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Where to Watch Birds in Wadi el-Gemal National Park and Neighboring Areas

Where to Watch Birds in Wadi el-Gemal National Park and Neighboring Areas

Livelihood and Income from the Environment (LIFE)

Sustainable Economic Development in the Red Sea Project

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INTRODUCTION

This is a practical guide aimed at the experienced and novice birdwatcher and naturalist visiting the Southern Red Sea. This is not a guide to the birds themselves, but a guide to where best to see and encounter particular target species that are characteristic of the Wadi el-Gemal National Park (WGNP) area and the Southern Red Sea region as a whole.

Some of these species are rare elsewhere or are difficult to see in other parts of the world. Some species are "desirable" and can only be seen in the Western Palaearctic biogeographic region in this part of Egypt. Many birders will travel especially to see these species.

WGNP provides a unique opportunity to see these birds in a pristine habitat, which would be difficult to access elsewhere in Egypt.

The guide also provides information on some spectacular avian phenomena that occur in the Park, such as bird of prey migrations, nesting sooty falcon colonies, and seabird colonies. By providing practical and accurate information on where and when to find these target species, visitors can better plan their visits and reduce time lost in learning basic facts about WGNP. This guide aims to help birdwatchers maximize the number of desirable species they can see (and thus increase their satisfaction) in a brief window of time.

One of the exciting aspects about this region is the fact that it is ornithologically under-explored and studied. Visitors have a good chance of making significant discoveries that can add to the scientific knowledge of this fascinating part of the world.

Figure 1 ***Balanites aegyptiaca*** **grove in the central area of Wadi el-Gemal National Park**

Geographic Scope

The main geographical focus of this guide is WGNP and the area immediately adjacent to it. However, since the visitors to the Park will be traveling through other parts of the Red Sea and Eastern Desert, a few other points of interest for birdwatchers, scattered between Hurghada and Shalateen are highlighted as well. This is not a comprehensive listing of birds that can be seen near the Red Sea, but rather points of interest that can be checked on the journey up and down the Red Sea that can add a few more species for the enthusiastic birder.

Figure 2 Wadi Abu Ghusoon with Gebel Hamata in the background

AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Eastern Desert of Egypt lies in the driest part of the Sahara, with less than 5mm average annual rain fall. However, because of its rugged mountainous terrain, meager vegetation occurs in runnels and *wadis* (dry riverbeds) where rainwater concentrates. This scant vegetation supports a modest diversity of uniquely adapted desert bird fauna.

The Red Sea coast and islands is a northern extension of the Indian Ocean and supports a diversity of seabirds. Mangrove thickets are sporadically scattered, providing nesting sites for many of the Red Sea specialties.

Resident Breeding Birds

There are about 47 species of birds known to breed in WGNP and adjoining regions. Thirty-three of these are desert-adapted species. The most commonly seen resident species in the desert are Brown-necked Raven, and Desert and Hoopoe larks. In the scattered human habitations, Palm, Pink-headed, and Collard doves can be seen.

Migration

WGNP falls on a major bird migration corridor. Millions of passerines and other small birds move in a broad front through the region every spring and autumn, with many species remaining to winter. The range of species encountered here includes some that are rarely seen elsewhere in Egypt, or for that matter in the entire Western Palaearctic region.

Figure 3 Without the use of binoculars, most migrating raptors appear to be dots in the sky

The most spectacular migration is that of soaring birds. Large birds of prey and storks migrate along the Eastern Desert mountain ridge utilizing the hot thermals rising from the desert. From February to June and from October to December of each year these birds can be seen soaring anywhere along the Eastern Desert mountains; but the best places to see these birds are at bottlenecks near Gebel el-Zeit, north of Hurghada, at Ain Sukhna, and Suez, where these birds tend to concentrate in larger numbers.

Wintering

The number of species that spend the winter in WGNP and adjacent regions is modest, but includes several species of interest that are seldom seen in other parts of the country. These include Asian Desert Warbler, Menetries's Warbler, Cyprus Warbler, Kurdish Wheatear, Isabelline Shrike, and Siberian Stonechat, which are regularly seen in the region. Grey Hypocolius is a rare winter visitor, but has been recorded recently three times in the region.

When to Visit

The best times to visit are in spring (March, April, May) and autumn (September, October, November), when the spectacle of migration is at its peak. Spring is particularly good, since the local breeders become engaged in courtship and are easier to see. However, both winter and summer have their specialties as well. In summer many of the migrant seabirds return to their nesting grounds on the Red Sea islands; while some species of interest are found during winter. In addition the cooler winter climate makes it easier and safer to penetrate deep into the desert to see some of the local residents as well.

Desert Birdwatching Strategies

Desert birdwatching involves going out either very early in the morning or very late in the day. This is particularly so for true desert species and during the hotter part of the year, when all activity stops in the middle of the day. Sea and shore birds are not affected by this schedule as much. Particular species such as Sandgrouse are very time specific and can be best seen at their watering holes either early in the morning or just after sunset (Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse).

Visiting waterholes is a good way to see resident desert birds, but one needs to be careful not to over stay and cause a disturbance to local wildlife.

A good way to see some nocturnal activity is to stay at a strategically selected spot (near a water hole or a well-vegetated *wadi*) until after dark. Listening carefully for owl calls, the beating wings of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse going to drink, or look for the silhouette of a fluttering Nightjar against the sky. A powerful flashlight is an important piece of equipment to have for nocturnal wildlife viewing. Spending the night in the desert is the perfect way to maximize opportunities to see nocturnal birds and to encounter the early morning bird activity.

Look out for larks, wheatears, and other open desert inhabitants, such as coursers and sandgrouse when driving along desert roads (but keep your eye on the road!). These birds often come close to the road in search of spilled grain and to feed on vegetation growing close to the roadside.

Most migrants are widely distributed and opportunistic and will utilize any apparently good habitat. Manmade habitats in hotel gardens, sewage works, and even rubbish tips can act as amazing migrant traps (sometimes with detrimental consequences, unfortunately). Soaring migrants are usually concentrated along the first high peaks parallel to the Red Sea. During

the migration seasons, frequently scan the sky—there is usually something flying overhead, though often at extremely high elevations.

Visiting the offshore islands can provide the opportunity to get closer looks at some seabirds, which are scarce near shore. However, the Red Sea is rather poor in pelagic species and one would not expect to add many species to his list on a deep sea trip.

Figure 4 Green Heron

TARGET SPECIES

This is a practical chapter with directions as to the best localities and times to see the main target bird species of the region.

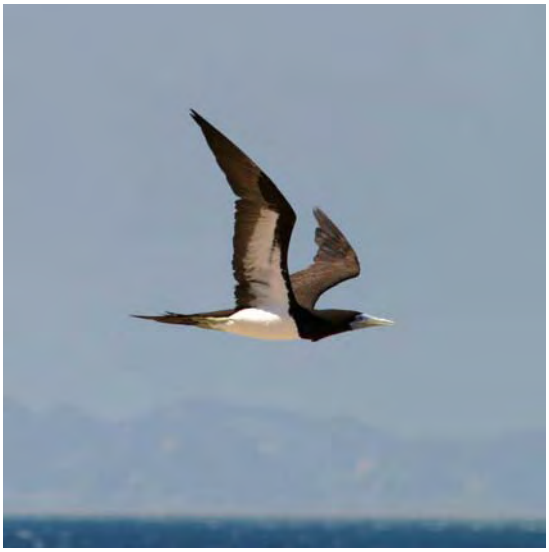
Resident and Breeding Specialties

Not all local resident or breeding species are listed here, but the inventory concentrates on those that have a particular appeal to the Western Palaearctic lister, with limited opportunity to see these species elsewhere in the Western Palaearctic region (the western portion of the Palaearctic, one of the eight ecozones of Earth).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

This illusive and secretive seabird breeds in WGNP on both Wadi el-Gemal Island and on Showarit Island (part of the Hamata Archipelago). On both these islands old nests have been found in crevices in sea cliffs. However, no birds were seen.

Figure 5 The Brown Booby can be frequently seen near Wadi el-Gemal Island



Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Not known to breed in WGNP, however there is a large population nesting on St John's Island, off Ras Banas. The species can be seen flying off shore around Wadi el-Gemal Island, particularly over the deep waters to the east of the island.

Green Heron *Butorides striata*

Fairly common but localized breeding resident, found primarily in mangroves and adjacent reef top flats and along rocky shorelines. Can be seen by scanning open reef top flats near mangroves during low tide, but it most often reveals itself by the distinctive squawking call emitted as it dashes from one mangrove clump to the next.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*

This is a rare localized resident breeder and casual migrant. They are usually associated with the mangroves of the region, where they are known to nest sporadically. These birds can be secretive and difficult to see despite their large size, but are often spotted on reef top flats not far from mangrove stands. In WGNP it is reported from the Hamata, Qurat el-Hertway and Wadi Lahmi mangroves, and is often seen commuting between these mangrove stands. It has also been seen at Marsa Hemira Mangrove.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

This is an uncommon, localized resident breeder. The Red Sea race *archarii* is the one found breeding here. Almost every mangrove stand along the Red Sea will have one or two pairs of these birds.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

A common resident, this heron breeds in all mangrove stands of the Egyptian Red Sea. White morph birds outnumber dark morph birds by about one to four.

Figure 6 Western Reef Heron

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

This common resident breeder breeds in most mangrove stands and islands of the Egyptian Red Sea. There is a large old abandoned nest on the ground about 5 km south of Abu Ghusoon, indicating how peaceful and undisturbed the Red Sea coast must have been until quite recently. The species continues to flourish along the Red Sea and can be commonly

seen perched on billboards and other manmade structures along the coast. The nests are quite easily accessible, particularly on the islands. Please do not approach active nests.

