

## Qatar, December 21<sup>st</sup> 2012



### A short note on a quest for *Hypocolius*

On our way home from a birding trip to Myanmar, we had a long transfer in Doha, Qatar. We soon decided to make the best out of the transfer time, that is birding off course! Qatar is *the* wealthiest country in the world with large gas resources. It's a peninsula shooting right out in the Persian Gulf, it's mostly flat, desert and barren. Few patches of mangrove survive. There are some isolated palm groves, a sewage pond, some irrigated farmlands and rich coasts that potentially hold birds, especially during migration. There are a few birders in Qatar, but it was rather tough finding any valuable information on internet. There is a yahoo-group called Qatarbirding which held some recent news. Luckily we made contact with Ajith Everester, an Indian birder and bird-photographer that live in Doha since a few years back. Ajith met us with a smile at the arrival terminal in Doha and we were soon on our way. We landed mid-day and sunset was already at 5 pm so we didn't have much time to spare. Ajith told us about a flock of *Hypocolius* that had been seen on the west coast of Qatar a week back which we could try for, although Ajith thought our chances to see them would be very slim on such a short time. We decided to try a sewage point southwest of Doha and then continue to the site for *Hypocolius*. The other option would be to visit some green farmlands which supposedly hold great numbers of birds, but that have to wait until next time.

Ajith can be contacted on e-mail: [ajith.everester@gmail.com](mailto:ajith.everester@gmail.com)



**Abu Nakhlah: 13.15-15.15**

A large sewage pond divided into two different water bodies by a thin embankment. There were some spare reedbeds surrounding the pond. We drove around the western water body anti-clockwise, a 4WD is preferable. The ponds were packed with birds, mostly Great Cormorants, ducks, grebes, flamingos, herons, and waders. Socotra Cormorant is sometimes seen here.

Great Cormorant 1000  
 Flamingo 400  
 Common Teal 1000  
 Northern Shoveler 100  
 Northern Pintail 2  
 Mallard 30  
 Little Grebe 100  
 Black-necked Grebe 50  
 Great Crested Grebe 10  
 Grey Heron 50  
 Purple Heron 2  
 Squacco Heron 1  
 Little Egret 50  
 Great Egret 3

Western Reef Heron 1  
 Little Stint 50  
 Dunlin 10  
 Grey Plover 1  
 Black-necked Stilt 50  
 Common Greenshank 3  
 Marsh Sandpiper 1  
 Wood Sandpiper 1  
 Common Sandpiper 2  
 Common Moorhen 5  
 Slender-billed Gull 10  
 Black-headed Gull 10  
 Large Gull sp 20  
 Caspian Tern 1

Whiskered Tern 10  
 Steppe Eagle 1 subad  
 Western Marsh Harrier 5  
 Osprey 1  
 Eurasian Collared Dove 1  
 Rock Dove 10  
 Water Pipit 20  
 White Wagtail 10  
 Western Yellow Wagtail 10  
 Tawny Pipit 1  
 Crested Lark 5  
 Red-tailed (Daurian) Shrike 1  
 Graceful Prinia 5

