



Field Guides Tour Report

Oman & the UAE: Birding Arabia I 2016

Jan 7, 2016 to Jan 23, 2016

Phil Gregory

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We saw a couple of subspecies of the Southern Gray Shrike, including this aucheri individual -- though (given the complexity of Southern Gray Shrike taxonomy) quite what this taxon is remains to be seen! Photo by guide Phil Gregory.

This was the sixth Field Guides trip to Arabia (and my ninth), and was again an exciting and varied experience, despite it being unusually dry in Oman, with relatively few passerine migrants about. We began in the rather astonishing city of Dubai, where this year we had a much better and more convenient hotel as our base, albeit with beer at an eye-watering \$15 per pint! We covered a number of desert sites with Mark, our excellent local guide, before going to Abu Dhabi with its extraordinary architecture and horribly distant *Hypocolius* roost.

Exciting birds were many and highlights included a vagrant Great White Pelican, Pharaoh Eagle-Owl, Greater Spotted Eagle, Crab Plover, Great Knot, Desert, Isabelline, Hume's, Hooded, Variable, and Red-tailed wheatears, Plain Leaf-Warbler, Scrub Warbler, and (once again) a day-roosting Pallid Scops-Owl. The new desert park at Bab al Shams gave an Imperial Eagle, and both Pin-tailed and Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse. Outstanding mammals here included some very nice Mountain Gazelles with a couple of the rare Goitered (Sand) Gazelle amongst them (a lifer mammal for us all), whilst a herd of the legendary Arabian Oryx with two babies were around the feeding areas, pending release into the park.

Then it was out to the huge oasis at Al Ain and the bleak beauty of Jebel Hafeet -- oddly enough in the rain this year! Egyptian Vulture made an appearance here as did Desert Lark and Hume's and Hooded wheatears, but a major highlight was finding an Arabian Tahr in the late afternoon.

Crossing into Oman at Buraimi was uneventful. Good birds here included Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Scrub Warbler and both Hume's and Red-tailed wheatears. Then we drove some four hours on an amazingly good, new highway to the ancient capital of Nizwa, seeing a Lappet-faced Vulture en route. A visit to the souk and fort at Nizwa made for an interesting couple of hours the following morning, whilst a stop in a nearby wadi gave us the only Menetries's Warbler of the trip and a fine Long-billed Pipit.

Muscat birding gave us Pallas's Gull, the first of many Sooty Gulls, and Red-necked Phalaropes, plus an uncountable view of an Asian Dowitcher at Al Ansab lagoons -- regrettably shut on weekends, of course. Our pelagic was a bit of a damp squib, noteworthy only for the phalaropes and some very close Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins. We bade farewell to the entertaining and very competent Justin here, and flew down to the brand new airport at Salalah, where the city has changed out of all recognition in an incredibly short time.

Our new guide, Gary, knew a site for Spotted Thick-knee, so this was our first port of call once we'd checked in to our ideally located Beach Villas. Then it was out to Ayn Sahalnoot, and the first Blackstarts, White-breasted White-eyes and Paradise-Flycatchers of the trip, whilst a couple of folks glimpsed a White-breasted Waterhen, a vagrant here. A try for Arabian Scops-Owl produced a heard-only record, with too much traffic for any to dare to approach the road, and the remnants of a dead (Arabian) Spotted Eagle-Owl as witness to the perils waiting if they did.

Ayn Hamran is always a big highlight, and this year was no exception, with great looks at Arabian Partridge, Bruce's Green-Pigeon, Arabian Warbler, Palestine and Shining sunbirds, and the elusive (Arabian) Golden-winged Grosbeak. Khor Rauri yielded Pheasant-tailed Jacana and Cotton Pygmy-Goose, and the spectacular sinkhole at Tawi Attair gave us Arabian Wheatear and Yemen Serin, as well as its resident Bonelli's Eagle.

The next day, given the bad views we had had of Hypocolius in Abu Dhabi, we went out to a site 80 km west of Thumrait towards the Empty Quarter, where the species has been overwintering. Sure enough, we got good views of several birds and this turned out to be one of the high points of the trip, with African Collared-Dove and Nile Valley Sunbird as bonus birds, and some interesting rock and black gravel desert habitat that we did not see again. There were some amazing triliths here, these being Iron Age stone structures of unknown purpose and origin, mentioned in several of the classic Arabian exploration works too, so it was very good to see them.

Sahnawt Farm was also very rewarding, with a huge flock of 420 Pacific Golden-Plovers, 32 Cream-colored Coursers, two Caspian Plovers, male Pallid and Montagu's harriers side by side, and a fantastic look at Steppe Gray Shrike.

Qitbit and Muntasar were a tad anticlimactic this year, with virtually no migrants in evidence, but we got great looks at Spotted Sandgrouse, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark and a Hume's Warbler as compensation, to make the trip worthwhile.

News of a wintering Forest Wagtail at East Khor Park (near our hotel) was encouraging, but in the end, we had to make three visits before we saw what proved to be a rather elusive bird on our last morning. The fact that our last visit coincided with the Friday holiday and hundreds of noisy subcontinental picnickers was not helpful, though Jim's finding of a Gray-headed Kingfisher was astonishing, and may represent the first January record for Oman. A Long-toed Stint at East Khor was another good bird, but, sadly, it looks as if the Khor Mughsayl Desert (Hume's) Owl may be a thing of the past.

A new site at Ayn Tobraq was very promising and gave us a Verreaux's Eagle and 4 Golden-winged Grosbeaks; this one is a definite keeper!