Figure 7 Osprey is a common inhabitant of the Red Sea coast—here one is hovering over the Hamata Mangrove

Lammergeyer Gypaetus barbatus

This is a rare resident breeder. At least one pair probably breeds in WGNP. Single adults have been seen in the past 5 years near Sheikh el-Shazeli, near the summit of Gebel Hamata, and on the coast just north of the Shams Alam Hotel. Local inhabitants describe it as resident and are familiar with its bone-breaking practices. It is likely to be encountered in the vicinity of Sheikh el-Shazeli, particularly after the festivities of the Muslim celebration of *Eid el-Adha*, when remains of slaughtered animals are disposed of in the neighboring desert.

Figure 8 Lappet-faced Vulture is the largest flying bird known in Egypt

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*

This uncommon resident breeder can be found sporadically from Gebel Elba to WGNP, where at least one pair breeds. The best place to see the species is at Shalateen, where tens can be seen feeding on the carcasses of slaughtered camels in and near the town. It is often seen near the coastal highway, feeding on road kills. In WGNP, the species is frequently seen near Abu Ghusoon and at Sheikh el-Shazeli, particularly after the festivities of *Eid el-Adha*, when remains of slaughtered animals are disposed of in the neighboring desert. Unfortunately, the species is declining due to increasing conflicts with man. In an attempt to control feral dogs around Shalateen, local authorities used poisoned bait, which in turn killed many vultures.

Birds feeding on carcasses lying very close to roads are often killed by traffic. If you see any persecution of these threatened birds please report it to Park Rangers. You can contribute to the species survival (if you can stomach it) by dragging away any carcasses lying too close to roads.

Figure 9 Lappet-faced Vultures after feeding on a camel carcass on the outskirts of Shalateen

Figure 10 Egyptian Vulture is frequently seen at carcasses throughout the region

Egyptian Vulture
Neophron percnopterus

This uncommon resident breeder and migrant breeds sporadically from Gebel Elba to WGNP, but there are not certain breeding records in the park. They are common at Shalateen at camel carcasses and waste dumps in and near the town. In WGNP, the species is most frequently seen near Sheikh el-Shazeli. Small numbers migrate in autumn and spring and can bee seen throughout the region.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*

This much sought-after species is rare and localized in WGNP. It is not certain if it is a resident breeding bird or a casual visitor from further south from the Gebel Elba vicinity. There is only one certain observation of the species at Magal Um Sweih in the year 2000. However, local residents know the species and see it frequently, saying that it breeds locally around Gebel Hamata. WGNP has a good population of Hyrax, which is the species' main food item, which supports the concept that they might breed locally. However, there could not be more than one or two pairs in the region.

Figure 11 Adult Bonelli's Eagle soaring near the summit of Gebel Hamata

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

A rare resident breeder and migrant, it can be readily seen around the higher elevations of Gebel Hamata and Gebel Sartut, where two or three pair have recently been found breeding. The species can be seen throughout the year and local inhabitants describe it as resident. The species is also known to nest further south at Bir Abraq, Gebel Garf, and Gebel Elba.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

A rare resident breeder and uncommon migrant, one pair nested at the entrance of Wadi el-Gemal in the spring of 2000, and the species is infrequently seen in the Park. Wintering and migrant birds augment local birds, which are much paler than their northern compatriots.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*

Rare, probably a resident breeder, it is seen primarily on the coastal plain, especially near Abu Ghusoon.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

An uncommon resident breeder and migrant, this species used to be quite abundant along the Red Sea coast, but populations have declined sharply as a result of the illegal falcon trade. It can be seen sporadically, primarily on the coastal plain, but also inland.

Figure 12 Several hundred pairs of Sooty Falcon breed on the islands of the Wadi el-Gemal National Park

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

A common migrant breeder, several hundred pairs nest on the islands of Wadi el-Gemal and the Hamata Archipelago. Birds return to Egypt in April and can be seen sporadically throughout the summer along the coast and inland, particularly at dusk hawking for insects and even bats. They start breeding in autumn between August and November to make use of the autumn bird migration. At breeding, birds are concentrated on the islands, but adults can be frequently seen hunting on the mainland. Landing on islands with breeding colonies (during the breeding season) is prohibited, but excellent observations can be made from boats offshore.

Figure 13 Hume's Tawny Owl photographed at the entrance of Wadi el-Gemal

Photo © Gabriel Mikhail, used with permission

Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*

This is an uncommon but widespread resident breeder. The species is secretive and thinly distributed to the extent that its occurrence in the Eastern Desert (and Africa) was only confirmed less than 10 years ago. It inhabits rugged mountainous deserts, preferring narrow *wadis* with steep sides and some trees or oases-like vegetation, but can also be found in very barren areas. It is most easily seen in the spring and summer (March–June), when birds are highly territorial and readily respond to even crude imitation of their call; which is a three syllable note (hooooo, ho-ho, ho-ho). Birds will often come quite close (a strong flashlight will be needed to have a good view of the bird), but please do not over use the call as it disrupts the bird's behavior.

The species is most readily found in the well-vegetated portions of Wadi el-Gemal, and has been seen in Wadi el-Rada, around Gebel Hamata, but can be expected in almost any suitable *wadi* in the region. Just listen for its call when camping in any of the mountains of the Eastern Desert.

Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi*

A relatively uncommon but widespread resident breeder, this species prefers fairly well vegetated *wadis* with steep sides. Usually moving around in small groups, the Sand Partridge is often hared before it is seen. It spends most of the day on rugged mountainsides among broken rocks and boulders, where it is difficult to spot. The best times to see these birds is early and late in the day, when they descend to *wadi* beds to feed on open ground. They are most often seen near water holes. Wadi el-Gemal is a good place to see them, especially at Bir Wadi el-Gemal. Bir el-Rada is another good place.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

An uncommon and localized resident breeder, they inhabit rugged mountainous desert with Acacia scrub. The species is best seen at or near waterholes. Their distinct calls can be heard ringing in the hollow *wadis* as they arrive in small groups to drink, just after dusk and well after darkness. If you wait quietly (not too close to the waterhole) the birds will land right next to you. You will need a flashlight to see them properly. The best waterholes in WGNP are Bir Wadi el-Gemal, Magal Um Sweih, Bir Sartut, and Bir Hafafit. The species can also be seen opportunistically in some of the *wadis* during the day, but they are very well camouflaged and difficult to spot even at close range, as they sit motionless on the ground. Wadi Shawab, Wadi Amira, and Wadi Abu Ghusoon are good places to look for them on the *wadi* bed.

Figure 14 Male Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse feeding near native houses in Wadi Abu Ghusoon

Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles coronatus*

Rather uncommon but widespread resident breeder, the species inhabits open hilly desert. They are most often heard before seen, calling high above one's head early in the morning. They are best seen at or near waterholes, where they congregates to drink early in the morning. The best waterholes to seem them in WGNP are Bir Wadi el-Gemal, Magal Um Sweih, Bir (Wadi Ghadeer), Bir Sartut, and Bir Hafafit. Perhaps the best waterhole in the region, is at Bir Beda, along the main highway to Qift, just 5 km west of Quseir. Here hundreds of birds congregate every morning to drink and can be seen just from the road. Crowned Sandgrouse can also infrequently be seen along the Safaga–Qena, Quseir–Qift, and Marsa Alam–Edfu highways.

African Collard Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

This is an African species of tropical semi-deserts and Acacia scrub, which seems to be undergoing a range expansion similar to its cousin, the Collard Dove. In fact, the two species coexist in WGNP and can be seen together at the Shams Alam Hotel. It is also seen now in coastal developments, as well as penetrating desert *wadis* (more so than the Collard Dove), where it has been found around Gebel Hamata and at Sheikh el-Shazeli.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

This is a rare and localized migrant and a possible breeder. The intertidal flats surrounding the southern margin of the Hamata Mangrove is the best and most convenient place to see the species in the whole Western Palaearctic at almost all times of the year. It is best to visit this site during low tide, when large intertidal flats are exposed. Stop at the southernmost edge of the mangrove stand and look at the exposed white sand spit beyond (east of) the mangroves. The Crab Plovers are often standing there, right at the edge of the reef flat. You need strong binoculars (or better a scope) to make out the plovers, which appear plain white from the distance.

The Crab Plover has been seen frequently on the intertidal flats of Wadi el-Gemal Island and on the Hamata Archipelago, and on the intertidal flats around Shalateen. It is not clear what the status of the species is in this region, but it almost certainly nests in small numbers in the southern Egyptian Red Sea, as recently fledged young have been observed during summer in the region.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*

This common migrant breeder can be found in the region between April and October. In WGNP it breeds in a small dense colony on a small sandy spit just north of Wadi el-Gemal Island and on the Hamata Archipelago. The species is sometimes difficult to see from the mainland, but a boat trip towards Wadi el-Gemal or Hamata Islands in the summer months will secure this species.

Figure 15 **A mixed colony of Lesser-crested Terns and White-cheeked Terns on one of the islands of the Hamata Archipelago**

Figure 16 **Bridled Tern can be seen during the summer near the Hamata Archipelago**

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*

A fairly common migrant breeder, it can be found in the region between May and October breeding on the Hamata Archipelago. The species is difficult or impossible to see from the mainland. A boat trip around Hamata Islands in the summer months will secure this species.

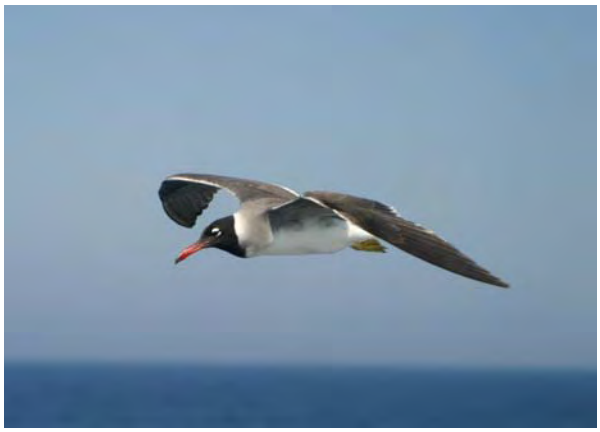
Lesser-crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Fairly common in summer, this species breeds on some islands in the Hamata Archipelago.

