four Cotton Teals, a Black-necked Grebe and a Wryneck. Next stop became Wadi Darbat above Khawr Rawri, a perfect place for combining lunch and raptor-watching. During two hours in the middle of the day we had a Eurasian Griffon Vulture and two Lappet-faced Vultures. A Greater Spotted Eagle was joined by another smaller eagle, the birds were many before it appeared closer and turned out to be a Lesser Spotted Eagle (see below). Also three adult Bonelli's Eagles, a juvenile Verreaux's Eagle and Steppe Eagles. To complete the bag two majestic adult Imperial Eagles made an appearance before we went for the final destination of the day, Khawr Rawri. In the northern parts we found another Lesser Spotted Eagle, Black-crowned Tchagra and a juvenile Barbary Falcon. Three Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and two Intermediate Egrets were also recorded. From the sea-facing cliffs in the evening we found a Brown Booby and an Arctic Skua. After sunset we once again went to the beach at Ras Janjari for a final try at seabirds the following morning.

### 12<sup>th</sup> December

Another morning at Ras Janjari. Today less activity, it's fascinating to see the difference in bird appearance from day to day. Very few Red-necked Phalaropes, maybe the same three Red-billed Tropicbirds flew by and at least 5 Pale-footed Shearwaters among the hundreds of Persians. A few darker seabirds at far distance both this day and previous days were left unidentified; maybe some of them were Jouanin's Petrels. Today we had one darker shearwater somewhat closer that we thought might be a Wedge-tailed Shearwater based on lengthy back, quick flight and faster wing-beats, but we are unsure.

Since many birds were far out at sea we thought about doing a pelagic. To action then! We drove to Mirbat harbour. Unfortunately it was Friday (resting day) and it wasn't much activity at the pier. After one hour's talking, and hard bargain we settled for 15 OR for 2 hours and 10 kilometers. We boarded the small boat at set off. It took a while to convince the boatman to head straight out to sea. After an hours going he actually wanted 5 OR more since he thought we were going too far, we agreed. This was tough birding; it was difficult to find any accumulations of seabirds (probably easier in the weeks when fishing boats are out). We found a few Persian Shearwaters resting, and also a mighty impressive flock of at least 100 dolphins. Best bird was a Wilson's Storm-Petrel which passed our course. We returned quite satisfied even though we'd hoped for some Jouanin's Petrels.





Part of the army of Spinner Dolphins, *Stenella longirostris*, that surrounded our boat at the pelagic trip. Photo: M. Gerdin.

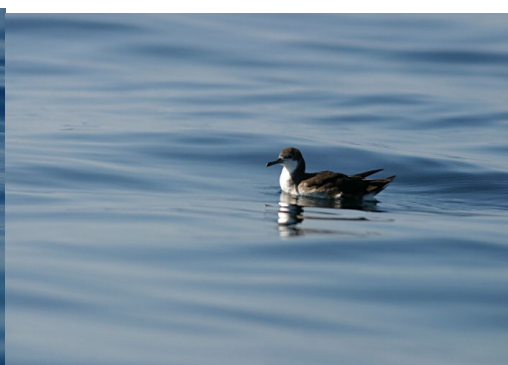
Lunch at Wadi Darbat where we again found two very distant Lappet-faced Vultures, also a European Honey Buzzard, an adult Verreaux's Eagle and many other various eagles. Hungry for more raptors we also tried the road to Tawi Atayr, where some Imperial Eagles, Steppe Eagles and Long-legged Buzzards were found. After all this was a holiday so on the way back toward Salalah we made a beach stop for a swim in the ocean. What a refreshment!

Back at Salalah we tried to enter Sahnawt Farm, which worked perfectly easy. We were let in and soon realized the outstanding numbers of Eurasian Collared Doves present. At a circular field to the east there were 1000's around. By chance a Red Turtle Dove was found among the common ones. It sat perched on a wire for a brief while before every dove took off. It was never found again. We drove around the area, some White Storks, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, seven Common Mynas, 25 Red-throated Pipits before we found THE place to be: A newly ploughed field where many Pacific Golden Plovers stood. We counted 240! When scrutinizing the flock a pratincole was found. Only when it flew a short bit we saw red coverts of the under-wing and a light trailing edge to the secondaries. A Collared Pratincole, at that point a large flock of larks landed among the plovers. It was 100 Bimaculated Larks! Then two Little Pratincole were added and a Short-eared Owl flew by. What a field!

Suddenly a jeep drove in our direction; it was the owner of the farm who asked us to leave the farm since visitors weren't welcome at the moment due to the risk of spreading infectious diseases among the animals. There was nothing much to argue about so we left right away. Night at Hotel Al Nile.



Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*,  
A couple of hundred seen on the pelagic.



Persian Shearwater, *Puffinus persicus*.  
Maybe 50 were seen from the boat.

### 13<sup>th</sup> December

At East Khawr we couldn't relocate the African Spoonbill, but instead a Gull-billed Tern, two Broad-billed Sandpipers and some Lesser Sand Plovers were worth mentioning. Back at Jarziz Farm for a revisit we saw some of the birds seen at last time. Best was 9 Sociable Plovers, a Rufous Turtle Dove (*ssp meena*), a Short-toed Eagle, two light morph Booted Eagles and a young Pallid Harrier. We headed for the airport to return our car before our domestic flight to Muscat at mid-day.