My thanks to Justin and Gary at Muscat Dive for their good company, driving, and general logistical assistance, with Gary's botanical knowledge proving a nice addition to the trip. We're hoping that we've set Gary off on the path to becoming a birder; he sure got some good Oman ticks to start him off! Sharon at FGI HQ did a great job setting it all up, and my thanks to Karen for help with the drastic flight rescheduling needed following the huge snowstorm that disrupted the east coast just as we were about to leave the Middle East. UAE guide Mark Smiles (who took me round pre-trip as well) was as excellent as ever, and gave us lots of valuable information. Particular thanks to a fun, good-humored and entertaining group, who coped with it all remarkably well; even the lack of beer in Dhofar was bearable, if not ideal! Safe travels and I look forward to meeting up with you all again at some point.

-- Phil, in Dubai and Kuranda

Itinerary:

Jan 7-8. Flights from the US to Dubai.

Jan 9. Umm al Quwain/Khor al Beida, Masafi Wadi, Wamm Farm.

Jan 10. Mushrif Park. Arabian Park Polo Club, Bab al Shams and Flamingo Lake, Masafa pond then Yas Island Golf Links for 1700.

Jan 11. Wamm Farm, Hamrania Turf Farms, UAQ corniche.

Jan 12. Ras al Khor, Warsan lakes, Jimi Oasis, Jebel Hafeet.

Jan 13. Mercure area Jebel Hafeet, Zakher Lake, then to Buraimi and pm to Sewage ponds and desert nearby. Dull and rainy all day!

Jan 14. Hanging Gardens (Jebel Qatar) then drive to Nizwa.

Jan 15. Nizwa souk, Wadi Mudhain, Al Ansab and Qurum Beach.

Jan 16. Qurum Beach then pelagic trip 35 km off Mutrah; Al Ansab, Qurum Beach and Muscat souk late p.m.

Jan 17. Flight from Muscat to Salalah, then birding Al Baleed and Ayn Sahalnoot.

Jan 18. Ayn Hamran, Khor Rauri, Ras Mirbat, Wadi Hanna baobabs and Tawi Attair sinkhole.

Jan 19. Sahnawt Farm and East Khor, then Raysut harbor, Mughsayl Khor, and Wadi Mughsayl.

Jan 20. Thumrait, then Modhai date grove, back to Salalah late pm.

Jan 21. Pre-dawn to Ayn Hamran, then East Khor Park, Thumrait, Al Beed farm, and Qitbit.

Jan 22. Muntasar Oasis, Frankincense tree wadi, then East Khor Park and East Khor.

Jan 23. East Khor Park, Sahnawt Farm, Khor Rauri and Ayn Tobraq. Afternoon departure for Dubai and hopefully flights home (depending on the status of the snowstorm in the eastern USA).

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*) – A single at Khor Rauri on two dates.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) – A couple on Flamingo Lake at Bab al Shams, an introduced species here. [I]

COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) – A single at Khor Rauri on Jan 18 was the only sighting.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – 8 at Al Warsan and 1 at Lake Zakher were the only sightings.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – Just one male at Khor Rauri on Jan 18.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – The most notable was the single drake at Muntasar oasis on Jan 22. There were 30 at Al Warsan and 100 at Zakher Lake, with a few at Al Ansab as well.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – The most widespread duck of the trip, we had small numbers at most wetlands and 150 at Khor Rauri with 100 at Lake Zakher.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Also widespread but no big numbers, 15 at East Khor were the most.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*) – Seen twice at Khor Rauri, with 3 on Jan 18 and 2 on Jan 23.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN) (*Anas crecca crecca*) – Small numbers at most wetlands, and 10 sitting out in the desert by the settling ponds at Buraimi made a strange sight.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*) – 2 at Al Warsan and 5 at Lake Zakher.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) – Just 4 at Khor Rauri on Jan 18.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

SAND PARTRIDGE (*Ammoperdix heyi*) – 2 running up a slope at Masafi Wadi on Jan 9, which Rick missed, then a nice view of 4 at Jebel Hafeet for everyone, and being unsuccessfully stalked by a cat!

CHUKAR (*Alectoris chukar*) – Jim saw a couple at Jebel Hafeet, where the introduction seems to be failing fast- they were all over the place here in 2014. [I]

ARABIAN PARTRIDGE (*Alectoris melanocephala*) – Three introduced birds at the Green Mubazzarah, then great views of two coveys of 6 at Ayn Hamran, this is a large and spectacular partridge. [E]

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Quite common in the urban areas of the Emirates and also in Muscat. [I]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – 5 day records, with 15 at Al Warsan and 20 at Lake Zakher the most.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – 2 showed very nicely on Flamingo lake at Bab al Shams on Jan 10

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

GREATER FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – 8 day records with small numbers at many wetlands, the most being 110 at Flamingo Lake.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

MASKED BOOBY (*Sula dactylatra*) – About 10 off Ras Mirbat were the only sighting.

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – Just a single off Mughsayl this trip.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Quite common around Dubai, the usual cormorant around here, and small numbers in southern Oman.

SOCOTRA CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*) – About 20 flying by off Umm al Quwain breakwater, and a couple of singles from Salalah beach and then off Mughsayl. The slender shag-like bill is a good field character.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

GREAT WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) – A single vagrant immature was at Ras al Khor, a shame it wasn't a Dalmatian Pelican!

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – Small numbers at all wetland sites.