Swift Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

Rather rare in WGNP, it is seen offshore, mostly in winter. It breeds largely on islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez.

Figure 17 White-eyed Gull is essentially a Red Sea endemic



White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*

This is a common resident and migrant breeder found throughout the year in the region, but with some regional dispersal. Most adults migrate further south during winter months, leaving behind many juveniles and immature birds. Any visitor to the Egyptian Red Sea is certain to see this species with ease. The breeding season on the islands of WGNP starts in June and lasts into September. This is the best time to observe this most beautiful and graceful of all gulls. One of the best places to get a close look at these creatures in summer is in hotel swimming pools, where these birds have learned to come and drink in droves!

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*

A fairly common resident breeder, it is found year round, but in smaller numbers than the White-eyed Gull. This species is especially common in WGNP and can be easily seen at the beach at the Shams Alam hotel and at Qulan and Hamata.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

This is probably the commonest and most widespread resident breeding bird inhabiting mountainous areas of the region. You are certain to see this species in WGNP even if you try not to! Seen almost everywhere and at any time, except on the open coastal plain where the closely related Bar-tailed Desert Lark is found.

Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*

This species is less common and much less widely distributed than the Desert Lark. It is a resident breeder, mostly encountered on the coastal plain, well away from the inland hills, and is often seen along the coastal highway. It is also found on some of the inland plains, such as those found along the road to Sheikh el-Shazeli or Aswan.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

A common resident breeder, inhabiting open sandy plains, and best seen on the coastal highway.

Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*

A species of African affinity, which reaches its northernmost distribution in Egypt. It is a species of Savannah and tropical semi-deserts, with erratic distribution. In years of good rainfall and good pasture it is found breeding commonly all the way north to Shalateen (it has been recorded at Safaga as a vagrant), but in drier years it retreats to the environs of Gebel Elba, and even there it might disappear some years. Look for it at and near the camel market of Shalateen and on the outskirts of the town.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

A widespread but rather uncommon resident breeder and migrant, it is an inhabitant of moderately vegetated *wadis* in hilly and mountainous desert. In winter, fairly common along the coast, where local populations are augmented with birds from further north. Wadi el-Gemal—particularly in its downstream portion—is a good place to see this species, but any of the vegetated *wadis* of the region could hold the species.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

A rather rare resident breeder with patchy distribution, this is a bird of sparsely vegetated mountainous desert. In WGNP it has been seen in Wadi el-Gemal, Wadi Nugrus, and Wadi Sekit. It is often seen feeding on parasites that infest camels. Look for them on hillsides and slopes, but not on the flat *wadi* bottom.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

A relatively uncommon but widespread resident breeder, this is a bird of mountainous and hilly desert. Being a granivoure (seed-eating bird) its distribution in the desert is rather erratic and tends to be associated with good rainfall and the presence of good grain-producing grasses, particularly *Panicum turgidum*. The best place to see these small lovely desert birds is at or near waterholes; otherwise they can be rather difficult to see. They are small and well camouflaged; their distinct nasal call is the only thing that reveals them, but then they are usually a small dot zipping between mountaintops! Bir Wadi el-Gemal and Bir el-Rada are good places to see them.

Mountain (House) Bunting *Emberiza striolata*

This is a rare and erratic bird in WGNP, which might breed locally. It has been only observed twice in the Park during years of good rain. Like Trumpeter Finch, its distribution is influenced greatly by the availability of good grain-producing grasses, particularly *Panicum turgidum*. The best place to anticipate this bird is near waterholes. The species can be seen more regularly at Bir Abraq and in the Gebel Elba region.

Migrant and Wintering Specialties and Rarities

The southern Red Sea, including WGNP, is a great place to see some rarities that are marginally represented in the Western Palaearctic, not only because of its strategic location, but also because it is an under-explored region, a sort of frontier region for birdwatchers. Many vagrants have been documented in the region in recent years, including, Black-bush Robin, Grey Hypocolius, and Cyprus Warbler. Some other rarities like Ethiopian Swallow

and Slender-billed Curlew have been reported in WGNP, but not well documented or substantiated.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

The species has been reported once from the Red Sea region at Bir Beda, west of Quseir. However, the species has been observed increasingly frequently in the Middle East and should be looked for among streams of migrating birds of prey.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*

This Palaearctic migrant is probably more widespread than reported in the Red Sea region. This is most likely because birders look for them in the wrong habitats. The species has been recorded at El Gouna, and on the outskirts of Hurghada previously, mainly on desert plains. In fact, the species has been found on desert plains around Shalateen and Gebel Elba in years of good rainfall.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

An erratic visitor, frequently observed in the region, probably breeds sporadically where conditions are right. Mostly seen in hotel gardens in spring and autumn. It has been seen several times in the Shams Alam Hotel gardens, Hurghada, Safaga and Shalateen. It should be looked for in well-vegetated places throughout the region.

Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*

A rather rare but widespread winter visitor that can be found secreting in small desert shrubs anywhere in WGNP, and has been seen on Wadi el-Gemal Island. Look among small shrubs rather than trees or large bushes for this species. One effective way to detect the presence of Desert Warblers is to look for wheatears (particularly Desert Wheatear with which it shares similar habitats), which are often chased from bush to bush by these warblers for some unknown reason.

Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*

A rare winter visitor to the Eastern Desert and Southern Sinai, with the largest numbers being found on Gebel Elba. Look for this species in *wadis* with good Acacia and Tamarisk cover, such as Wadi el-Gemal, rather than in hotel gardens. It prefers short bushes, not large trees.

Menetries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*

A rare winter visitor to the Eastern Desert, with the largest numbers being found on Gebel Elba. Look for this species in *wadis* with good Acacia and Tamarisk cover, such as Wadi el-Gemal, rather than in hotel gardens. It prefers short bushes over large trees.

Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*

This sub-Saharan rare erratic visitor has been seen increasingly frequently along the Red Sea coast, probably mostly due to the increasing number of birders visiting the region, as

well as, the availability of more vegetation cover in the form of hotel gardens. Since 2000, the species has been recorded at El Gouna, Shams Alam Hotel, Shalateen, and Gebel Elba.

Figure 18 **Kurdish (Red-tailed) Wheatear is a rare winter visitor to the Eastern Desert. This bird was found at Shalateen**

Kurdish (Red-tailed) Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthoprymna*

A rare winter visitor thinly distributed through the region, although quite common on Gebel Elba. Mostly found in the high mountains in small *wadis* with steep sides, usually where there is some reasonable vegetation cover. It has also been observed in some of the Red Sea coastal urban centers, where it prefers areas of abandoned buildings.

Figure 19 **Siberian Stonechat at Shams Alam Hotel**

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

A fairly common migrant and winter visitor, every hotel garden south of Marsa Alam has a few of these birds. Small numbers are also found in well-vegetated *wadis* such as Wadi el-Gemal. The Siberian Stonechat was classified as a subspecies of the Common Stonechat (as *Saxicola torquata maurus*), but DNA analysis, together with other evidence confirmed that this is a distinct species.

Figure 20 Isabelline Shrike at Shams Alam Hotel

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

A rather uncommon but regular migrant through the region, this shrike is mostly seen along the coastal highway in and near hotel gardens. A few individuals also spend the winter locally.

Grey Hypocolius Hypocolius ampelinus

This Middle Eastern endemic has been seen on a few occasions recently during winter in the Red Sea region, at the Quseir Movenpick Hotel, and at the Shams Alam Hotel. The species is probably a rare but regular winter visitor, which should be anticipated and looked for.

BIRDWATCHING LOCATIONS

This section reviews different locations and routes for birdwatching in WGNP and the adjacent region, classified according to ease of access, whether by foot, boat, 2-wheel drive vehicle, or 4-wheel drive vehicle.

Offshore Islands

All marine islands of the Egyptian Red Sea are protected. WGNP includes four small islands, most famous of which is Wadi el-Gemal Island, located just offshore of the Shams Alam Hotel. Further south offshore of Hamata is an archipelago composed of four small coralline islands: Siyul, Showarit, Um Ladid, and Mahabis, mentioned in ascending order of size. Still further south and further offshore there are two important islands for breeding seabirds: St John (Zabargad) and Rocky islands (both located outside the WGNP boundary, but protected as part of the Elba National Park).

All of these islands (except for Rocky Island) are considered Important Bird Areas (IBAs), because they hold internationally important populations of breeding seabirds. There are large colonies of White-eyed Gull, Sooty Gull, Lesser-crested Tern, Bridled Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, and smaller numbers of Red-billed Tropicbird, Osprey, Western Reef Heron, Green Heron, Spoonbill, and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. The islands also hold probably the world's greatest concentrations of breeding Sooty Falcon, which are an amazing spectacle to see during their breeding season in autumn. Crab Plover is seen throughout the year in very small numbers on the Hamata Archipelago, and is likely to be breeding there, but this is not confirmed yet.

Probably the best time to visit these islands is during late summer and early autumn. September and October are probably the best. This provides the opportunity to see most of the summer breeding specialties, without causing grave disturbance to their breeding grounds (as most young would be fledged or near fledging). Also at this time one could witness the spectacle of breeding Sooty Falcons cooperative hunting maneuvers, targeting the bounty of Palaearctic migrants heading south for the winter.

Needless to say, the islands and their breeding birds are very sensitive to visitors, and visiting is strictly regulated by the Park Rangers. If for some reason you do find yourself on one of these islands during the hot summer months, please help protect breeding birds by keeping your distance from their nests. During summer, the sun is so strong that if you disturb the parents from a nest with eggs or small chicks, the intense heat from the sun will kill them within just a couple of minutes. Visiting during the cooler parts of the day, walking on the shoreline and keeping away from the interior of the island are good ways to minimize disturbance. Please inform and advise others to do the same. For bird watching purposes, you do not really need to land on the islands at all. You can get very good views of the birds you need from your boat.