During the afternoon at Muscat we managed to squeeze in another hour of birdwatching at Al Qurm Park and became well rewarded with a Pied Kingfisher (only 3 previous records in Oman!), one European Honey Buzzard, and some Common Swifts. In the last hours we did some sightseeing at the Grand Mosque and the Mutrah Souk before we went back to Seeb to catch our midnight flight back to Europe. A truly fantastic trip had come to an end.

## Site comments

### General

The information given in the new edition (2008) of the Birdwatching Guide to Oman by Eriksens and Sergeant is mostly very accurate. The maps can be a bit difficult to follow since they are out of scale. The best feature however is the GPS waypoints which are perfect to follow. Bring a GPS! The comments that could be given by us are peripheral so we skip those with one exception: the farmlands at Salalah. Two places un-described in the guide are Wadi Baqlat and Wadi Stimah, they are located between Janjari and Mirbat and are supposedly good as long as they carry water. Wadi Baqlat can easily be viewed from a cliff on the eastern banks. At Wadi Stimah you'll have to walk 500 m to reach the mouth of the river. Both places are really worth to check.

### Farmlands at Salalah

Jarziz Farm was more or less easy to enter. We turned up at the gate, and asked the guard to be let in, and he opened the gate, leaving one passport as insurance. On our second visit the guard wouldn't let us in before he'd talked to the boss, it was early in the morning, so he wouldn't call until 8 o'clock, to when we were asked to come back. After the talk we were let in. The other farm Sahnawt should probably be considered closed to visitors. Sad since there is a large difference in birdlife between the farms. We were let in by the guard, without any problems at all actually, although when the manager showed up he wanted us to leave which we did. The other groups we talked to hadn't been let in whatsoever at Sahnawt. The following two aerial photos give some clues about how the farms are located. Although which fields that are productive for birds probably differ from year to year (not to say month to month).



Jarziz Farm from the Salalah-Muscat flight, December 2008. North is upwards. **Green** arrow indicates: Entrance. **Blue** star indicates: Good spot for Singing Bush-Lark. **Yellow** X indicates: Best fields in december 2008 (Sociable Plovers, Wagtails, Rufous Turtle Dove) . A road is running parallel to the fence at Yellow X. At the round field in NW some Pallid Harriers hawked. The harrier roost changes probably from day to day but regularly somewhere in the NE. Photo: M. Gerdin.

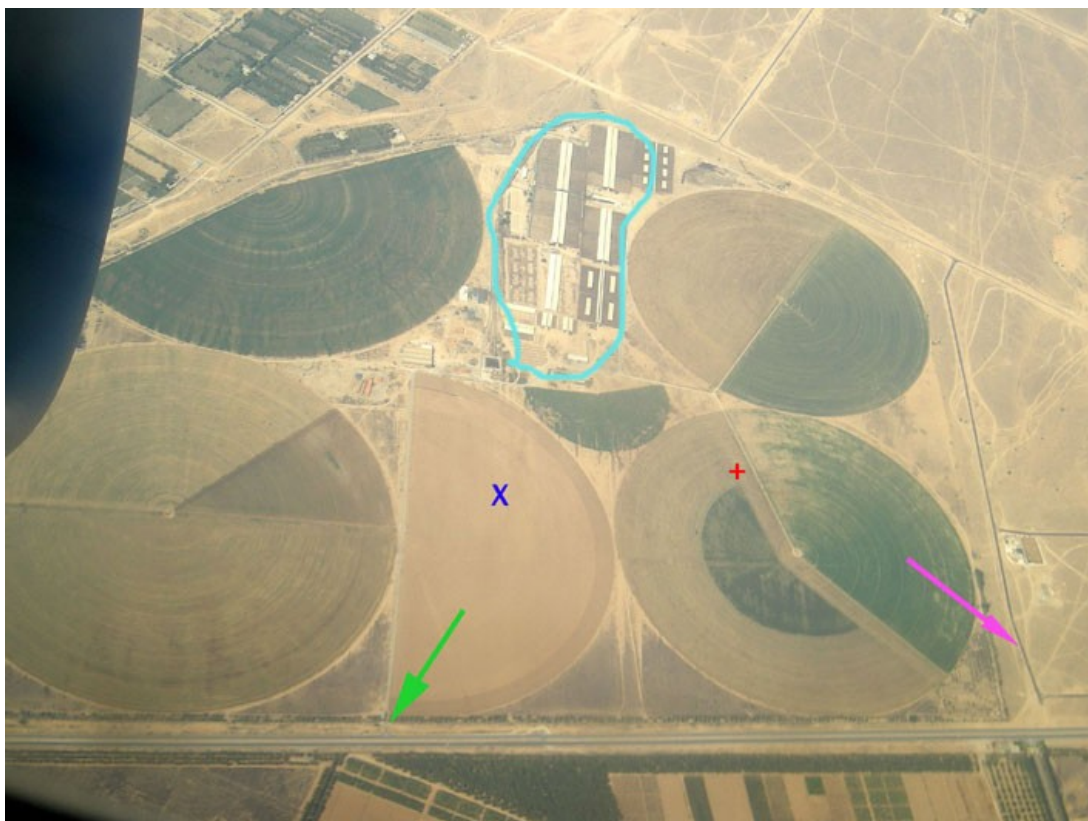


A first-year Steppe Eagle, *Aquila nipalensis*, Raysut 9/12.  
Photo: M. Gerdin.