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*) – 4 at Al Warsan then a single at Al Baleed and 1 at East Khor.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Ones and twos at many wetlands sites, but really surprisingly scarce

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Just 3 singles, from Al Warsan, Lake Zakher then oddly way out in the desert at Al Beed.

WESTERN REEF-HERON (*Egretta gularis*) – Small numbers throughout, the first being white morph birds at Al Warsan. Dark birds seem to predominate as you go south, and greyish intermediates are widespread.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Small numbers at many sites, with 2 at Al Beed being noteworthy. This is the western taxon.

SQUACCO HERON (*Ardeola ralloides*) – Just 4 day records. it was surprisingly scarce with 2 the most we saw.

INDIAN POND-HERON (*Ardeola grayii*) – Great looks at a bird at Wamm Farm, very dark mantled, heavily streaked dark below, and with a dark loreal line.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striata*) – A great look at one at Ras al Khor.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – 15 at Ras al Khor and three singles later.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*) – Widespread in small numbers, the most was 11 at Ras al Khor.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – 5 day records of ones and two.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*) – Only seen at Jebel Hafeet where we had about 4 adults, now sadly a very rare bird throughout. Jim saw one near Al Ansab as well.

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE (*Torgos tracheliotos*) – A single in the desert as we drove from Buraimi to Nizwa, the only one we saw and another rare

species.

SHORT-TOED SNAKE-EAGLE (*Circaetus gallicus*) – A fine single sat by the new road to Nashib in southern Oman on Jan 18.

GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE (*Clanga clanga*) – Six day records, the most being 3 at Khor al Beida on Jan 9.

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – A fine dark phase bird was at Sahnawt farm on Jan 19.

STEPPE EAGLE (*Aquila nipalensis*) – Just 3 day records from the Salalah vicinity, max. 3 birds, but we did not visit Raysut tip where they concentrate.

IMPERIAL EAGLE (*Aquila heliaca*) – A fine adult perched in a tree at Bab al Shams Desert Park.

VERREAUX'S EAGLE (*Aquila verreauxii*) – One at the beautiful wadi at Ayn Tobraq was a very welcome final addition to the trip list.

BONELLI'S EAGLE (*Aquila fasciata*) – One distant bird at Jebel Hafeet Jan 12, then 2 at the usual site at Tawi Attair and one near Taiq cave the same day.

EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*) – Three males around in the UAE and various female plumaged birds there too, plus 3 f plumaged at the treatment plant at Buraimi. Finally, daily records of single female plumaged birds in Dhofar.

PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) – A lovely male at Sahnawt farm on Jan 9, at one point right beside a male Montagu's Harrier, which was a much heavier darker grey bird with much more black in the wing tips. Nice to get such a comparison. A male also flew over at the same site on Jan 23.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*) – Two ringtails at Sahnawt on Jan 19 and a fantastic comparison of a male beside a Pallid Harrier, which was a much more slender and paler species. I think this was the first time I've ever seen males of the two species together.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Bart and Gary saw one briefly at Ayn Sahalnoot on Jan 17, but it vanished into an opening in the rocks, never to be seen again! A vagrant here.

GRAY-HEADED SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) – Two birds at Al Warsan lakes, at long last split from Purple Swamphen!

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Small numbers at various wetlands, with 15 in a pond en route to wadi Mughsayl the most, and then 14 at East Khor.

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – 2 at Al Warsan, 2 at Flamingo Lake and 2 at East Khor.

Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

SPOTTED THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus capensis dodsoni*) – Gary knew of a roost at Al Baleed Frankincense Museum in Salalah, and we found some 10 birds sat quietly there on Jan 17, an Oman tick for Phil. Later we saw 2 sheltering under a scrubby thorn bush at Sahnawt Farm Jan 19, an unexpected find, good spotting by John C.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Widespread but no really big numbers.

PIED AVOCET (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) – A couple at Ras al Khor.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*) – One was seen by a few at Khor al Beida.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – 30 at Khor al Beida and a few from Oman.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis apricaria*) – One at Arabian Farms Polo club on Jan 10 was a good find, they are quite scarce in the UAE. I'd seen 3 at Hamrania the day before the trip but they had gone when we visited.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A really good count of about 420 at Sahnawt on Jan 19, with 90 there on Jan 23.

SPUR-WINGED LAPWING (*Vanellus spinosus*) – A single vagrant was at the pond at Masafa in Abu Dhabi near the White-tailed Lapwings Jan 10, an Arabian tick for me.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*) – Quite common in the UAE with 120 at Hamrania on Jan 11, then small numbers at Al Ansab in Oman.

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING (*Vanellus leucurus*) – We twitched 3 at a rather dismal pond at Masafa in Abu Dhabi on Jan 10, just as well as we only saw one other at Al Ansab and most folks missed that brief sighting on Jan 16, and my Hamrania bird from my pre-trip was gone.

LESSER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*) – 150+ at Khor al Beida on Jan 9, then 70 at Qurum Beach Jan 15, with 30 there next day.

GREATER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) – Just 3 records, with 3 at Khor al Beida then 15 at Qurum Beach, with 5 there next day.

CASPIAN PLOVER (*Charadrius asiaticus*) – A great find at Sahnawt on Jan 19, I thought I saw one in the heat haze at the first stop, then got onto a fine adult in breeding dress on the eastern bare field, with a winter plumage bird accompanying it. The English birder we met was thrilled and it was new for many of our group.