Access with 2-Wheel Drive Cars and on Foot

Along the Coastal Highway: The Coastal Plain

The coastal plain is flat, sandy, and featureless in most parts. It is a good place to see some open desert species, particularly Hoopoe Lark and Bar-tailed Lark. The latter is rather difficult to see elsewhere in the region. This is also a good place to see some of the resident falcons: Barbary, Lanner, and Sooty falcons. Look on pylons and near the shore. During migration, harriers might be seen, as well as flocks of migratory larks and frequently the Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor*.

Wadi el-Gemal Delta

The Wadi el-Gemal Delta, located among prominent Date and Dom palms immediately to the east of the coastal highway, has a small freshwater spring, several brackish ponds, and rare swamp vegetation. It is an excellent spot to see many songbirds and waterbirds in a pristine natural setting. Rarities of interest recently observed in this location include Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* and Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*. Gazelles *Gazella dorcas* often come to drink at the spring, so keep an eye out for them. The mosquitoes here are rather nasty and can make your visit unpleasant, especially if there is no wind.

You can reach here by walking along the coast from the Shams Alam Hotel, or by parking near the Dom Palms *Hypaene thebica* near the highway.

Figure 21 Swamp vegetation, Wadi el-Gemal delta

Mangroves

Mangroves of the Red Sea hold a set of typical species, including Reef Heron, Green Heron, Spoonbill (of the Red Sea race *archarii*), Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, and Osprey, which breed in almost every mangrove in the Egyptian Red Sea. Goliath Heron also occurs sporadically in mangroves south of Marsa Alam. During summer, these mangrove often hide within them quite a few straggling Palaearctic migrants; these might be worth closer examination, as they could include some unique rarities.

There are three primary stands of Mangroves *Avicennia marina* in WGNP and the adjacent region that are easily accessible from the main coastal highway. These are Qulan Mangrove, Hamata Mangrove, and Lahmi Mangrove. Marsa Hemira Mangrove on the road to Shalateen is also accessible.

Hamata Mangrove

This is one of the most extensive mangrove stands in Egypt. The intertidal flats surrounding this mangrove attract many migrating shorebirds. This is one of the best locations to see Crab Plovers and Goliath Herons in Egypt. Odd Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* have been observed here.

Figure 22 Mangroves at Qulan

Wadi Lahmi Mangrove

This large and dense mangrove is the best known accessible place to see Goliath Heron along the Egyptian Red Sea. Look for the bird on the reef flat surrounding the mangrove. Visit the Lahmi Bay Diving Center for easy access to the mangrove, or approach from the north from the incomplete Aqua Sea development.

Marsa Hemira Mangroves

This mangrove is located 40 km north of Shalateen and can be easily seen from the coastal highway. Several tracks lead towards the mangrove, which has been heavily browsed by camels.

Shalateen Town and Adjacent Desert

Shalateen is the southern-most spot most visitors can reach along the Egyptian Red Sea without getting a military permit. This is a very exotic (yet new) town with a strong African flavor, and was a simple outpost for camel traders just 15 years ago.

Although the trip from WGNP of about 250 km is rather bland, Shalateen itself can add a few birds of interest to your trip list. The camel market attracts a good number of Lappet-faced Vultures and Egyptian Vultures (both in decline due to persecution), which feed on camel carcasses that get dumped all around the town. The sight of these large scavengers in the middle of town adds to the wild feel of the place. Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* have been seen as well during winter. Look in the sky to see where the vultures are circling, that is the best way to locate a dead camel.

Figure 23 Lappet-faced Vultures

Please inform Elba National Park Rangers (office located at the Park Visitor Center along the main road entering the town) if you find vultures being harassed, or feeding on carcasses very close to the main roads (which puts them at risk of being hit by traffic).

Other birds of prey include Lanner and Barbary Falcons, which are usually around. This is the northern-most outpost for Black-crowned Finch Larks (during years of good rainfall). Look for them around the camel market where they feed among the camel dung. The camel market and surrounding areas are also a good for other larks and wheatears. Kurdish Wheatear has been seen infrequently in winter and Black Bush Robin has been recorded among Acacia trees.

Inland Locations

These are sites that are accessible by regular 2-wheel drive vehicles or on foot. They are organized from north to south.

Bir Beida

Bir Beida is a small oasis of reeds growing around a an overflowing spring about 5 km west of the town of Quseir on the road to Qift in the Nile Valley. This small patch of vegetation is an excellent migrant trap during spring and autumn. It falls directly under the main bird of prey migratory rout (under normal wind conditions), and during hot periods of the migration seasons birds come down to drink in large numbers. It is also a good place to see Crowned Sandgrouse, which come to drink in the hundreds every morning. Other resident specialties seen here include the illusive Sand Partridge, Hooded Wheatear and Trumpeter Finch. Rarities seen here include Crested Honey Buzzard, Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, and Pale Rock Sparrow *Carpospiza brachydactyla*.

Although this site is very close to Quseir, it might be difficult for foreigners to reach because of security restrictions, which require travelers on certain highways heading to the Nile Valley to join convoys.

Sheikh el-Shazeli

This road trip will give you the chance to go into the interior of the Eastern Desert and get to real wilderness. The traffic is usually light, except during the Shazeli feast, when thousands of pilgrims visit the site. The trip starts from Marsa Alam on the Red Sea coast, heading west on the Edfu road. Foreigners should be able to use this road without a convoy if they mention that they are only going to Sheikh el-Shazeli (not Edfu). After about 40 km there is a junction with a road heading south to the village of Sheikh el-Shazeli. After about 110 km you reach a junction that takes you to Sheikh el-Shazeli (go left), or to the new Bernice–Aswan Road (go right). Sheikh el-Shazeli is a few kilometers beyond the junction. From here you could elect to go back to Marsa Alam, or go down the road further south (about 4 km) to another junction that can take you either to Bernice on the Red Sea coast, about 110 km away (go left) or to Aswan, about 220 km away (go right).

This road leading to Sheikh el-Shazeli provides a good opportunity to encounter typical desert species, such as Desert and Bar-tailed larks; Mourning, White-tailed, and Hooded wheatears; Crowned Sandgrouse, and Sand Partridge. Sheikh el-Shazeli it self is a migrant trap of sorts, with many passerines being attracted to the few trees and refuse tips around the village. Many of the resident birds of the surrounding desert come into the village in search for food: notable species include Trumpeter Finch, various wheatears, Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*, and Pink-headed Dove. This is also a good place to look for vultures such as Lappet-faced Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, and Lammergeyer; this is particularly true after the Shazeli Feast, which takes place during *Eid el-Adha*, one of the most important annual Muslim feasts, when many animals are slaughtered and their remains are disposed of in the surrounding desert.

Downstream Wadi el-Gemal

The downstream portion of the *wadi* perhaps supports the densest natural vegetation along the entire Egyptian Red Sea coast. Going upstream to the west of the highway, the vegetation is made primarily of dense Tamarisk bushes. During migration and in winter it is worth walking here in the early morning in search of songbirds, particularly warblers. This is a good place to look for wintering Desert, and possibly Menetries's and Cyprus Warblers as well. Other species to be expected include Mourning Wheatear, Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*, and Bar-tailed Desert Larks. Look out for Dorcas Gazelle or Cape Hare *Lepus capensis*.

You can reach here by walking along the coast from the Shams Alam Hotel, or by parking near the Dom Palms near the highway.

You can go a bit further upsteam into Wadi el-Gemal by taking the dirt track to Fustat Camp (24°39'09"N 35°02'39"). Starting west of the coastal highway immediately opposite the Ranger Headquarters, south of Shams Alam Hotel. This is a 5 km drive accessible by regular car. Park at the Camp and then walk upstream into the *wadi* (cars not allowed in). Here the *wadi* narrows and is enclosed by high mountains. Walk 2 km to the spot Fustat Camp has its nightly campfire (24°38'32"N 35° 1'51"E). This is a good spot to see Sand Partridge, which come to feed on scraps early in the morning. This part of the *wadi* is the best and most accessible place to look for Hume's Tawny Owls.

Wadi Abu Ghusoon

This is the shortest, easiest, and potentially the most rewarding of all the routes accessible to regular 2-wheel drive vehicles; however the road is in bad shape, with most of the asphalt worn off, and in parts could be challenging for a car with low clearance.

The road starts from within the Abu Ghusoon village on the Red Sea coast, heading straight west towards the mountains, where an active Alamanite mine is located. It initially crosses the wide open downstream part of Wadi Abu Ghusoon with dwarf, wind-stunted Acacia trees, where some open desert species can be expected, such as Hoopoe Lark and Bar-tailed Lark.

After 9 kms, the mountains close in and the *wadi* takes a narrow winding form, with many large Acacias and good shrub cover. Here some of the typical rocky desert species can be seen, including Whit-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Trumpeter Finch, Desert Lark, and Sand Partridge. Lanner and Barbary Falcons have been seen here on several occasions. This is a potentially excellent place to look for Hume's Tawny Owl.

After 15 kms, the road veers away from the *wadi* onto an open plain. This is a good place to look for Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse during the day. The birds tend to move around on the ground between the scattered huts of local residents, feeding among the droppings of domestic animals.

From here you could go either go towards Bir Sartut, to Wadi el-Gemal, or Wadi Rada (see proposed 4 X 4 locations), or go back to the coastal highway if you do not have off-road capacity.

Bernice–Aswan Road

This is a new road that is not yet marked on any existing road maps of Egypt. This road starts from within the town of Bernice. After crossing a 9 km open plain, the road traverses 30 km of interesting wild and not well explored mountainous area, which harbors the typical assemblage of desert species and is likely to be a good area to see birds of prey and Hume's Tawny Owl.

Beyond the first 40 km, the road enters a rather open desert and after about 70 km a junction is reached, with an option to go to Sheikh el-Shazeli (a further 7 km ahead) or turn left to go to Aswan (about 220 km). The road to Aswan is not explored yet, but is unlikely to have exceptional avian habitats. However, it provides a potentially convenient link to the Nile Valley, traversing wild and pristine desertscape, and there are no security restrictions on the use of this road at the time of writing this guide.