Short-toed Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*, Jarziz Farm 10/12.  
Photo: M. Gerdin.





Sahnawt Farm from the Salalah-Muscat flight, December 2008. North is upwards. **Green** arrow indicates: Entrance. **Pink** arrow indicates: Road running parallel to the fence on the outside of the farm. The cow shelters could be scanned from here if looking for Abdim's Storks. **Blue X** indicates: The magic field 2008 with 240 Pacific Golden Plovers, Collared and Little Pratincoles and 100 Bimaculated Larks. **Red** cross indicates: Newly harvested field, with at least 1000's of collared doves including one Red (*S. tranquebarica*). Also lot of larks, pipits and wagtails here. **Turquoise** ring indicates: Cow shelters. Photo: M. Gerdin.

### Birdlist: Oman November 30<sup>th</sup> - December 13<sup>th</sup> 2008

To make it simple we've to a large extent followed the list in the Birdwatching Guide to Oman, since this book still has to be considered the reference for the status of bird-species in Oman. This list differentiates in some parts from Clements.

**1. Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Seen in the Khawrs around Salalah.

**2. Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

1 Wadi Stimah 11/12.

**3. Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax*

1 Sur Masirah 4/12.

**4. Pale-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*

10 Ras Janjari 11/12, 5 Ras Janjari 12/12.

**5. Persian Sheawater** *Puffinus persicus*



8 Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 1 Hilf harbour 5/12, 10 Ras Janjari 8/12, 177 migrating in 10 min (totally at least 1000) Ras Janjari 11/12, 600 Ras Janjari 12/12, 50 Mirbat pelagic 12/12.

**6. Wilson's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*

1 Mirbat pelagic 12/12.

**7. Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis*

1 Ras Janjari 8/12, 1 Ras Janjari 11/12.

**8. Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus indicus*

3 Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 3 Ras Janjari 11/12, 3 Ras Janjari 12/12.

**9. Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra melanops*

2 Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 15 Ras Janjari 8/12, 1 Ras Janjari 11/12, 1 Ras Janjari 12/12, 8 Mirbat pelagic 12/12.

**10. Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster plotus*

1 ad Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**11. Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Scattered observations throughout, uncommon in the south. At least 1000 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12.

**12. Socotra Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*

2 imm Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 60 Al Mughsayl 9/12, 60 Khawr Sawli 10/12.

**13. Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

1 juv Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**14. Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

7 Hilf 4-5/12, 1 S Ras Al Ya 4/12, 3 W Taqah 12/12.

**15. Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*

1 Shinas 1/12, 7 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 5 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Wadi Baqlat 11/12.

**16. Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii*

2 Hilf 4-5/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Ayn Razat 10/12, 2 Al Qurm Park 13/12.

**17. Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

Scattered observations. Common at farms.

**18. Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis*

Common at coastal sites. 1 out of range at Qatbit oasis 6/12.

**19. Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Common.

**20. Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia*

1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 2 Khawr Rawri 10/12.

**21. Great Egret** *Egretta alba*

Common.

**22. Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Common.

**23. Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

1 Liwa 1/12, 2 juv Kawri Taqah 8/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12.

**24. Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

3 Wadi Baqlat 8/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Wadi Baqlat 11/12. 5 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**25. White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12, 300 Raysut waste disposal 9/12, 6 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12, 6 Sahnawt Farm 12/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 13/12.

**26. Glossy Ibis** *Plegadia falcinellus*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, many at Khawr Barr Al Hikman, 8 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 20 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**27. Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

Seen at most Khawrs and mudflats.

**28. African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba*

1 ad East Khawr 10/12. Present since a couple of weeks. 4 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**29. Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

e.g. 400 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 1000 East Coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12.

**30. Lesser Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*

3 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12. Present since at least a week. 1 record in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**31. Cotton Teal** *Nettapus coromandelianus*

3 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 4 Wadi Stimah 11/12.

**32. Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

Seen in Khawrs.

**33. Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Wadi Stimah 11/12.

**34. Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*

Seen throughout.

**35. Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

1 male Hilf 4-5/12, 6 Wadi Stimah 11/12.

**36. Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Seen in Khawrs.

**37. Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

Seen in Khawrs.

**38. Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Seen in Khawrs.

**39. Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

10 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**40. Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

4 Hilf 4-5/12, also seen in southern Khawrs.

**41. European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

1 Wadi Darbat 12/12, 1 Al Qurm Park 13/12.

**42. Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

2 males + 3 females/juvs NW of East Khawr 10/12. Present since at least a week. 7 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**43. Black Kite** *Milvus migrans aegyptius*

A few at Khawr Taqah and Raysut waste disposal.

**44. Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*

30 Samail 2/12, 20 Masirah 4-5/12.

**45. Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*

1 Wadi Darbat 11/12.

**46. Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos negevensis*

2 Wadi Darbat 11-12/12.

**47. Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*

1 Shinas 30/11, 1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12, 2 Ayn Hamran 8/12, 1 Wadi Hanna 8/12, 1 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 1 Ayn Hamran 10/12, 2 Wadi Darbat 11/12, 3 Wadi Darbat 12/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 13/12.