KENTISH PLOVER (KENTISH) (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*) – 30 at Khor al Beida and 20 at Ras al Khor, then just a handful from Oman.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Four day records of ones and twos in both countries.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (CURONICUS) (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*) – Just 2 birds from East Khor.

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – 3 at Khor Rauri on both visits, and two at East Khor.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

TEREK SANDPIPER (*Xenus cinereus*) – Some folks saw one at Khor al Beida, the only sighting this trip.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Small numbers at all the wetlands.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – Seven day records from both countries, all singles except for 2 at Hamrania. One seen very nicely at Ayn Tobraq on Jan 23.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (*Tringa erythropus*) – 2 at Lake Zakher and 4 at Buraimi settling ponds, then just a single at Qurum Beach.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Seven day records, max 8 at Al Baleed.

- MARSH SANDPIPER** (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – Just 2 birds at Flamingo Lake on Jan 10.
- WOOD SANDPIPER** (*Tringa glareola*) – Just 3 records of single birds from Flamingo Lake, Al Ansab and East Khor.
- COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*) – A good count of 250 at Khor al Beida then small numbers later in the trip, max. 14 at East Khor.
- WHIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*) – 30 at Khor al Beida, then mostly singles on 4 days later.
- EURASIAN CURLEW** (*Numenius arquata*) – 5 day records of singles of what is now sadly a threatened species, with good views at East Khor and Mughsayl on the same day.
- BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa limosa*) – One at Lake Zakher was well inland, then a couple at Khor Rauri and Mughsayl.
- BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*) – 70 at Khor al Beida, and a single at Qurum Beach.
- RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – 5 at Khor al Beida, and 5 at Ras Mirbat.
- GREAT KNOT** (*Calidris tenuirostris*) – A single of this rare species was at Khor al Beida with the Barwits, this is the westernmost wintering area for it.
- RUFF** (*Calidris pugnax*) – 90 at Flamingo lake, and 30 at Lake Zakher including some swimming rather like phalaropes! Then small numbers from Oman.
- CURLEW SANDPIPER** (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Just 5 at Khor al Beida this trip.
- TEMMINCK'S STINT** (*Calidris temminckii*) – One at Flamingo Lake Jan 10 and 3 at Hamrania Jan 11 were the only sightings.
- LONG-TOED STINT** (*Calidris subminuta*) – A great view of one at East Khor on Jan 22, the scaly upperparts and yellow legs giving it away. We saw one last trip also, but it's a good find.
- DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – 250 at Khor al Beida and 30 at Flamingo lake, then half a dozen at East Khor and one at Mughsayl.
- LITTLE STINT** (*Calidris minuta*) – A single at Khor al Beida, then 40 at Flamingo lake, 30 at Lake Zakher and 3 at East Khor.
- COMMON SNIPE** (*Gallinago gallinago*) – Six day records, max. 4 birds from Al Ansab where confusion with the Asian Dowitcher in the abominable light was all too easy! I think we did see the Asian Dowitcher, as a larger more uniform snipe-billed bird was behind 2 snipe at one point, but it was far away and in bad hazy light. Annoying that the wetlands are closed at weekends as this mega has been here for some weeks.
- RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – A few way off Ras Mirbat, then about 130 on the disappointing pelagic off Muscat, seen very nicely. This is a major wintering area for them.
- Dromadidae (Crab Plover)*
- CRAB PLOVER** (*Dromas ardeola*) – A close single then 5 distant birds from Khor al Beida was a poor count, probably due to disturbance. An important species for the tour, being a monotypic family as well as a terrific and very odd bird
- Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)*
- CREAM-COLORED COURSER** (*Cursorius cursor*) – A very good tour for them, we had 11 at Dubai Polo Club, then 32 at Sahnawt farm on Jan 19 with 20 there on Jan 22. It was memorable for me to see one by a Hoopoe at the Polo Club, as my first ever way back in Oct 1969 was also with a Hoopoe, only this was in Norfolk, England!
- Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*
- SLENDER-BILLED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus genei*) – Six day records, starting at Khor al Beida and Ras al Khor, then Qurum Beach and in Dhofar, max.20 birds.
- BLACK-HEADED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – Widespread in modest numbers in the UAE with fewer in Muscat, and hardly any in Dhofar.
- SOOTY GULL** (*Ichthyaeetus hemprichii*) – The first were at Qurum Beach, then very common in Dhofar with hundreds each day and a big roost on the beach by our hotel.
- PALLAS'S GULL** (*Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus*) – A great view of one of this very large gull with the black head in the harbour at Qurum Beach, then a couple on the pelagic next day, they turned out to be the only ones we saw. Often known as Great Black-headed Gull.
- CASPIAN GULL** (*Larus cachinnans*) – Some of the more delicate paler mantled and white-headed gulls we saw were this species, but the taxonomy is puzzling and I can't see why the very similar Steppe Gull is classed as being a Lesser Black-backed!
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (HEUGLIN'S)** (*Larus fuscus heuglini*) – Some of the dark mantled gulls we saw in Oman can be assigned here, but it was by far the scarcest of the 3 large white-headed gull forms.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (STEPPE)** (*Larus fuscus barabensis*) – The taxonomy here is a mess, what were formerly Heuglin's Gull is now lumped with Lesser Black-backed, whilst what was the barabensis Steppe Gull is usually likewise lumped there. Anyway, many of the paler large-billed white headed gulls with streaky heads and mid-grey mantle were this Steppe Gull, whilst darker birds can be assigned to Heuglin's. Both taxa appeared to be quite common in Oman, but the final resolution of what is what remains elusive shall we say. Personally I'd lump them all as Big Pale Gull and have done with the larid theology!
- BRIDLED TERN** (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – Bart saw one of what is presumably this species off Umm al Quwain, being mobbed by a skua.
- GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Just 6 day records and small numbers only in both countries.
- CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – 5 day records of singles, from both countries.
- WHITE-WINGED TERN** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – One at Al Ansab, then 12 at Al Baleed, 12 at Sahnawt and finally 12 flying down East Khor.
- WHISKERED TERN** (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – 4 at Flamingo Lake, 1 at Al Ansab and 3 at Khor Rauri.
- WHITE-CHEEKED TERN** (*Sterna repressa*) – Two birds late afternoon off the beach by our hotel were the only ones we saw this time. The smallish size, grey rump and tail along with quite a deep tail fork are helpful. [E]
- GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii velox*) – Just a few around Muscat on 3 dates.
- SANDWICH TERN** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – Small numbers in Muscat and off Salalah.
- LESSER CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) – Seen most days in Muscat and off Salalah in small numbers