Bir Gahelya

This relatively short dead-end road offers an opportunity to sample the interior of the southern Eastern Desert with a regular car. This detour of no more than 100 km can be done in conjunction with visiting Shalateen. Hume's Tawny Owl is expected in the mountains, while Lichtenstein's and Crowned Sandgrouse, along with Trumpeter Finches, and probably Mountain Bunting are expected around Bir Gahelya.

The junction to this road is located 70 km south of Bernice at 23°24'23"N 35°30'24"E. After crossing a rather featureless 9 km wide costal plain, the road enters the mountains and continues for a further 35 km, where it ends at Bir Gahelya, which is a small settlement based around a well.

4-Wheel Drive Access Only

These suggested off-road localities only provide general directions and are not meant as navigational aids. To go off road any where in WGNP you are expected to take a local **Community Guard** with you. These guards know the park well and can show you exactly where the birds and other wildlife are, saving you time and effort, as well as providing safety and traditional knowledge. As a rule, always have two cars in your party, register with the Park Rangers, and take one of the local community guards before going off road in WGNP.

Mid-stream Wadi el-Gemal

Wadi el-Gemal has some of the richest vegetation in the entire Eastern Desert, composed of *Acacia, Tamarix, Balanites,* and *Salvadora* thickets. Besides its importance for resident species, this is an excellent place to look for wintering and migrant warblers. Wadi el-Gemal is also one of the best places to find Hume's Tawny Owl.

Leave the coastal highway at the Ranger Outpost at Wadi Um el-Abas (24°31'24"N 35°08'04"E), through Wadi Mukhatata (17 km), which leads to the mid-stream of Wadi el-Gemal.

Birds of Gebel Elba

Gebel Elba represents an Afro-tropical enclave, where several African bird species have their northernmost limits just in the Western Palaearctic, including until recently (1980s) exciting birds such as the Ostrich, which is now locally extirpated from the region (but there is always a chance they could move north again from Sudan). For this reason Gebel Elba is high on the list of any visitor to Egypt. Unfortunately, Gebel Elba falls in a region that is inaccessible to non-Egyptians without a military permit, which is currently impossible to obtain; this, however, could change in the future as many parts of Egypt have opened up and become much more accessible over recent years.

Gebel Elba (1,435 m) enjoys higher precipitation than any of the other mountains in the region, primarily because of its proximity to the sea and its favourable position in the face of moisture-laden northeasterly winds. Because of the abundance of moisture and its geographic position, Gebel Elba supports a rich biological diversity unparalleled in any other similar desert habitat in Egypt.

Some 41 bird species are known or thought to breed in the immediate vicinity of Elba. These include species not breeding elsewhere in Egypt, such as: Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, Namaqua Dove, Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulva*, Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, Black-crowned Finch Lark, Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus*, Red Sea Warbler *Sylvia leucomelaena*, Rosy-patched Shrike *Rhodophoneus cruentus*, Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, and possibly African Silverbill *Euodice cantans*, and Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*. The area also holds breeding populations of several birds of prey that are rare or have sharply declined throughout the remainder of their range in Egypt. These are Lammergeyer, Egyptian Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle.

Figure 24 Nugrus

Nugrus and Sekit

The ancient Roman mining villages and temples located in Wadi Nugrus and Sekit are a traditional venue for any visitor to WGNP. Although these sites are not exceptionally good for birds, the trip to these sites takes you through good areas, such as Wadi el-Gemal, with the option of making a detour to Bir Wadi el-

Gemal (see accounts for these sites). The ruins at Nugrus and Sekit are good places for tough desert inhabitants such as Hooded Wheatear, Mourning Wheatear, and Desert Lark.

Continue along the midstream part of Wadi el-Gemal for some 20 km. When you reach the Ranger Outpost at the *wadi* junction, follow Wadi Nugrus. Another 2 km further up this *wadi*, Wadi Sekit branches off to the right.

Figure 25 Sekit

Bir Wadi el-Gemal

This is perhaps the largest and most accessible water sources (to visitors) in WGNP. The well itself is deep and not directly accessible to wildlife, but birds come to feed and drink from spilled water and scraps left behind by users. This is a good place to see Sand Partridge, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Trumpeter Finch, and probably the best place to see a Mountain Bunting (if they are around).

To get to Bir Wadi el-Gemal, continue along the main course of Wadi el-Gemal for about 16 km beyond the Ranger Outpost.

Figure 26 Roman Ruins in Sekit

Magal Um Sweih

Magal means small waterhole in the local dialect of native Ababda inhabiting the region. There are a number of these extremely small waterholes, some only the size of a cup, which are very important for wildlife. Magal Um Sweih is the largest and most accessible of these, which is also used by

locals for domestic animals. This is the only spot Verreaux's Eagle has been observed in WGNP.

Gebel Hamata

Gebel Hamata is the second tallest mountain in the Eastern Desert and thus enjoys a slightly higher rainfall than the surrounding desert. The best ways to approach Gebel Hamata from the coast is either through Wadi el-Rada or through Wadi Abu Ghusoon. The general mountain area is good for resident birds of prey and for soaring bird migration.

Bir Sartut

Figure 27 Bir Sartut

Bir Sartut is a permanent brackish water source at the foothills of Gebel Hamata. It is composed of a series of small waterholes scattered along the upstream part of Wadi Sartut. These waterholes attract a variety of resident birds, particularly Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Sand Partridge, and Trumpeter Finch, all of which come here to drink. This is also one of the best places to see resident Bonelli's Eagles and Lammergeyers.

Bir Sartut falls immediately on the main route for the soaring bird of prey migration. It is an excellent locality to get close up views of migrant soaring birds of prey, which come down to drink at the waterholes particularly during hotter times of the migration seasons.

Starting from Abu Ghusoon Village on the coast, follow Wadi Abu Ghusoon's broken asphalt for about 17 km, then turn right to join the main track up Wadi Abu Ghusoon. Merge left to Wadi Sartut and follow the track (about 17 km) to its end. Park your vehicle and walk approximately 500 m until you meet the first of the pools.

Bir El Rada

This is a deep well, not accessible to wildlife, and it may be dry at the time of writing. It is a good place to see some typical desert species including Sand Partridge, Trumpeter Finch, and Desert Lark, which come to the well in search of food and drink particularly early and late in the day. Hume's Tawny Owl has been recorded here several times. The well is only 15 km west of the town of Hamata in Wadi Rada, en-route to Gebel Hamata.

BIRDING FROM YOUR HOTEL ROOM

Hotel gardens are some of the best places to watch migrants, especially songbirds, along the Red Sea coast. These gardens represent little verdant oases along the harsh desert coast, which attract the migrants moving through the region. These migrant traps provide excellent opportunities to see a large number of species, particularly small migrants, at close range and from the comfort of your own hotel grounds. Many secretive and illusive species, difficult to see under normal conditions, can be easily observed in these migrant traps.

The quality and suitability of hotel gardens varies greatly according to several general factors:

- **Age:** The older the better as vegetation is more mature and complex and local species have a better chance to be established.
- **Complexity:** The more complex and varied the vegetation, the more diversity of species can be expected and better hiding places for them are available.
- **Species of plants used:** Certain plant species are more beneficial and useful for birds than others. In general, native species are notably much more attractive than exotic ones. Acacia and Tamarisk are the best for birds. Flowering trees are also attractive to birds as they attract many small insects. Unfortunately, most native trees and shrubs are regarded as weeds and are regularly eliminated from gardens.
- **Isolation:** A single isolated garden in the desert has a greater attraction power for migrant birds, than a string of closely spaced gardens. However, a larger habitat area could attract a greater number of permanent residents and retain visitors for longer periods.
- **Availability of open water:** The presence of open water could attract many wetland species, such as rails and small waders.
- **Degree of manicuring:** As a rule, highly manicured gardens are not very hospitable to birds. A good example of this is Makadi Bay, which has large gardens that are almost devoid of bird life.
- **Intensity of use of pesticides:** Unfortunately, many of the hotels on the Red Sea use pesticides rather intensively and haphazardly, which hugely reduces their value for wildlife, eliminating all insect and reptile life and often turning their gardens into a real death trap for migrant birds.

Following is a review of some of the best hotel gardens along the Red Sea (from north to south):

El-Gouna

This sprawling complex of hotels and up-market residential areas located 20 km north of Hurghada has extensive green areas, including golf courses and good tree cover. These grounds have proven to be an excellent birding spot for passerines, particularly pipits, wagtails, wheatears, and waders that sprawl over the open golf courses. Soaring migrants that pass over the area sometimes land in their thousands. White storks and birds of prey often land and rest on the golf courses, especially during the hotter time of the year. The remnant mangroves found in some of the waterways interspersing this development often hold a good representative collection of waders and herons, including Green and Reef herons.

The golf courses and surrounding flat deserts are a good place to look for Caspian Plover, which has been seen during spring migration. Other rarities seen at El-Gouna recently include Pied Stone Chat *Saxicola caprata*, Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*, Sociable Plover *Vanellus gregarius*, and Black-bush Robin.

Another area of interest is the El-Gouna farms located on the other side of the main highway immediately west of El-Gouna at the base of some low hills and clearly visible from the highway. This recently-established farm area has a dense tree cover and is an excellent migrant trap. Bird of prey migration would be more evident here than at El-Gouna. The hills behind the farm are home to resident Pharaohs Eagle Owls *Bubo ascalaphus*, as well as a variety of resident rocky desert species.

Magawish

This is one of the oldest resorts on the Egyptian Red Sea. It is a fairly good place to see birds in the middle of Hurghada and has quite large gardens, mature trees, and some scruffy neglected areas that can be good for migrants.

Movenpick Quseir

Besides being one of the best managed hotels on the Red Sea, the rather small gardens of this hotel have for some reason proven quite good for birding, possibly as a result of its relative isolation and reduced levels of pesticide use. Grey Hypocolius has been seen here recently.