**48. Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

Widespread.

**49. Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*

1 male + 1 female Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12, 1 male Al Beed Farm 7/12, 2 males + 1 juv Jarziz Farm 10 & 12-13/12.

**50. Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

7 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**51. Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

A few observations.

**52. Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus*

1 Wadi Hanna 8/12.

**53. Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*

1 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 1 Tawi Atayr 8/12, 1 Ayn Razat 10/12, 2 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 2 Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 Mirbat 12/12, 1 Wadi Darbat 12/12, 1 Tawi Atayr 12/12.

**54. Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina*

1 subad Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 subad Khawr Rawri 11/12. 9th and 10th record in Oman.

**55. Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*

1 Hilf 4-5/12, 3 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 1 Tawi Atayr 8/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 'fulvescens' Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 3 Raysut waste disposal 9/12, 3 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12, 2 Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12, 2 Wadi Darbat 12/12, 2 Sahnawt Farm 12/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 13/12.

**56. Steppe Eagle** *Aquila rapax*

100 Raysut waste disposal 9/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 5 Wadi Darbat 11/12,

3 Wadi darbat 12/12, 2 Tawi Atayr 12/12.

**57. Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*

1 juv Khawr Taqah 8/12, 1 juv Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 5 Raysut waste disposal 9/12, 1 juv Ayn Razat 10/12, 1 juv Ayn Hamran 10/12, 1 juv Jarziz Farm 10/12, 2 ad + 1 juv Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 ad Wadi Darbat 12/12, 2 ad + 1 juv Tawi Atayr 12/12, 1 ad + 2 juv Sahnawt Farm 12/12, 1 ad + 2 juv Jarziz Farm 13/12.

**58. Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii*

1 ad Ayn Hamran 8/12, 1 ad + 1 juv Ayn Hamran 10/12, 1 juv Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 ad Wadi Darbat 12/12.

**59. Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennatus*

1 light morph (lm) Wadi Hanna 8/12, 1 dark morph (dm) Ayn Hamran 10/12, 1 lm + 1 dm East Khawr 10/12, 1 lm Sahnawt Farm 12/12, 2 lm Jarziz Farm 13/12.

**60. Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciatus*

1 juv Shinas 30/11, 3 juv Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 subad Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 2 Ayn Hamran 8/12, 1 Tawi Atayr 8/12, 3 ad Wadi Darbat 11/12, 1 juv Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**61. Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

Singles seen throughout.

**62. Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Widespread.

**63. Barbary Falcon** *Falco peregrinoides*

1 ad Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 juv Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**64. Arabian Partridge** *Alectoris melanocephala*

6 Ayn Hamran 10/12.

**65. Sand Partridge** *Ammoperdix heyi intermedius*

2 Wadi Al Muaydin 2/12, 3 Wadi Al Muaydin 3/12, 6 Wadi Rabkut 7/12.

**66. Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus*

Common in north.

**67. Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 Hilf 4/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 2 Jarziz Farm 10/12.

**68. Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*

1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**69. Little Crake** *Porzana parva*

1 Muntasar 6/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**70. Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*

10 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**71. White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

1 Qatbit resthouse 6/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**72. Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Seen in Khawrs.



**73. Coot** *Fulica atra*

Seen in Khawrs and at Hilf.

**74. Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

3 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 3 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**75. Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

A few seen. 200 Sur Masirah 4/12.

**76. Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

Scattered observations. Many at Sohar dams and at Raysut sewage works.

**77. Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

3 Hilf 4-5/12.

**78. Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola*

150 Filim 3/12, 35 Sur Masirah 4/12, 1 Hilf 5/12, 50 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 1000(!) East coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12.

**79. Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*

1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**80. Little Pratincole** *Glareola lactea*

2 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 2 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**81. Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Seen at Sohar and Jarziz.

**82. Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

A few seen.

**83. Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

e.g. 100-1000s at Barr Al Hikman. 100 East Khawr 10/12, 100 Khawr Sawli 10/12.

**84. Lesser Sand Plover** *Chardrius mongolus*

e.g. 1000s at Barr Al Hikman.

**85. Greater Sand Plover** *Chardrius leschenaultii*

e.g. 1000s at Barr Al Hikman.

**86. Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

2 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12, max 3 Hilf 4-5/12, 1 Wadi Baqlat 8/12, 37 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 240 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**87. Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Singles seen.

**88. Red-wattled Lapwing** *Hoplopterus indicus*

Common in north. 4 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**89. Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria*

1 Wadi Baqlat 8 + 11/12, max 19 Jarziz Farm 10+13/12.

**90. Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*

6 Filim 3/12, 50 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 2 East coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12.

**91. Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

Common.

**92. Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

Common.

**93. Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

Common.

**94. Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

Less common.

**95. Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Common.

**96. Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*

15 Filim 3/12, 6 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, max 2 East Khawr 10 + 13/12.

**97. Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

Less common. E.g. 120 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**98. Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

Less common. E.g. 9 Hilf 4/12, 15 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**99. Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*

2 Hilf 4-5/12, 1 Al Beed Farm 7/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**100. Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

2 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, 1 Hilf 4/12, 2 East coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**101. Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

E.g. 400 Sur Masirah 4/12, 100s at Barr Al Hikman.

**102. Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

E.g. 260 Sur Masirah 4/12, 100s at Barr Al Hikman.