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

- PIN-TAILED SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles alchata*) – About 50 out in the desert at Bab al Shams, where they have been introduced for falconry; we got some terrific views and photos. [I]
- CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles exustus*) – Two at Bab al Shams, easily identified by the black underwing and dark belly, then 2 flyovers at Sahnawt Farm in Salalah.

SPOTTED SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles senegallus*) – Very nice looks just north of Thumrait where they were feeding on spilled grain by the road, we saw about 80. Next day we had just 2 at Muntasar, a very poor showing, and about 10 by the road north of Thumrait again. Once again no sign of Crowned Sandgrouse which I have finally removed from the checklist as we never see it!

LICHTENSTEIN'S SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles lichtensteini*) – We did well for these en route to the Hanging Gardens, flushing about 8 birds at quite close range but failing to pick them up again as they went over the ridges.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Feral Pigeons were widespread, whilst some at Jebel Hafeet and the more remote rocky sites were actually wild Rock Doves.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Widespread, seen every day of the trip with hundreds at Sahnawt.

AFRICAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia roseogrisea*) – A single at Mudhai on Jan 20 showed the white vent and belly, and I am sure I heard it at Al Baled. I think this is either overlooked or colonizing in Dhofar, this was a new Arabian bird for me.

LAUGHING DOVE (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) – Widespread, seen every day of the trip, but not as abundant as Collared Dove.

BRUCE'S GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron waalia*) – Great views of 5 at Ayn Hamran Jan 18, then unexpectedly 2 in a roost tree at Wadi Mughsayl on Jan 19. The weird laughing call is very distinctive.

Strigidae (Owls)

ARABIAN SCOPS-OWL (*Otus pamela*) – Aargh, this bird is turning out to be a real nemesis as it calls but keeps back, and seems very shy. We heard it at dusk at Wadi Sahalnoot, and went out pre-dawn to Ayn Hamran where we heard a couple but could not lure any in for views. I still have only seen this thing in flight, I badly need an upgrade. [E*]

PALLID SCOPS-OWL (*Otus brucei*) – John and Jim saw one briefly at Mushrif in the acacias, but it vanished all too quickly. Happily however the bird was at the same site in Al Ain that it was in back in 2011 and 2014, and we got fantastic looks at it. Yay!

PHARAOH EAGLE-OWL (*Bubo ascalaphus*) – A good scope view of what looks to be a nesting bird in an old quarry at Mushrif, it is reminiscent of a huge cat, and has distinctive chestnut-washed cheeks, great to see it again. It is right under the main flight path to Dubai airport too, so gets a plane over every 3 minutes or so!

LITTLE OWL (LILITH) (*Athene noctua lilith*) – One on the putting green at the Mercure Jebel Hafeet just after dusk. I managed to call two people to see it but it did not hang about. Taxon uncertain, I am not sure that lilith occurs in the mountains. [E]

Apodidae (Swifts)

PALLID SWIFT (*Apus pallidus*) – Widespread in small numbers in the UAE, with 50+ at Lake Zakher the most. Just a single in Oman, at Al Ansab.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – Six day records of singles of this gorgeous species, calling nicely at Wamm Farm.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

GRAY-HEADED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon leucocephala semicaerulea*) – Jim found us one of these at East Khor Park, a total surprise as they are not supposed to be here at this time of the year, it is a summer rains migrant from Africa and there are no January records in the Oman Bird Atlas/Checklist. I later learned one was seen here in early December so it is clearly overwintering and doesn't mind loud Indian music on Fridays! An Oman tick for me, thanks Jim.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

GREEN BEE-EATER (*Merops orientalis*) – Small numbers in the UAE and near Muscat, this is the blue-throated race muscatensis, a very pretty bird. We also saw the slightly paler taxon cyanophrys at Sahnawt and Modhai. These are split by HBW/BirdLife as Arabian Green Bee-eater and that makes sense as each group is pretty distinct.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

INDIAN ROLLER (*Coracias benghalensis*) – Great views in the UAE and I counted 19 at Wamm Farm on one scan. Just one in Muscat was it for Oman.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

EURASIAN WRYNECK (*Jynx torquilla*) – John C. found one at Ayn Hamran Jan 18 but it flew before most of got to see it. Darn!