Kahramana

This resort offers lush greenery and nice complexity intermixed with some rocky areas, offering good birding opportunities. The site is also quite isolated with a good migrant trap effect. However, there is a moderately heavy use of pesticides.

Shams Alam

The Shams Alam Hotel has become a focal point for birdwatchers visiting the Red Sea. It has a unique and strategic location on the southern Red Sea, right at the northern boundary of WGNP, providing an excellent place from which to visit the interior of the park and even walk to some of the main attractions within it. It has a special appeal for

birders with its well-developed gardens, the best south of Marsa Alam. The hotel grounds provide fairly good foliage, which is not excessively manicured or sprayed with pesticides. It is thus an excellent migrant trap where a great diversity of species can be seen during spring and autumn. Many species of interest have been observed in these gardens since the opening of the hotel, including Black-bush Robin, Namaqua Dove, Pink-headed Dove (breeding at the hotel, along with Collard Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*), Grey Hypocolius, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Menetries's Warbler. and Isabelline Shrike.

The WGNP Ranger Headquarters are found just 100 meters to the south of the hotel. Walk there to inquire about arrangements to visit the interior of the Park, and to ask about recent bird observations in the area.

Figure 28 African Collard Dove at the Shams Alam Hotel

Lahmi Bay Hotel

This upscale hotel has a moderately attractive garden for birds, which is currently the southern most along the Egyptian Red Sea. It is strategically located near the Wadi Lahmi Mangrove, where Goliath Heron is regularly observed.

SOARING BIRD MIGRATION IN THE EASTERN DESERT

The Eastern Desert falls on one of the world's greatest routes for migrating soaring birds. Soaring birds are typically large birds (including storks, birds of prey, and pelicans) that depend in their flight on thermals (rising hot air generated from landmasses heated by the sun). These birds will avoid flying any distance over bodies of water, where thermals are not generated. A quick look at any world map will show how Egypt represents the only land bridge between Eurasia and Africa, and that is why it is such an important bottleneck for soaring birds.

Most soaring migrants concentrate in the eastern part of the country, following the peaks of the Eastern Desert mountains. The Gulf of Suez has several bottlenecks of global significance, where birds concentrate at different points, attempting to cross or avoid crossing this modest water body. Suez is by far the best known of the bottlenecks and it is the place where the greatest concentration of large eagles and vultures tends to be found (as they are the least likely to make the crossing over the Gulf of Suez). Gebel Zeit and the surrounding desert and intertidal flats are another area that witnesses a large volume of migrating soaring birds. Large flocks of White Storks and (sometimes) White Pelicans often rest here, just before or after the sea crossing.

In WGNP, most of the soaring bird migration is composed of birds of prey. For almost 6 months of the year there are birds of prey moving through this part of the desert, either going north in spring (March, April, May), or south in autumn (September, October, November). The best area to intercept the constant stream of soaring migrants is roughly located between 10–20 km west of the coastline. The birds generally follow a line that links between the highest peaks of the Eastern Desert mountains, moving from one high peak to the next. This migration over the desert is rapid, and most birds will pass through Egypt in 3–4 days. During the hotter parts of the season, soaring migrants will often be attracted to water sources and greenery (and this is also when they get into trouble). Some of the natural wells in WGNP, such as Bir Sartut are a good place to see these birds at close range and in large numbers as they come down to drink.

The composition of birds changes through the seasons, with most large eagles coming through during the cooler months, while Buzzards *Buteo buteo* comes through in larger numbers in the middle of the season and Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* come through in huge numbers during 1 or 2 days, usually in early May and in September.

SOME PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Park Regulations

Management regulations are essential to ensure the long-term maintenance of the natural values of any park. WGNP is a young park (less than 5 years old) and management procedures are not yet fully developed and tested. We ask visitors, particularly ecotourists, to help enforce existing regulations and apply common sense to help maintain the wildlife and sensitive ecosystems of the park. WGNP's management plan indicates the following regulations that are relevant to birdwatching activities:

- Driving off road should be restricted to existing tracks only
- If you go off road, inform the Park Rangers and take a Park Community Guard with you
- Do not use local vegetation for firewood
- Landing on any islands requires park permission. All visits during the summer months are prohibited without the accompaniment of a Park Ranger. On Wadi el- Gemal Island (the most visited island) only the southern sandy tip may be visited; the rest of the island is off limit to visitors
- Do not disturb nesting birds.

Obviously, all hunting and killing of wildlife and destruction of habitats is prohibited inside the park and limited by law outside the park. If you see any illegal or disturbing activities, please do not hesitate to contact the Park Rangers at the numbers provided under contacts below.

Traveling Hints

Most individual travelers will be using private rental cars, rented either from Hurghada or Cairo, depending on their point of entry. One thing to remember when traveling around the Wadi el-Gemal region in a private car is that there are no gas stations between Marsa Alam and Shalateen, and sometimes petrol is not available for several days (diesel tends to be more abundant). Always fill up your tank when there is an opportunity and take extra gas on board if you are going on an extended drive.

Do not depend completely on cell phones to keep in touch. Coverage in the park is patchy along the coast and non-existent inland. If you are in trouble, you can try to get onto high ground, where there might be some coverage. There is no coverage between Lahmi Bay and Shalateen.

If you do not have a 4-wheel drive vehicle and want to go into the desert, several local operators offer off-road trips to the interior of the desert. These can be contacted through your local hotel. As well, contact the Park Rangers—if you are lucky, there is a chance you could join them on one of their patrols!

Non-Egyptians are allowed to travel freely along the entire Red Sea coast south to Shalateen. Beyond Shalateen you need a military permit, which is currently difficult to obtain. It is also difficult for non-Egyptians to travel the paved roads that link the Red Sea with the Nile Valley, without joining official convoys (for security reasons). The only exception is the Bernice–Aswan Road.

Going Offshore

The best way to get to Wadi el-Gemal Island is to arrange it through the Wadi el-Gemal Dive Center, located at the southern end of the Shams Alam complex (close to the WGNP Headquarters). The dive center is familiar with the park regulations and has close relationships with the Rangers and a good appreciation of birdwatchers' needs. Contact Wadi el-Gemal Dive Center at wadigimal@shamshotels.com, or call 012-244-4931 once you are in Egypt. To get to the Hamata Archipelago it is probably easiest to get a boat from Lahmi Bay Hotel. Please follow the rules when visiting the islands and do not disturb nesting birds.

Spending the Night

There are an increasing number of hotels of various quality along the coast (see section on good birding hotels). You need to book your hotel in advance, as it is often difficult to find a place without reservations, and much more expensive. Remember that there are no proper hotels in Shalateen to spend the night.

Camping in WGNP is preferable within the vicinity of one of the three inland Ranger Outposts. It is recommended that you inform the Park Rangers if you are going to camp in the park. Do not camp along the coast, as this could get you in trouble with the Coast Guard.

Safety Precautions

If you are intending to go off-road in deep desert (more than 10 km from a paved road) please take the following safety precautions:

- Inform Park Rangers of your schedule and check in and out with them (at the very least, someone who is not on the trip should know of your travel plans).
- Take a local Park Community Guard with you (they are the best safety measure and an excellent source of knowledge. A Community Guard will be able to cut your search for target species to a fraction of the time that you would spend if you do it on your own.
- Take two cars (make sure that you have viable spare tires and basic tools).
- Take plenty of water for all.
- Ensure that you have functional communication and navigation equipment. Satellite phones are recommended for any extended desert travel.

In the unlikely event that your car is disabled or you get lost in a remote desert locality, stay in or near your vehicle, keep in the shade, and avoid moving around during the heat of the day. It is best to conserve your water and energy until help arrives.

Contributing to Local Knowledge

Your ornithological observations are valuable scientifically as well as for park management purposes. Please try to communicate your findings to the WGNP Rangers. They are eager to hear and learn from you, and they can be a great asset to facilitate you getting the most from your visit. Communicate with the Rangers at the links provided below.

Contacts

Currently the main WGNP Ranger Headquarters are located immediately south of the Shams Alam Hotel. A secondary office is located at the southern edge of the park just north of Hamata village. Both buildings are located east of the coastal highway.

Mr. Mohamed Abbas, WGNP Manager (Shams Alam): 018-978-8052

Mr. Said Khodari, Ornithologist WGNP (Shams Alam): 018-017-1545

Mr. Osama El Ghazali, Elba Protected Area (Shalateen): 010-713-4135

Mr. Mohamed Gad, Southern Red Sea Protected Areas (Quseir/ Shams Alam): 016-466-6395

Dr. Moustafa Fouda, Nature Conservation Sector Director (Cairo): foudamos@link.net

Useful Internet Sites

Protected Areas of Egypt: http://www.parksegypt.org/

Egypt's biodiversity site: http://www.biomapegypt.org/

Ministry of Environmental Affairs: http://www.eeaa.gov.eg/

Egypt's bird watching site: http://www.birdingegypt.com/

Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME): http://www.osme.org/

African Bird Club: http://www.africanbirdclub.org/

APPENDICES

Checklist of WGNP Breeding Birds

A comprehensive list of species reported breeding in WGNP proper.