**Umm Bab Jetty 16.00-17.15**

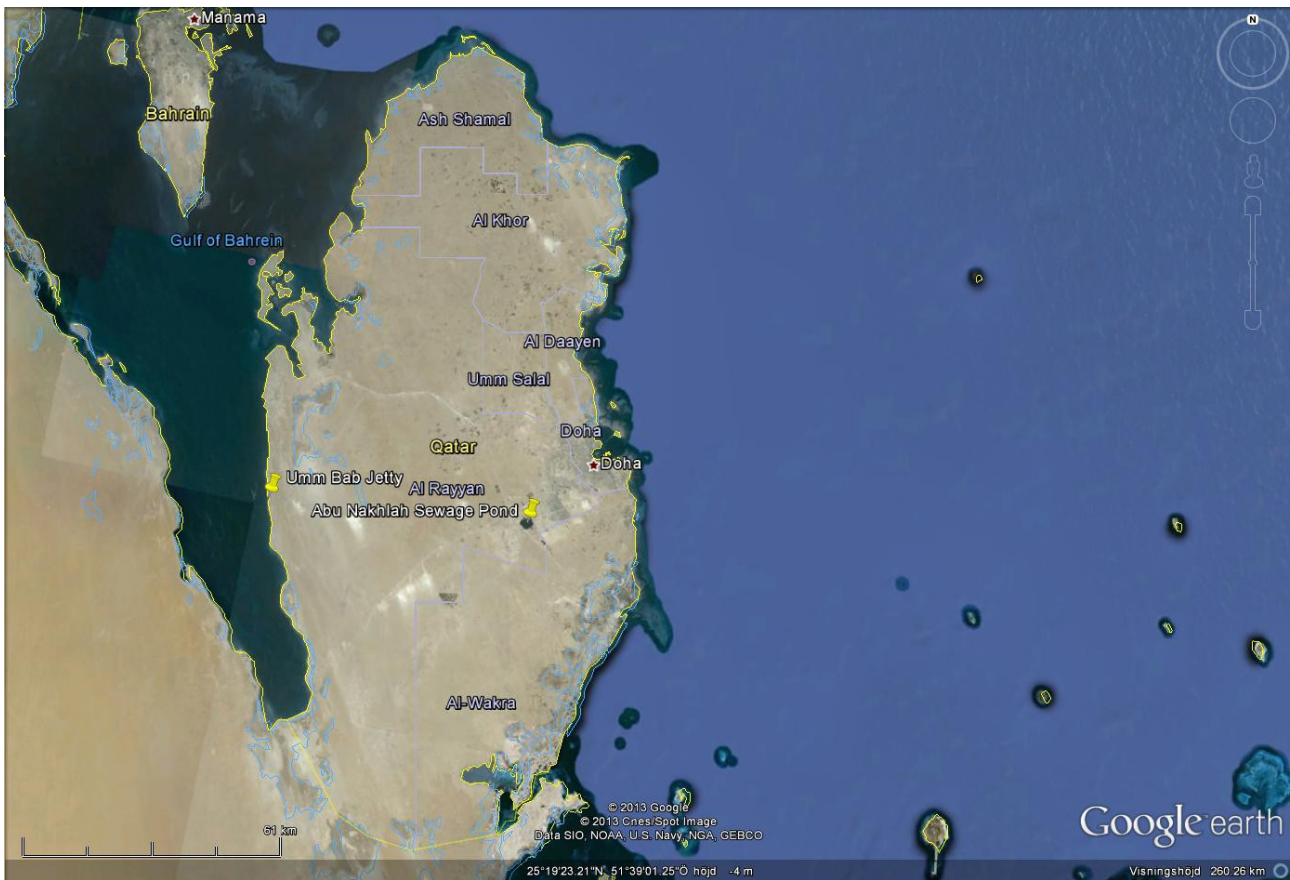
After a short while we were suddenly on the west coast of Qatar (which is not a large country!). There was a small desalination plant just at the waterfront. Around these buildings there were a few palm trees, this was the spot! Since we didn't see one single tree along the road from Abu Nakhlah to here, one could imagine the attracting effect of these palms on passerines. What happened next was almost unbelievable. We parked the car at a somewhat larger gathering of palms. We went out, and since we didn't have much more than half an hour before sunset we decided to split up, but we didn't need to, because after 10 meters, an amazing flock of 12 Hypocolius came flying low in perfect light just past us. High-fives all around! All birds were first winter/female-types (at least we couldn't see any adult males). But then they were gone, we searched hard for another 40 minutes but strangely we couldn't relocate them, although there were just very few palm trees around and the flock contained 12 birds! Hypocolius has a reputation of being elusive, we couldn't agree more. During the search we found a few other goodies such as Asian Desert Warbler and a male Desert Wheatear. After an hour or so we were back in Doha, we had a great dinner at an Indian restaurant before Ajith kindly drove us back to the airport for our late night flight to Sweden. If you read this Ajith, thank you for your kind hospitality and joyful manners.

Grey Francolin 1 (introduced)  
Kentish Plover 5  
Common Ringed Plover 5  
Laughing Dove 20  
Eurasian Collared Dove 1  
Grey Hypocolius 12  
White-eared Bulbul 10  
Desert Wheatear 1 male  
Asian Desert Warbler 1  
House Sparrow 30



*Sunset at Umm Bab Jetty with Hypocolius under the belt.*

## Map of Qatar



## Contact

Måns Grundsten, [mans.grundsten@gmail.com](mailto:mans.grundsten@gmail.com), compiler and photos  
Tomas Carlberg, [tomas.carlberg@slu.se](mailto:tomas.carlberg@slu.se)  
Stockholm, Sweden