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – 7 day records, with several birds at Sahnawt and Al Beed. A very distant lightly built all grey falcon we saw mobbing a Spotted Eagle at East Khor on Jan 22 looked intriguing. I was wondering about Red-footed but that does not occur here, so Amur or Sooty Falcon are tantalizing but sadly unverifiable possibilities. I am sure it was not the Peregrine we saw next day, the shape was completely different, being too long tailed and lightly built.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – A splendid adult was sat in the bare eastern field at Sahnawt on Jan 23 and was new Arabian bird for me, I'd seen Barbary Falcon before but not this one. The grey nape was seen well, and the bird was seen in flight later clutching a dove. A rare bird here and unexpected given the prices such falcons fetch in Arabia.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Small numbers were widespread in the UAE, Muscat and Salalah. [II]

Malaconotidae (Bushshrikes and Allies)

BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA (BLACK-CROWNED) (*Tchagra senegalus percivali*) – Nice looks at Ayn Hamran and Ayn Tobraq, this is a very distinctive small form with grey underparts and a rather different call, I would not be surprised to see it split.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

ISABELLINE SHRIKE (DAURIAN) (*Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*) – 4 sightings in the UAE and one in Oman.

SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (SOUTHERN) (*Lanius meridionalis aucheri*) – Very few, with 5 day records in the UAE and Oman; taxonomy of the grey shrikes is a mess and quite what this taxon is remains to be established.

SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (STEPPE) (*Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*) – Great views of one at Sahnawt Farm, the yellowish base to the bill and pinkish washed underparts with lots of white in the tail make this very distinctive, it is split by the iOC.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

AFRICAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone viridis harterti*) – Great views at Sahalnoot, also at Ayn Hamran. Ayn Tobraq and East Khor Park. Another rather distinctive S. Arabian taxon that might be a split in waiting.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*) – Unfortunately becoming very common around Salalah from its beachhead around Raysut, badly needs some control measures. Also widespread around Dubai. [I]

BROWN-NECKED RAVEN (*Corvus ruficollis*) – Nice views out in the desert areas of UAE and in Oman, with a very showy bird at Qitbit.

FAN-TAILED RAVEN (*Corvus rhipidurus*) – Seen en route to Tawi Attair and on the escarpment above Salalah, very distinctive in shape.

Alaudidae (Larks)

SINGING BUSHLARK (*Mirafra cantillans*) – Only seen dropping into fodder crops at Sahnawt, where the small size and white in the tail identified them from Crested Larks.

GREATER HOOPOE-LARK (*Alaemon alaudipes*) – Good views N of Thumrait from the main highway, there were 5 birds seen this day, a large and showy species but quite wary.

BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK (*Eremopterix nigriceps*) – Seen well N of Thumrait and at Al Beed farm.

DESERT LARK (*Ammomanes deserti*) – Nice views of a dark drab form at Jebel Hafeet and Jebel Qatar, presumably talmuri, then a strikingly different taxon (azizi?) at Modhai which was much paler, heavily streaked on the chest with a big pale eye-ring and yellowish heavy bill. I imagine various splits await in the complex as there are many different races.

GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK (*Calandrella brachydactyla*) – 15 at Al Beed on Jan 21, they showed nicely.

CRESTED LARK (*Galerida cristata*) – Common throughout, even seen at Al Beed 200 km out in the desert.

SKY LARK (*Alauda arvensis*) – Just 4 at Wamm Farm on Jan 11.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Just 4 day records and very small numbers.

ROCK MARTIN (PALE CRAG-MARTIN) (*Ptyonoprogne fuligula obsoleta*) – Widespread in the rocky areas, and with about 50 at the Buraimi settling ponds. Split by IOC as Pale Crag Martin.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Just 3 day records, with 15 at Sahnawt and 9 at Buraimi ponds the most.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Singles in the UAE, with one seen at Jebel Hafeet. [I]

WHITE-SPECTACLED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus xanthopygos*) – Common in the rocky areas, the first were at Wamm Farm and it was tame at Jebel Hafeet. Also seen at East Khor Park. [E]

WHITE-EARED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus leucotis*) – Common in the UAE in the suburban areas and Jebel Hafeet, also seen at Buraimi and Muscat where much less frequent. [I]

Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

SCRUB WARBLER (*Scotocerca inquieta*) – Great looks at 2 birds singing and foraging over rocks at Masafi wadi, and seen again on rocks at Jebel Qatar, an uncommon and elusive species that is sometimes elevated to monotypic family status.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – Just 4 day records, max 2 at Qitbit, very scarce this season.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (SIBERIAN) (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*) – One dull bird at Muntasar was constantly giving the very distinctive plaintive callnote.

PLAIN LEAF WARBLER (*Phylloscopus neglectus*) – Just one at the wadi near Masafi, a delightfully drab and nondescript species. Arabia is one of the best places to see it.

HUME'S WARBLER (*Phylloscopus humei*) – One calling at Qitbit and eventually giving good views, another drab Phyllosc but with a single wing bar and a distinctive call. One of the few migrants here this year.

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER (BROWN) (*Acrocephalus stentoreus brunescens*) – Seen well at Al Warsan and singing out by the Hypocolius site. A potential split as well.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

GRACEFUL PRINIA (*Prinia gracilis*) – Widespread and quite vocal, many folks saw it right by the hotel in Dubai and it showed well at Al Warsan.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)

ASIAN DESERT WARBLER (*Sylvia nana*) – One out by Zakher lake, and a couple by the Hanging Gardens. The yellow eyes and legs are good field characters.