Latin Name	الاسم العربي	English Name
Phaethon aethereus	رئيس البحر	Red-billed Tropic Bird
Sula leucogaster	أطيش	Brown Booby
Egretta gularis	بلشون الصخر	Western Reef Heron
Ardea goliath	بلشون جبار	Goliath Heron
Butorides striatus	بلشون أخضر	Striated Heron
Platalea leucorodia	أبوملعقة	Spoonbill
Buteo rufinus	صقر حوام	Long-legged Buzzard
Hieraaetus fasciatus	عقاب سعفاء	Bonelli's Eagle
Pandion haliaetus	عقاب نسارية	Osprey
Neophron percnopterus	رخمة مصرية	Egyptian Vulture
Gypaetus barbatus	نسر أبو ذقن	Lammergeyer
Torgos tracheliotus	نسر أذون	Lappet-faced Vulture
Falco biarmicus	صقر حر	Lanner Falcon
Falco concolor	صقر الغروب	Sooty Falcon
Ammoperdix heyi	حجل الصخر	Sand Partridge
Pterocles lichtensteinii	قطا نوبي	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse
Pterocles coronatus	قطا متوج	Crowned Sandgrouse
Pteroceles senegallus	قطا أنقط	Spotted Sandgrouse
Streptopelia senegalensis	يمام بلدي	Palm Dove
Streptopelia decaocto	يمام مطوق	Collard Dove
Streptopelia roseogrisea	يمام وردي	Pink-headed Dove
Columba livia	يمام جبلي	Rock Dove
Larus hemprichii	نورس أسحم	Sooty Gull
Larus leucophthalmus	نورس عجمة	White-eyed Gull

Latin Name	الاسم العربي	English Name
Sterna repressa	خطاف أبو بطن	White-cheeked Tern
Sterna caspia	خطاف أبوبلحة	Caspian Tern
Sterna bengalensis	خطاف متوج	Lesser Crested-Tern
Sterna anaethetus	خطاف أسحم	Bridled Tern
Charadrius alexandrinus	قطقاط أسكندرى	Kentish Plover
Burhinus oedicnemus	كروان صحراوي	Stone Curlew
Cursorius cursor	جليل	Cream-colored Courser
Strix butleri	بومة بتلر	Hume's Tawny Owl
Bubo ascalaphus	بعفة الصحراء	Pharao's Eagle Owl
Ammomanes cincturus	قنبرة صحراوية موشمة الذيل	Bar-tailed Desert Lark
Ammomanes deserti	قنبرة صحراوية	Desert Lark
Alaemon alaudipes	مكاء	Hoopoe Lark
Hirundo obsoleta	خطاف الصخر	Rock Martin
Oenanthe lugens	أبلق حزين	Mourning Wheatear
Oenanthe monacha	أبلق أبو قلنسوة	Hooded Wheatear
Oenanthe leucopyga	أبلق متوج	White-crowned Black Wheatear
Hippolais pallida	خنشع زيتوني	Olivaceous Warbler
Lanius meridionalis	دقناش البادية	Southern Grey Shrike
Corvus ruficollis	غراب نوحي	Brown-necked Raven
Emberiza striolata	بلبل الشعير المخطط	House Bunting
Rhodopechys githagina	زمير مصري	Trumpeter Finch

List courtesy of "Management Plan For Wadi El Gemal National Park," Egypt Environmental Policy Program (EEPP), July 2004

Checklist of the Birds of the Red Sea Governorate

Key to status abbreviations: RB = resident breeder; MB = migrant breeder; M = migrant; WV = winter visitor; V = vagrant; EX = locally extinct; e = indicates species largely confined to the Gebel Elba region.

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Ostrich	*Struthio camelus*	EX e
Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	M, WV
Great Crested Grebe	*Podiceps cristatus*	M, WV
Cory's Shearwater	*Calonectris diomedea*	V
Sooty Shearwater	*Puffinus griseus*	V
Red-billed Tropicbird	*Phaethon aethereus*	MB
Great White Pelican	*Pelecanus onocrotalus*	M
Brown Booby	*Sula leucogaster*	RB
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	M, WV
European Shag	*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*	V
Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	M, WV
Goliath Heron	*Ardea goliath*	RB
Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	M
Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	M
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	M
Western Reef-Heron	*Egretta gularis*	RB
Squacco Heron	*Ardeola ralloides*	M
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	M, WV
Striated Heron	*Butorides striata*	RB
Black-crowned Night-Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	M
Little Bittern	*Ixobrychus minutus*	M
Yellow-billed Stork	*Mycteria ibis*	V
Black Stork	*Ciconia nigra*	M
White Stork	*Ciconia ciconia*	M
Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	M
Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*	RB, M

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	M
Egyptian Goose	*Alopochen aegyptiaca*	V
Common Shelduck	*Tadorna tadorna*	WV
Eurasian Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	M
Gadwall	*Anas strepera*	M
Eurasian Teal	*Anas crecca*	M
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	M
Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	M
Garganey	*Anas querquedula*	M
Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*	M
Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	M
Ferruginous Pochard	*Aythya nyroca*	V
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	M
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	RB, M
European Honey-buzzard	*Pernis apivorus*	M
Crested Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	V
Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	M
Lammergeyer	*Gypaetus barbatus*	RB
Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*	RB, M
Rueppell's Griffon	*Gyps rueppellii*	V
Eurasian Griffon	*Gyps fulvus*	M, WV
Lappet-faced Vulture	*Torgos tracheliotus*	RB
Short-toed Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*	M
Bateleur	*Terathopius ecaudatus*	EX e
Western Marsh-Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*	M, WV
Hen Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	WV
Pallid Harrier	*Circus macrourus*	M
Montagu's Harrier	*Circus pygargus*	M
Levant Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter brevipes*	M
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	M, WV
Eurasian Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	M

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Long-legged Buzzard	*Buteo rufinus*	RB, M
Lesser Spotted Eagle	*Aquila pomarina*	M
Greater Spotted Eagle	*Aquila clanga*	M
Steppe Eagle	*Aquila nipalensis*	M
Imperial Eagle	*Aquila heliaca*	M
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*	M
Verreaux's Eagle	*Aquila verreauxii*	RB
Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*	RB, M
Booted Eagle	*Aquila pennata*	M
Lesser Kestrel	*Falco naumanni*	M
Eurasian Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	RB, M
Red-footed Falcon	*Falco vespertinus*	M
Eleonora's Falcon	*Falco eleonorae*	M
Sooty Falcon	*Falco concolor*	MB
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*	M
Eurasian Hobby	*Falco subbuteo*	M
Lanner Falcon	*Falco biarmicus*	RB
Saker Falcon	*Falco cherrug*	V
Barbary Falcon	*Falco pelegrinoides*	RB
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*	M, WV
Sand Partridge	*Ammoperdix heyi*	RB
Common Quail	*Coturnix coturnix*	M
Demoiselle Crane	*Anthropoides virgo*	V
Common Crane	*Grus grus*	M
Water Rail	*Rallus aquaticus*	M, WV
Corn Crake	*Crex crex*	M
Little Crake	*Porzana parva*	M
Baillon's Crake	*Porzana pusilla*	M
Spotted Crake	*Porzana porzana*	M
Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	M, WV
Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	M

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Macqueen's Bustard	*Chlamydotis macqueenii*	EX?
Crab Plover	*Dromas ardeola*	MB?
Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	WV
Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	M
Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	M, WV
Eurasian Thick-knee	*Burhinus oedicnemus*	RB?, M
Cream-colored Courser	*Cursorius cursor*	MB, M
Collared Pratincole	*Glareola pratincola*	M
Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	M, WV
Spur-winged Plover	*Vanellus spinosus*	RB, M
Sociable Lapwing	*Vanellus gregarius*	V
White-tailed Lapwing	*Vanellus leucurus*	M
Black-bellied Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	M, WV
Common Ringed Plover	*Charadrius hiaticula*	M, WV
Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	M
Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*	RB, M
Lesser Sandplover	*Charadrius mongolus*	V
Greater Sandplover	*Charadrius leschenaultii*	M, WV
Caspian Plover	*Charadrius asiaticus*	M, WV?
Eurasian Woodcock	*Scolopax rusticola*	V
Jack Snipe	*Lymnocryptes minimus*	M
Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	M, WV
Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	M
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	M
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*	M, WV
Slender-billed Curlew	*Numenius tenuirostris*	V
Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	M, WV
Terek Sandpiper	*Xenus cinereus*	M
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	M, WV
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	M, WV
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*	M

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	M, WV
Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	M, WV
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	M, WV
Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*	M, WV
Ruddy Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*	M, WV
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	M
Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	M, WV
Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	M
Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	M
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*	M, WV
Ruff	*Philomachus pugnax*	M
White-eyed Gull	*Larus leucophthalmus*	RB
Sooty Gull	*Larus hemprichii*	RB
Mew Gull	*Larus canus*	M
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	M
Caspian Gull	*Larus cachinnans*	M
Armenian Gull	*Larus armenicus*	M
Great Black-headed Gull	*Larus ichthyaetus*	M, WV
Gray-headed Gull	*Larus cirrocephalus*	V
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	M, WV
Slender-billed Gull	*Larus genei*	M, WV
Little Gull	*Larus minutus*	M
Bridled Tern	*Onychoprion anaethetus*	MB
Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	M
Saunders' Tern	*Sternula saundersi*	V?
Gull-billed Tern	*Gelochelidon nilotica*	M
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*	RB
Black Tern	*Chlidonias niger*	M
White-winged Tern	*Chlidonias leucopterus*	M
Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	M
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	M

English Name	Latin Name	Status
White-cheeked Tern	*Sterna repressa*	MB
Great Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bergii*	MB
Sandwich Tern	*Thalasseus sandvicensis*	M
Lesser Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bengalensis*	MB
African Skimmer	*Rynchops flavirostris*	V
Pomarine Jaeger	*Stercorarius pomarinus*	M
Parasitic Jaeger	*Stercorarius parasiticus*	M
Long-tailed Jaeger	*Stercorarius longicaudus*	V
Spotted Sandgrouse	*Pterocles senegallus*	RB
Crowned Sandgrouse	*Pterocles coronatus*	RB
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	*Pterocles lichtensteinii*	RB
Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	RB
Stock Dove	*Columba oenas*	WV
Eurasian Turtle-Dove	*Streptopelia turtur*	M
Eurasian Collared-Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	RB
African Collared-Dove	*Streptopelia roseogrisea*	RB
Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	RB
Namaqua Dove	*Oena capensis*	MB?
Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	V
Great Spotted Cuckoo	*Clamator glandarius*	M
Common Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	M
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba*	RB?
European Scops-Owl	*Otus scops*	M
Pharaoh Eagle-Owl	*Bubo ascalaphus*	RB
Hume's Owl	*Strix butleri*	RB
Little Owl	*Athene noctua*	RB
Northern Long-eared Owl	*Asio otus*	M
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*	M
Eurasian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus europaeus*	M
Egyptian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus aegyptius*	M
Nubian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus nubicus*	RB e