**103. Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

E.g. 200 Sur Masirah 4/12, 100s at Barr Al Hikman.

**104. Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

Common.

**105. Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*

3 Filim 3/12, many at Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 17 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**106. Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Common.

**107. Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Singles seen throughout.

**108. Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Singles seen throughout.

**109. Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*

3 Shinas 30/11, 500(!) Filim 3/12, 10 Sur Masirah 4/12, 30 Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 50 East coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12.

**110. Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common.

**111. Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Common Barr Al Hikman. 550(!) Sur Masirah 4/12.

**112. Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

15 Ras Janjari 8/12, 2000(!) Ras Janjari 11/12, 100 Ras Janjari 12/12, 70 Mirbat pelagic 12/12.

**113. Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

1 Ras As Sawadi 2/12.

**114. Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

1 Shinas 30/11, 1 Liwa 1/12, 5 Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 3 Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12.

**Unid. Antarctic/South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki/antarcticus*

1 distant bird at Khawr Sawli 10/12

**115. Sooty Gull** *Larus hemprichii*

Very numerous along the coasts.

**116. Pallas's Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*

2 Shinas 30/11, 1 Liwa 1/12, 1 2y Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 1 1y Sur Masirah 4/12, 4 ad + 1 1y Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 1 1y Hilf harbour 5/12.

**117. Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

Less common.

**118. Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*

Common.

**119. Siberian Gull** *Larus (fuscus) heuglini*

Very numerous. Siberian Gull *L. heuglini* is lumped with Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* in Clements 2008.

**120. Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans barbarensis/cachinnans*

Very numerous. Steppe Gull *L. barbarensis* is lumped with Caspian Gull *L. cachinnans* in Clements 2008.

**121. Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*

10 Filim 3/12, 1 1y Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 1 1y East Khawr 13/12.

**122. Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia*

2 Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 8 Filim 3/12, 40 Sur Masirah 4/12, seen at Barr Al Hikman.

**123. Swift Tern** *Sterna bergii*

Common.

**124. Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*

Common.

**125. Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*



Common.

**126. Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

A few seen on Masirah and around Salalah. Also many *Sterna* sp.

**127. White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*

5 Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 3 Hilf harbour 5/12.

**128. Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus*

15 Ras Abu Rasas 4/12, 1 Hilf harbour 5/12, 2 Ras Janjari 8/12.

**129. Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons*

Seen on Masirah.

**130. Saunders's Tern** *Sterna saundersi*

Seen on Masirah. A few unidentified little terns were seen both in the North and in the South.

**131. Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12, 1 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 2 East Khawr 10/12, 3 East Khawr 13/12, 2 Al Qurm Park 13/12.

**132. White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

1 Shinas 30/11, 1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, 1 East coast Barr Al Hikman 5/12, 8 East Khawr 10/12, 100 *Chlidonias* sp Jarziz Farm 10/12, 1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12, 1 East Khawr 13/12.

**133. Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

1 female Khatmat Milahah 30/11.

**134. Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus*

150 Muntasar 6/12, 500 Al Beed Farm 7/12.

**135. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus*

35 Khatmat Milahah 30/11, 200 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 12 Hilf 4/12, 60 Hilf 5/12, 4 Muntasar 6/12, 10 Wadi Rabkhut 7/12.

**136. Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

Common.

**137. Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus casiotis*

10 Wadi Bani Habib, Sayq 3/12, 3 Al Manakhir, Sayq 3/12.

**138. Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Extremely numerous at farms Sohar, Jarziz and Sahnawt.

**139. Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

1 among 1000s of Eurasian Collared Doves at Sahnawt Farm 12/12. 3 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**140. Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis meena*

1 among 1000s of Eurasian Collared Doves at Jarziz Farm 10+13/12.

**141. Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Common.

**142. Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12.

**143. Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia*

e.g. 15 Ayn Hamran 8/12, also seen at Ayn Razat.

**144. Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*

Common at Khatmat Milahah, Al Batinah and Jarziz/Sahnawt Farm.

**145. Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea*

1 Hilf 4/12.

**146. African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis pamelae*

1 calling Ayn Hamran 8/12, 2 calling Shir 10/12.

**Scops Owl sp** *Otus* sp

1 seen in flashlight at Muntasar 6/12.

**147. Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

1 Khatmat Milahah 30/11.

**148. Hume's Owl** *Strix butleri*

2 calling Wadi Hashir (Al Mughsayl) 9/12. Magic!

**149. Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**150. European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

1 Qatbit oasis 6/12.

**151. Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

1 seen in flashlight and heard calling at Muntasar for almost one hour in the evening 6/12. Magic!!

**152. Common Swift** *Apus apus*

5 Al Qurm Park 13/12.

**153. Collared Kingfisher** *Halcyon chloris kalbaensis*

2 Shinas 30/11, 3 Liwa 1/12.

**154. Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

Singles seen throughout.

**155. Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*

1 Al Qurm Park 13/12. 3 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

**156. Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis cyanophrys*

Common in the north, few in the south.

**157. European Roller** *Coracias garrulus*

1 Hilf 4/12, 1 south of Ras Al Ya 4/12.

**158. Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis*

Common Sohar.

**159. Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

Singles seen throughout.

**160. Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

1 Khatmat Milahah 30/11, 1 Wadi Stimah 11/12.

**161. Singing Bush Lark** *Mirafra cantillans simplex*  
Easily seen at Jarziz and Sahnawt Farm.

**162. Black-crowned Finch Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps*  
Seen at Sohar, in the desert and in the south.

**163. Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti* ssp  
2 Al Manakhir, Sayq 3/12, 10 Wadi Rabkhut 7/12.

**164. Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes doriae*  
At least 20 seen in the desert 6-7/12, 10 Al Beed Farm 7/12.

**165. Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata*  
1 Hilf 4/12, 100 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**166. Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*  
15 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 Hilf 4/12, 1 Muntasar 6/12, 70 Al Beed Farm 7/12, 50 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**167. Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*  
Common.

**168. Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*  
1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, 1 Muntasar 6/12, 2 Jarziz Farm 10/12.

**169. Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*  
8 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12.

**170. Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*  
1 Filim 3/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 2 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 1 Wadi Baqlat 11/12.

**171. African Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*  
Common.

**172. Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*  
Common.

**173. Streak-throated Swallow** *Hirundo fluviicola*  
1 Hilf 5/12. 5<sup>th</sup> record in Oman.

**174. Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*  
4 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 10/12.

**175. Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*  
Common.

**176. Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis arabicus*  
Seen at Ayn Hamran, Ayn Razat and Wadi Darbat.

**177. Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*  
Singles seen at Masirah and in the south.

**178. Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*  
1 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12. 5 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).



**179. Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

Common at farmlands.

**180. Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

50 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, singles at farmlands and sewage works.

**181. Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens japonicus*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11. 5 records in Oman.

**182. Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* ssp

ssp. *flava*, *thunbergi*, *feldegg* (only at Jarziz and Sahnawt Farms) and *lutea* (only at Jarziz Farm) seen. Probably also ssp. *beema*. One possible ssp. *taivana* at Sohar Sun Farms 1/12. 200 Yellow Wagtails Jarziz Farm 10/12. 100s at Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**183. Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

3 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-12/11. 1 1y Filim 3/12, 2 Hilf 4-5/12, 2 Al Beed Farm 7/12, 1 1y Khawr Taqah 8/12, 1 female Wadi Baqlat 8/12, 3 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 2 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 5 Wadi Stimah 11/12, 8 Khawr Rawri 11/12, 3 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**184. Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

3 Hilf 4-5/12, a few seen in the south.

**185. White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* ssp

Ssp. *alba* common. Ssp. *personata* 2 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11-1/12.

**186. White-cheeked Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

Common in the north.

**187. Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer*

1 Ras As Sawadi 2/12.

**188. Yellow-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*

Common.

**189. Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*

Singles seen throughout.

**190. Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* ssp

Singles in the north and in the desert.

**191. Blackstart** *Cercomela melanura neumanni*

Singles in the south.

**192. Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*

Singles in the desert and in the south.

**193. Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

1 male Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**194. Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*

1 female Khatmat Milahah 30/11.

**195. Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

Common. Seen daily with around 20 birds.

**196. Persian Wheatear** *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

2 Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 1 Wadi Al Muaydin 2/12, 1 Sayq 2/12, 5 Sayq 3/12. Treated as a subspecies of Red-tailed Wheatear *O. xanthopyrma* in Clements 2007.

**197. Eastern Pied (Variable) Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata*

4 Khatmat Milahah 30/11.

**198. South Arabian Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugentoides boscaweni*

A pair seen along road to Yemen 9/12, 3 Ayn Razat 10/12, 1 Ayn Hamran 10/12, 1 pair Wadi Darbat 11/12. Treated as a subspecies of Mourning Wheatear *O. lugens* in Clements 2007.

**199. Hume's Wheatear** *Oenanthe alboniger*

20-25 seen around Sayq 2-3/12.

**200. Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

1 male Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 2 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**201. Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

1 Sayq 3/12, 2 Qatbit 6/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**202. Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis*

Common.

**203. Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta grisea*

2 Wadi Muaydin 3/12.

**204. European Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

At least 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

**205. Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Common in mangroves and reedbeds.

**206. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida*

1 Ayn Hamran 8/12.

**207. Syke's Warbler** *Hippolais rama*

1 Shinas 30/11. Non seen at Liwa 1/12!

**208. Ménétries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea*

1 Qatbit 6/12.

**209. Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana*

1 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 2 Muntasar 6/12, 1 Haylat Ar Rakah 7/12, 10 Wadi Rabkhut 7/12.

**210. Arabian Warbler** *Sylvia leucomelaena leucomelaena*

5 Ayn Hamran 8/12, 3 Ayn Hamran 10/12.

**211. Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*

1 Qatbit 6/12.

**212. Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* ssp

Ssp. *minula*/*halimodendri* seen throughout (Desert Lesser Whitethroat) a few nominate ssp. *curruca* seen in the south.

**213. Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*

1 Muntasar 6/12, 1 Qatbit 6/12. 7 records in Oman (Eriksen 2008).

- 214. Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus*  
7 Khatmat Milahah 30/11, 7 Wadi Muaydin 2/12, 25 Sayq-area 3/12.
- 215. Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* ssp  
Common. Mostly ssp. *tristis*.
- 216. Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*  
Max 7 Hilf 4-5/12, 1 Muntasar 6/12, 1 Qatbit 6/12, 1 Wadi Darbat 12/12.
- 217. African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis harterti*  
Common at Ayn Hamran. Also seen at Ayn Razat and Wadi Darbat.
- 218. Arabian Babbler** *Turdoides squamiceps* ssp  
20 Khatmat Milahah (ssp. *muscatensis*) 30/11, 4 Wadi Rabkhut 7/12.
- 219. Purple Sunbird** *Nectarina asiatica brevirostris*  
Common in north.
- 220. Shining Sunbird** *Nectarina habessinica hellmayri*  
Seen at Ayn Hamran.
- 221. Palestine Sunbird** *Nectarina osea osea*  
Seen at Ayn Hamran.
- 222. White-breasted White-eye** *Zosterops abyssinica arabs*  
Seen at many sites in the south.
- 223. Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala percivali*  
2 Ayn Hamran 8/12, 3 Ayn Hamran 10/12, 1 Khawr Rawri 11/12.
- 224. Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* ssp  
1 Shinas 30/11, 2 Liwa 1/12, 1 Sohar Sun Farms 1/12, 1 Hilf 4/12, 1 Muntasar 6/12, 1 S Dawkah 7/12, 1 Haylat Ar Rakah 7/12, 3 Khawr Taqah 8/12, 3 Wadi Baqlat 8/12, 7 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Raysut sewage works 9/12, 1 Ayn Hamran 10/12, 2 Khawr Sawli 10/12, 1 East Khawr 10/12, 1 Jarziz Farm 10/12, 10 seen Ras Janjari to Khawr Rawri 11-12/12. Both ssp. *isabellinus* and ssp. *phoenicuroides* occur.
- 225. Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*  
1 Qatbit 6/12.
- 226. Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* ssp  
Ssp *aucheri*, singles seen throughout. Ssp *pallidirostris* 1 1y Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, 1 1y Ras As Sawadi 2/12, 1 ad + 1 1y Al Beed Farm 7/12, 1 1y Khawr Taqah 8/12.
- 227. Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus*  
1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.
- 228. Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*  
1 Hilf 4-5/12. No previous records in Oman! (Eriksen 2008).
- 229. House Crow** *Corvus splendens*  
Common in the north. 1 East Khawr 13/12.
- 230. Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis*  
Singles and pairs in the desert.



**231. Fan-tailed Raven** *Corvus rhipidurus*

Common in Dhofar.

**232. Tristram's Grackle** *Onychognathus tristramii*

Common in Dhofar.

**233. European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

1 Hilf 4-5/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12, 1 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**234. Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*

3 Al Beed Farm 7/12.

**235. Common Mynah** *Acridotheres tristis*

Common in the north. 7 Sahnawt Farm 12/12.

**236. House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Common in the north.

**237. Rüppell's Weaver** *Ploceus galbula*

Common in the south.

**238. Indian Silverbill** *Euodice malabarica*

Common in the north.

**239. African Silverbill** *Euodice cantans*

Common in the south.

**240. Yemen Serin** *Serinus menachensis*

1 Tawi Atayr 8/12.

**241. Golden-winged Grosbeak** *Rynchostruthus socotranus percivali*

2 Ayn Hamran 8/12.

**242. Mountain Bunting** *Emberiza striolata striolata*

4 Wadi Bani Habib 3/12, 1 Qatbit 6/12.

**243. Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi arabica*

Common in the south.

**244. Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*

10 Sohar Sun Farms 30/11, 5 Hilf 4-5/12, 3 Muntasar 6/12, 1 Qatbit 6/12, 1 Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.

## Some interesting species NOT seen

*Wedge-tailed Shearwater* - possible but difficult (mostly due to problems with long distances and positive identification) at Ras Janjari during the autumn.

*Little Bittern* - Should be seen in the Khawrs in the south.

*Striated Heron* - Should be possible.

*Abdim's Stork* - Seen some winters at Salalah Farmlands, migrating from Yemen.

*Golden Eagle* - Sometimes seen at Muntasar where considered resident breeder.

*Sooty Falcon* - Seldom linger later than early November. Breed at Al Fahl island off Muscat and at Ras As Sawadi.

*Lanner Falcon* - Could be seen in the central desert where declining.

*MacQueen's Bustard* - Jaaluni and Wadi Rabkut are mentioned as probable sites. Very difficult.

*Spotted Thick-Knee* - Appearance not fully understood. Probably partly migratory breeder. Nocturnal habits make it hard to connect with. Khawr Dhurf is mentioned in the guide. Some groups have it in Salalah.

*Cream-coloured Courser* - Seen by most groups at Sohar Sun Farms.

*Caspian Plover* - My most wanted bird, could turn up here and there, most likely at the farmlands (Sohar) during migration. A Dutch group recorded one at Barr Al Hikman in January 2008.

*White-tailed Plover* - Possible during migration and winter in wetlands throughout.

*Slender-billed Curlew* - ...

*Common Noddy* - Southern sea-watching during early autumn.

*Crowned Sandgrouse* - Sometimes seen drinking in Muntasar.

*Pied (Jacobin) Cuckoo* - Regular but unpredictable migrant from India (winters in Africa).

*Didric Cuckoo* - Migratory breeder of the Dhofar Mountains.

*Striated Scops Owl* - Should be possible to find in the north. Difficult to find if you don't know exactly where to look (which we didn't).

*Spotted Eagle Owl* - Rare breeder of the Dhofar Mountains.

*Forbes-Watson's Swift* - ('Dhofar' Swift) disappear from Dhofar in November.

*Grey-headed Kingfisher* - Migratory breeder of the Dhofar region. Linger into early November.

*Blue-cheeked Bee-eater* - Common migratory breeder.

*Dunn's Lark* - Notoriously difficult and elusive desert lark.

*Hypocolius* - Unfortunately for the first winter for many years no *Hypocolius* wintered at Muntasar or Qatbit.

*Eversmann's Redstart* - Musandam in winter only.

*Oriental White-eye* - Only present on Mahawt Island in Ghubbat Hashish.

### Additional record shots



*Crab Plover, Dromas ardeola, one of the most sought-after birds in Oman. Barr Al Hikman and Sur Masirah have the highest counts in Oman. Filim 3/12.*



*'Steppe' Grey Shrike, Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris, conveniently posed on top of our car! Sohar Sun Farms 30/11.*



Ashy Drongo, *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, Hilf 4-5/12. Mega-rarity no. 1 at Hilf.



Streak-throated Swallow, *Hirundo fluvicola*, Hilf 5/12. Mega-rarity no. 2 at Hilf.



Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*.  
1 of 45 at Khawr Barr Al Hikman 5/12.



European Roller *Coracias garrulus*,  
at dusk. Masirah 4/12.





Hume's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus humei*, Muntasar 6/12. Heard calling with a typical 'tso-it'.



Oriental Skylark, *Alauda gulgula*.



Black Storks, *Ciconia nigra*.

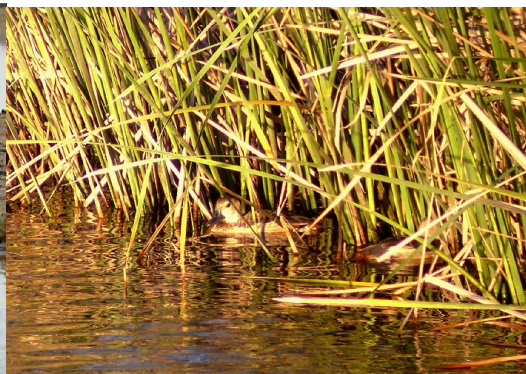
Note the short primary projection, Muntasar 6/12. Two of the three birds at Wadi Baqlat 8/12.



Verreaux's Eagle, *Aquila verreauxii*. A magic silhouette from Dhofar. Ayn Hamran 10/12.



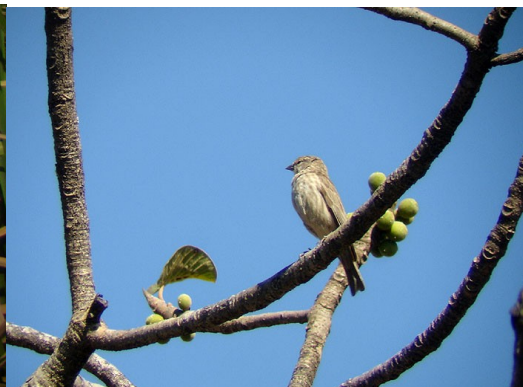
Sociable Plover, *Chettusia gregaria*.  
Wadi Baqlat 8-11/12.



Lesser Whistling-Duck, *Dendrocygna javanica*.  
2 of the 3 birds at Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12.



Yellow Bittern, *Ixobrychus sinensis*.  
Juvenile bird at Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12. Note  
reddish streaks on the breast.



Yemen Serin, *Serinus menachensis*.  
At the famous sinkhole in Tawi Atayr 8/12.





Golden-winged Grosbeak, *Rynchostruthus socotranus percivali*. This Arabian peninsular endemic is easier earlier in the season but we were lucky to connect with two birds at Ayn Hamran 8/12.



Buff-bellied Pipit, *Anthus rubescens japonicus*, together with some 50 Water Pipits, Sohar Sun Farms 30/11.



*Lesser Spotted Eagle, Aquila pomarina, subadult bird at Wadi Darbat 11/12.*



*Lesser Spotted Eagle, Aquila pomarina, subadult bird at Khawr Rawri 11/12. This small-size Aquila-eagle is considered a vagrant in Oman with fewer than ten records.*





Red Turtle Dove, *Streptopelia tranquebarica*. Note pink breast, chestnut wings, black markings on tail, blue-grey head and small size. Sahnawt Farm 12/12.



Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis meena*. A juvenile bird at Jarziz Farm 10 & 13/12.



Possible Citrine x Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava x citreola*. Note olive back, crown and ear-coverts. Bright yellow supercilium and underparts. Shows some resemblance to Yellow Wagtail ssp *taivana*. Call rather harsh. Raysut Sewage Works 9/12.





*Pied Kingfisher, Ceryle rudis, in the final hour we got one more species on our list at Al Qurm Park. Only a handful previous Oman records. Al Qurm Park 13/12.*



*Pacific Golden Plover, Pluvialis fulva, Hilf 4-5/12. Photo: M. Gerdin*



*Sociable Plovers, Chettusia gregaria, almost the whole impressive flock at Jarziz Farm 10/12.*  
Photo: M. Gerdin



*Mountain Bunting, Emberiza striolata, Qatbit 6/12.*



*Masked Shrike, Lanius nubicus, Khawr Al Mughsayl 9/12. Photo: M. Gerdin*