DESERT WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia minula*) – Seen at Jebel Qatar, then at the wadi Mudhain near Nizwa, with a single at Modhai and another at Qitbit. The dry trilled call is very distinctive. [E]

ARABIAN WARBLER (*Sylvia leucomelaena*) – Great views at Ayn Hamran, a very local species, also seen by some at Ayn Tobraq. [E]

MENETRIES'S WARBLER (*Sylvia mystacea*) – A nice view of a male at Wadi Mudhain on Jan 15, this area seems to be a good site for this uncommon species. [E]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

WHITE-BREASTED WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops abyssinicus arabs*) – This small rather drab white-eye was widespread in the greener parts of Dhofar, starting at Sahalnoot. I would not be surprised to see this split in due course as it's rather different to the African birds.

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

ARABIAN BABBLER (*Turdoides squamiceps*) – 3 at Masafi wadi, one at Mushrif and 3 at Jebel Qatar, we got good looks at what can be a tricky species. [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia svecica*) – Just one bird at Flamingo lake was the only sighting of the trip.

BLACK REDSTART (EASTERN) (*Phoenicurus ochruros semirufus*) – Great looks at Masafi wadi and Wamm Farm and also seen at Qitbit. This form is a likely split as Eastern Black Redstart; we saw a couple of females but I am not sure they can be assigned to any subspecies.

BLUE ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola solitarius*) – One male at the Mercure Jebel Hafeet, and a female at Ayn Hamran.

WHINCHAT (*Saxicola rubetra*) – One at Sahnawt, and then one at Muntasar oasis, one of the few migrants there this year.

EUROPEAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola rubicola*) – 2 at Wamm farm on Jan 9.

SIBERIAN STONECHAT (SIBERIAN) (*Saxicola maurus maurus*) – One at Wamm Farm on Jan 9, the long supercilium and pale buff rump identified it as this species, now at last split by most.

BLACKSTART (*Cercomela melanura*) – Nice looks at Sahalnoot, Ayn Hamran, Tawi Attair, Modhai and Ayn Tobraq. The black tail is a good character.

HOODED WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe monacha*) – One at Wamm Farm on Jan 9 was a nice species to get here, I'd seen it the day before when it flew into Oman as well. Then a tame bird at the Mercure Jebel Hafeet, with another at the car park above it. An uncommon species.

HUME'S WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe albonigra*) – A smart black and white wheatear of the desert rocky areas, we saw them at Masafi, Wamm Farm, Jebel Hafeet, Jebel Qatar and Wadi Mudhain. Quite a restricted range species.

ARABIAN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe lugentoides lugentoides*) – A male en route to Tawi Attair, then a pair there with both showing nicely up on the rocky plateau. Usually split as Arabian or South Arabian Wheatear, the female is very distinct to other taxa of Mourning Wheatear. Uncommon and restricted range. [E]

VARIABLE WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe picata*) – This one is a very scarce winter visitor, so finding 2 females at Wamm Farm was very pleasing.

RED-TAILED WHEATEAR (RED-TAILED) (*Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna chrysopygia*) – Seen on 2 days, with 1 at Masafi wadi and 2 at Wamm Farm, and 3 out at Jebel Qatar the most. A great subtle little bird, this is one of the best places to see it. [E]

DESERT WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe deserti*) – Quite widespread especially in Dhofar, the males are every striking.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe isabellina*) – Scarce, we saw them at Wamm Farm, Hamrania and then again at Al Beed.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – One at Wamm Farm was the only record.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A single at Hamrania, an uncommon migrant here.

ASIAN PIED STARLING (*Gracupica contra*) – One in Dubai, and some also saw them by our hotel there, it's an uncommon introduced species. [I]

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Depressingly widespread, with a blotchy white patched one at East Khor Park, they seem prone to plumage anomalies. [I]

BANK MYNA (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) – We only saw these at Wamm Farm and Al Warsan, it is quite a local introduction. [I]

TRISTRAM'S STARLING (*Onychognathus tristramii*) – Widespread and quite noisy around Salalah and the escarpment. [E]

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

NILE VALLEY SUNBIRD (*Hedydipna metallica*) – 10+ birds out in the date grove spring area at Modhai included 3 partial breeding dress long-tailed males. There was a single female at Qitbit too, another elusive readily missed bird.

PALESTINE SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris osea*) – Two males and a female at Ayn Hamran, then 10 out at Modhai and finally a male at Ayn Tobraq, a good year for this low density species. [E]

SHINING SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris habessinicus*) – Nice views at Al Baleed, then at Ayn Hamran, East Khor Park and Modhai, the common sunbird in Dhofar.

PURPLE SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – A few around in the UAE, one at Jebel Qatar and at Al Ansab in Muscat.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*) – A single at East Khor Park which we finally nailed on Jan 23, the Oman atlas lists 9 records of this vagrant. A great bird and a tick for quite a few.

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*) – A single immature at Khor Rauri Jan 18 was the first flava of the trip.

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (FLAVISSIMA/LUTEA) (*Motacilla flava lutea*) – The green crowned bird with the olive green back, whitish-yellow supercilium and yellow chin, throat and underparts at East Khor Park on Jan 22 looks good for being a lutea, often called Yellow-headed Wagtail. This is not a taxon we usually see.

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (BLUE-HEADED) (*Motacilla flava flava*) – I was bemoaning the lack of flava wagtails when we found 8 feeding on the grassy verges as we came into Salalah on Jan 22, then more at East Khor Park the same day and Jan 23.