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Alpine Swift	*Tachymarptis melba*	M
Common Swift	*Apus apus*	M
Pallid Swift	*Apus pallidus*	M
Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	M
Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	M
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	*Merops persicus*	M
European Bee-eater	*Merops apiaster*	M
European Roller	*Coracias garrulus*	M
Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	M
Eurasian Wryneck	*Jynx torquilla*	M
Greater Hoopoe-Lark	*Alaemon alaudipes*	RB
Finch Lark	*Eremopterix nigriceps*	MB
Bar-tailed Lark	*Ammomanes cinctura*	RB
Desert Lark	*Ammomanes deserti*	RB
Bimaculated Lark	*Melanocorypha bimaculata*	M
Greater Short-toed Lark	*Calandrella brachydactyla*	M
Lesser Short-toed Lark	*Calandrella rufescens*	M
Eurasian Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	M, WV
Bank Swallow	*Riparia riparia*	M
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	M
Eurasian Crag-Martin	*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*	M
Rock Martin	*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*	RB
House Martin	*Delichon urbicum*	M
Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	M
Richard's Pipit	*Anthus richardi*	M
Long-billed Pipit	*Anthus similis*	MB e
Tawny Pipit	*Anthus campestris*	M
Meadow Pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	M
Red-throated Pipit	*Anthus cervinus*	M, WV
Tree Pipit	*Anthus trivialis*	M
Water Pipit	*Anthus spinoletta*	M, WV

English Name	Latin Name	Status
White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	WV
Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*	M
Gray Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	M, WV
Common Bulbul	*Pycnonotus barbatus*	RB
Hypocolius	*Hypocolius ampelinus*	V
Rock-Thrush	*Monticola saxatilis*	M
Blue Rock-Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*	M, WV
Eurasian Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	M, WV
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	M, WV
Streaked Scrub-Warbler	*Scotocerca inquieta*	RB
Eurasian River Warbler	*Locustella fluviatilis*	M
Savi's Warbler	*Locustella luscinioides*	M
Sedge Warbler	*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*	M
Eurasian Reed-Warbler	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*	M
Blyth's Reed-Warbler	*Acrocephalus dumetorum*	V
Marsh Warbler	*Acrocephalus palustris*	M
Great Reed-Warbler	*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*	M
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	*Hippolais pallida*	MB
Upcher's Warbler	*Hippolais languida*	M
Olive-tree Warbler	*Hippolais olivetorum*	M
Icterine Warbler	*Hippolais icterina*	M
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	M
Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*	M, WV
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	*Phylloscopus orientalis*	M
Wood Warbler	*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	M
Blackcap	*Sylvia atricapilla*	M
Garden Warbler	*Sylvia borin*	M
Barred Warbler	*Sylvia nisoria*	M
Western Orphean Warbler	*Sylvia hortensis*	M
Asian Desert Warbler	*Sylvia nana*	WV

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Greater Whitethroat	*Sylvia communis*	M
Lesser Whitethroat	*Sylvia curruca*	M
Red Sea Warbler	*Sylvia leucomelaena*	RB e
Cyprus Warbler	*Sylvia melanothorax*	WV
Menetries' Warbler	*Sylvia mystacea*	V
Spectacled Warbler	*Sylvia conspicillata*	WV
Rueppell's Warbler	*Sylvia rueppelli*	M
Subalpine Warbler	*Sylvia cantillans*	M
Sardinian Warbler	*Sylvia melanocephala*	WV
Spotted Flycatcher	*Muscicapa striata*	M
European Pied Flycatcher	*Ficedula hypoleuca*	M
Collared Flycatcher	*Ficedula albicollis*	M
Semicollared Flycatcher	*Ficedula semitorquata*	M
Red-breasted Flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*	M
European Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	WV
Thrush Nightingale	*Luscinia luscinia*	M
Common Nightingale	*Luscinia megarhynchos*	M
Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*	WV
Rufous Bush Robin	*Cercotrichas galactotes*	M
Black Bush Robin	*Cercotrichas podobe*	V
Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*	WV
Common Redstart	*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	M
Whinchat	*Saxicola rubetra*	M
European Stonechat	*Saxicola rubicola*	WV
Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*	WV
White-tailed Wheatear	*Oenanthe leucopyga*	RB
Hooded Wheatear	*Oenanthe monacha*	RB
Northern Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	M
Mourning Wheatear	*Oenanthe lugens*	RB
Pied Wheatear	*Oenanthe pleschanka*	M
Cyprus Wheatear	*Oenanthe cypriaca*	WV

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Black-eared Wheatear	*Oenanthe hispanica*	M
Kurdish Wheatear	*Oenanthe xanthoprymna*	WV
Red-tailed Wheatear	*Oenanthe chrysopygia*	V
Desert Wheatear	*Oenanthe deserti*	WV
Isabelline Wheatear	*Oenanthe isabellina*	WV
Blackstart	*Cercomela melanura*	RB e
Fulvous Babbler	*Turdoides fulva*	RB e
Eurasian Penduline-Tit	*Remiz pendulinus*	V
Nile Valley Sunbird	*Hedydipna metallica*	V
Shining Sunbird	*Cinnyris habessinicus*	RB e
Eurasian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	M
Red-backed Shrike	*Lanius collurio*	M
Isabelline Shrike	*Lanius isabellinus*	M, WV
Southern Gray Shrike	*Lanius meridionalis*	RB
Lesser Gray Shrike	*Lanius minor*	M
Masked Shrike	*Lanius nubicus*	M
Woodchat Shrike	*Lanius senator*	M
Rosy-patched Shrike	*Rhodophoneus cruentus*	RB e
House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	RB
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	RB
Brown-necked Raven	*Corvus ruficollis*	RB
Fan-tailed Raven	*Corvus rhipidurus*	RB e
Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*	V
European Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	WV
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	RB
Spanish Sparrow	*Passer hispaniolensis*	WV
Sudan Golden Sparrow	*Passer luteus*	MB? e
Pale Rock Sparrow	*Carpospiza brachydactyla*	M
African Silverbill	*Euodice cantans*	MB? e
European Greenfinch	*Carduelis chloris*	WV
European Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	WV

English Name	Latin Name	Status
Eurasian Linnet	*Carduelis cannabina*	WV
Trumpeter Finch	*Bucanetes githagineus*	RB
Cinereous Bunting	*Emberiza cineracea*	M
Ortolan Bunting	*Emberiza hortulana*	M
Cretzschmar's Bunting	*Emberiza caesia*	M
Mountain Bunting	*Emberiza striolata*	RB
Corn Bunting	*Emberiza calandra*	WV

Gazetteer of Locations Mentioned in the Text

Abu Ghusoon	24°26'51"N 35°12'2"E
Ain Sukhna	29°32'56"N 32°20'39"E
Berenice	23°59'52"N 35°24'10"E
Bir Abraq	23°25'8"N 34°47'54"E
Bir Beida	26°06'27"N 34°12'13"E
Bir el-Rada	24°15'24"N 35°14'13"E
Bir Gahelya	23°30'31"N 35° 8'45 "E
Bir Wadi el-Gemal	24°30'37"N 34°42'48"E
Bir Sartut	24°16'33"N 34°59'51"E
Bir Hafafit	24°46'23"N 34°31'11"E
El-Gouna	27°23'18"N 33°40'43"E
Fustat Camp	24°39'9"N 35° 2'39"E
Gebel el-Zeit	27°56'57"N 33°27'49"E
Gebel Elba	22°10'29"N 36°21'22"E
Gebel Hamata	24°12'14"N 35° 0'52"E
Hamata Village	24°16'40"N 35°22'56"E
Hamata Archipelago	24°21'26"N 35°23'46"E
Hamata Mangrove	24°20'0"N 35°19'58"E
Nugrus ruins	24°37'12"N 34°46'27"E
Hurghada	27°13'20"N 33°49'55"E
Magal Um Sweih	24°28'5"N 34°53'22"E
Marsa Alam	25° 3'49"N 34°53'50"E
Marsa Hemira Mangroves	23°28'45"N 35°29'16"E
Qurat El Hertway	24° 7'5"N 35°29'54"E
Quseir	26° 6'7"N 34°16'49"E
Ranger outpost at Wadi el-Gemal	24°34'41"N 34°49'30"E
Ranger outpost at Wadi Abu Ghusoon	24°22'47"N 35° 2'39"E
Ranger outpost at Hafafit	24°43'49"N 34°32'19"E
Ranger HQ at Shams Alam	24°41'11"N 35° 5'0"E
Ranger HQ in Shalateen	23° 8'4"N 35°35'26"E
Safaga	26°45'1"N 33°56'19"E
Sekit ruins	24°37'53"N 34°47'43"E
Shalateen	23° 6'26"N 35°33'44"E
Sheikh Shazeli	24°11'52"N 34°38'4"E
Wadi Gemal Delta	24°39'39"N 35° 5'39"E
Wadi Gemal Island	24°39'32"N 35° 9'39"E
Wadi Lahmi Mangrove	24°13'19"N 35°25'17"E
Zabargad Island	23°36'23"N 36°11'44"E

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Arabic Terms

bir	(beer)	A simple well or spring
Eid el-Adha	(eed il ahdha)	One of two important Muslim feasts, where sheep and other livestock are traditionally sacrificed
gebel	(gehbil)	Mountain
magal	(magil)	Very small spring or seepage of water (Ababda dialect)
wadi	(wahdee)	Dry river bed that flows only seasonally

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Dr. Sherif Baha El Din has been involved in nature conservation in Egypt for more than 25 years. He is an avid and renowned birdwatcher, with extensive experience with the birds of Egypt and the Middle East. His areas of interest include ornithology, herpetology, ecology, wildlife management, and biodiversity conservation. He has published many scientific papers and has authored, co-authored, and illustrated six books on the birds and reptiles of Egypt and the Middle East. In addition, Dr. Baha El Din has described eight new species of reptiles and amphibians to science.

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