CITRINE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla citreola*) – Small numbers were widespread at wet areas in Both UAE and Oman, with a fine grey-backed breeding dress bird seen.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*) – Seen on most days with 30 at Hamrania the most.

RICHARD'S PIPIT (*Anthus richardi*) – One at Wamm Farm.

LONG-BILLED PIPIT (*Anthus similis*) – Good views of one at Wadi Mudhain and then 2 at Ayn Hamran.

TAWNY PIPIT (*Anthus campestris*) – One at Wamm Farm, then one at Buraimi ponds and one at Sahnawt.

TREE PIPIT (*Anthus trivialis*) – Four at East Khor Park were a good fine, thanks John Collins.

WATER PIPIT (*Anthus spinoletta*) – 12 at Hamrania, then small numbers at other wet areas and 2 at East Khor Park.

Hypocoliidae (Hypocolius)

HYPOCOLIUS (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) – The mangrove roost site at Abu Dhabi proved disappointing as the viewpoint was very distant and the birds were just specks, coming in high in small flocks of 4-12 birds. We saw 40+ here but it was anticlimactic to say the least. Happily I heard of the site in the date grove at Modhai in the desert west of Thumrait, and a twitch out here got us nice looks at 3+ birds including a fine male. Bird of the trip for many people, they can be very elusive and hard to find even if you know where they are. [E]

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

STRIOLATED BUNTING (*Emberiza striolata striolata*) – 3 at Wamm Farm and 3 at Wadi Mudhain, but once again not seen Dhofar.

CINNAMON-BREASTED BUNTING (*Emberiza tahapisi*) – Seen well at Ayn Hamran, Tawi Attair and Ayn Tobraq.

CORN BUNTING (*Emberiza calandra*) – 13 at Wamm Farm were a good find, perched up on power lines for nice views.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

YEMEN SERIN (*Serinus menachensis*) – 2 birds showed very well at Tawi Attair, an isolated outpost from the main range in Yemen, but with so much wild country intervening there must be undiscovered populations. [E]

GOLDEN-WINGED GROSBEEK (ARABIAN) (*Rhynchostruthus socotranus percivali*) – One flew over us, then we got lucky and got good views of a pair of this very elusive species in a fruiting *Zizyphus* tree at Ayn Hamran, with two seen again later that might be different. Then on Jan 23 two were drinking from the spring at Ayn Tobraq and I at last managed to get some photos. Two were seen again later, quite likely different birds. It was a good year for this easily missed species which is quite small and short tailed for a grosbeak and reminds me of Hawfinch. [E]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus hufufae*) – This rather pale quite grey race was widespread, in UAE and Muscat, but birds in Dhofar seem better marked and much less pale to me, and may be a different taxon, presumably indicus.

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

RUEPPELL'S WEAVER (*Ploceus galbula*) – Good views from Al Baleed, Ayn Hamran, Ayn Tobraq and East Khor Park, including several breeding dress males.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

INDIAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice malabarica*) – Widespread in small numbers in the UAE, seen well at the Mercure at Jebel Hafeet, also at Qurum and in Mudhain wadi.

AFRICAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice cantans*) – Small numbers in Dhofar starting at Ayn Hamran, a few in Salalah, then at Khor Rauri and Ayn Tobraq. The call seems identical to Indian Silverbill and the only difference looks to be the dark not white rump.

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*) – About 15 in the East Khor Park were a new Oman bird for me. [I]

MAMMALS

INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus palmarum*) – Several seen at Hamrania were unexpected, it is an introduced species from India and my first here.

INDO-PACIFIC BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops aduncus*) – Very nice close looks at some bow-riding our boat as we came back in from the pelagic off Muscat, we saw at least 15 out here.

ARABIAN ORYX (*Oryx leucoryx*) – 32 adults and two fawn-colored calves were in a pre-release pen at Bab al Shams where they are being reintroduced. None seen out in the desert this year but still a beautiful species to see. [I]

GOITERED GAZELLE (*Gazella subgutturosa*) – The two strikingly pale white-rumped gazelles with recurved horns with Mountain Gazelle at Bab al Shams are the very rare Sand Gazelle, of the race marica. This was a new mammal for me, it has 4 races that are likely all good species.

MOUNTAIN GAZELLE (*Gazella gazella*) – The striking gazelles at Bab al Shams with the black flank stripe and black on the face are this species, which is being reintroduced at various sites.

TAHR SP. (*Hemitragus jayakari*) – I spotted a male atop a ridge top wall from the garden at the Mercure on Jebel Hafeet late afternoon, getting a scope on it for great looks at a lifer mammal for us all. I'd always looked for it but had not succeeded before. One of the sightings of the trip for me. [E]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Hottentotta jayakari was the scorpion Justin showed us at Wamm Farm, named for a doctor in the Indian Medical Service in Victorian times.

Butterflies were very sparse, a Painted Lady was seen in Dhofar and Plain Tiger was widespread.

Desert rose *Adenium tuberosum* was seen in bloom near Taiq Cave, and frankincense trees were quite widespread in rocky valleys in Dhofar, whilst Baobabs were seen at Wadi Hanna.

Birds of the trip were varied but *Hypocolius* not surprisingly came out in front, with Sand Partridge, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Forest Wagtail and Gray-headed Kingfisher also featuring in a diverse selection. I was especially pleased with Arabian Tahr and Sand Gazelle

Totals for the tour: 211 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa