

# Saudi Arabia Bird Report 1998-2001

## INTRODUCTION:

For three years, 1998-2001, I lived with my family in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I was employed as a Research Associate at the Research Centre of the King Faisal Specialist Hospital. After a lengthy recruiting process, we eventually arrived in the Kingdom on 19 September 1998. Our first home was the Al Nakheel Compound in northern Riyadh. After nine months we moved to a brand new flat in the Diplomatic Quarters in western Riyadh, at the edge of Wadi Hanifah. This is where all the embassies are located and naturally very well guarded. Most of my spare time, I watched birds. First by foot in the Al Nakheel district. When I got my car, I slowly started to explore the vicinity for good birding sites. I did not have much up to date information but tried to find the sites that I had heard of, with mixed success. Most of the time was spent in Al Hair, Mansouriyah and Thumamah.

Travelling within Saudi Arabia is cheap and problem free as long as you have your Iqama and a Travel Letter, issued by your sponsor. In February 1999, I did my first trip to the Eastern Province, followed by a family trip to Jubail and Dammam in April. Later that year, in December, we made a round trip Riyadh-Taif-Jeddah-Jizan-Abha-Taif-Riyadh. The new millennium we awaited, camping at the Farasan Island in SW. The third trip to Eastern Province I did in October 2000, when I visited Hofuf and Al Khobar. During 2001 I travelled to Abha in April, Eastern Province in May and SW Province in July together with Kurt Johansson, a Swedish birder also living in Riyadh. Shortly before I left Saudi Arabia, I wanted to visit Abha in the Asir Mountains once again and went there in August 2001.

The day of departure, Exit Only, was 19 September 2001, completing a three-year experience that I will cherish for the rest of my life.



## Locations of some of the sites mentioned in the text:

**Central Province (C):** Riyadh, Riyadh Watercourse, Diplomatic Quarter, Wadi Hanifah, Al-Ilb Dam, Thumamah, Rawdhat Khuraim, Mansouriyah, Al Hair, Al Safi Dairy Farm.

**The Riyadh Watercourse** (or Riyadh River) is the treated waste water running south in Wadi Hanifa from Riyadh. Some areas are flourishing with permanent pools. Naturally this attracts many birds and the watercourse is consequently one of the best birdwatching sites in the Riyadh region, especially in the Mansouriyah and Al Hair areas.

**Thumamah** (25.153945N, 46.64966E) is an estate some 80 km NW of Riyadh. The area is fenced and, during my stay, closed to general public. The King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre, located within the estate, kindly granted me permits for birdwatching. The birds of Thumamah have been subject to surveys in 1984-85 and again in 1989-1994, and have proved to be an important area for migrating passerines. I found that the estate is still valuable for passerines, but due to the increased development of farms in the Central Province, the occurrence of many species is not as concentrated to Thumamah as it was before. All in all I made 56 visits to Thumamah. The latest news regarding Thumamah is that it became a Nature Park of some kind in 2003 and is now open to public.

**Al Safi Dairy Farm** (24.18949N, 47.43767E) is situated approximately 100 km SE of Riyadh or c. 15 km E of AlKharj. It covers an area of 35 km<sup>2</sup> and is one of the largest dairy farms in the world. I was able to get permission to visit the farm on several occasions. The farm provided excellent bird watching all year around and I could easily spend a whole day, driving around this huge farm. There was also a very good restaurant where I could have lunch. At the farm there are several central pivot irrigated fields, where various fodder crops are grown and a number of manmade ponds. Many birds make a stop here on their migration or spend the entire winter. Unfortunately, due to the alarming outbreak of Foot-and Mouth Disease in Europe, I was not granted permission to visit the farm after 25 January 2001.

**Eastern Province (E):** Hofuf, Al Khobar, Half Moon Bay, Dahran, Dammam, Al Jubail, Ras Tanura.

**Hofuf** is the main town in the Al Hasa oasis on route from Riyadh to Dammam. The area is dotted with date palm and fruit farms. The irrigation surplus is led into the desert creating reed marshes. I followed one of these canals towards N and NE and ended up at the marsh that I refer to as Hofuf marshes in the checklist. I have realised later that the best wetlands for birds is probably located to the SE of the town.

**Western Province (W):** Jeddah, Taif, Al Qunfudhah, Al Birk

**Southwestern Province (SW):** Jizan (Gizan, Farasan Islands, Malaki Dam, Wadi Jawwah, Sabiya, Bani Malik area, Abu Arish, Ad Darb, Abha, Raydah escarpment.

**Abha** in the Asir Mountains is one of my favourite places on earth. All the endemics can be seen at the Raydah escarpment and with paved roads all the way to the top, at 2800 m altitude, its easy to get there. Abha is a very popular resort for Saudi citizens in the summer months when the temperature is more moderate here.

**The backwaters of Malaki Dam** (17.04728N, 42.978864E) are a real magnet to birds. Wintering ducks, herons, storks and shore-birds can be found in large numbers. With the cultivated landscape and the wadies surrounding the dam, it is undoubtedly one of the best birding sites in the Kingdom.

**Bani Malik area** (NE Al Dayer) is the name I have given an area that I found together with Kurt Johansson, when we drove up the hills E of Sabya. After leaving a small village, Bani Malik, the road descends into a valley. From here (17.35027N, 43.16555E) and onwards, up to 1800 m altitude, we experienced some fantastic birding.

## About the records:

The first table, presented for all species, shows the number of observations made for each province visited. These observations may comprise several individuals in one area, during a whole day, but still considered as only one record. Due to the importance Thumamah has shown for migrants in the past, I want to show the records specifically for this site as well. Thus, the total numbers for Central Province include the Thumamah records.

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	C	3		X

A (abundant) or C (common) are used for more common species in some areas. X = recorded but not counted.

The occurrence tables indicate the monthly frequency of records and total numbers of individuals for species that I observed at least five times, in the Central Province, 1998-2001.

Month	Total
Records	$\Sigma$
Individuals	$\Sigma$

The hottest months, May-August, are clearly under-represented in my report. Because of the often unbelievable high temperatures birdwatching was limited. My annual leave was also often taken during July-August.

## Acknowledgements:

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## References:

An Interim Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia, Michael C Jennings.

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Birds in Bahrain, a study of their migration patterns 1990-1992, Erik Hirschfeld.

Saudi Arabia (and some U.A.E.), 1992-1993, Tom Tarrant.

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The IOC World Bird List <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

HBW Alive <http://www.hbw.com>

## Systematic List of Species

**Common Shelduck** - *Tadorna tadorna* (Scarce winter visitor, more regular in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2			2	1

Two S Al Qunfudhah 27 December 1999, 3 Al Birk 28 December 1999, 25+ at Malaki Dam backwaters 29 December 1999. 1 adult Al Safi Dairy Farm on 2 March 2000 and 1 juvenile at the farm on 6 July 2000.

**Ruddy Shelduck** - *Tadorna ferruginea* (Scarce migrant, occasional breeder in Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

Two individuals seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 10 October 2000 was the only observation.

**Eurasian Wigeon** - *Mareca penelope* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10		1		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	3	3									2	<u>10</u>
44	59	12									50	<u>165</u>

Recorded 7 December-26 March. Flocks of 10-50+ seen regularly in the Al Hair area.

**Gadwall** - *Mareca strepera* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
19												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	4	5								1	4	<u>19</u>
91	32	71								2	67	<u>263</u>

Recorded 26 November-26 March. All records but one from Al Hair; 20+ Al Safi Dairy Farm on 25 January 2001.

**Eurasian Teal** - *Anas crecca* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
20	3			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3	4	1						1	2	4	5	<u>20</u>
31	51	50						1	40	39	115	<u>327</u>

Recorded 28 September-2 March. Flocks of 50-75 were seen at Al Hair Dam 25 December 1998, Malaki Dam (SW) 29 December 1999 and at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 2 March 2000.



**Mallard** - *Anas platyrhynchos* (Common resident and winter visitor in the Central Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	2			

No detailed counts were made for this species. Two Thumamah records; 1 male 18 November 1999 and 3 on 8 February 2001.

**Northern Pintail** - *Anas acuta* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7	1			1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	2									1	<u>7</u>
50	16	10									1	<u>77</u>

The largest flock was 35 at Al Hair 21 January 1999. One male was seen at Thumamah 8 February 2001. A distant, migrating flock of 25 at Thumamah 3 February 2000 was most likely this species. Observed between 31 December and 18 March.

**Garganey** - *Spatula querquedula* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2			1	

I found it to be surprisingly scarce. A pair at Al Hair 8 April 1999, 2 females/juveniles at Wadi Hanifah 16 September 1999 and 1 eclipse male SE Al Birk 22 July 2001, were the only records during the period.

**Northern Shoveler** - *Spatula clypeata* (Regular winter visitor and occasional breeder in Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
16				1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3	2	5	1						1		4	<u>16</u>
25	15	66	2						20		27	<u>155</u>

Recorded 19 October-8 April. The largest congregations were 50+ Malaki Dam backwaters 29 December 1999 and 40 at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 2 March 2000.

**Common Pochard** - *Aythya ferina* (Irregular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

30+ in the backwaters of Malaki Dam 29 December 1999, was the only record.

**Ferruginous Duck** - *Aythya nyroca* (Regular winter visitor and a newly established breeder S of Riyadh)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
15				1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	3	2	2				2		1	1	<u>15</u>
8	9	6	3	3				12		1	1	<u>43</u>

Highest count was 11 Al Hair 21 September 1999. In SW, 4 were seen at Malaki Dam 29 December 1999.

**Tufted Duck** - *Aythya fuligula* (Scarce winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2	1			3

75+ Malaki Dam 29 December 1999, 2 Abha 2 January 2000, 1 juvenile in a cooling tank at Thumamah 16 November 2000, 5 Al Hair 7 December 2000 and 3 Abha 12 April 2001.

**Philby's Partridge** - *Alectoris philbyi* (Endemic resident. Locally common at higher rocky altitudes in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

All observation made in the Raydah escarpment vicinity, above 2000 m. One seen and later one heard, 2 January 2000. Five seen and singles heard, 14-15 April 2001. 12 in one flock, 30 August 2001 and singles heard calling, 31 August 2001.

**Arabian Partridge** - *Alectoris melanocephala melanocephala* (Endemic resident. Common in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

A party of seven were seen in the valley E of Raydah escarpment, 2 January 2000. One seen and at least one more calling, Bani Malik area, 24 July 2001. Three seen, in the lower parts of Raydah escarpment, 31 August 2001

**Sand Partridge** - *Ammoperdix heyi heyi* (Widespread resident in C and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
17	11		1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	3	3	3	1			1		2			<u>17</u>
12	8	7	8	1			5		12			<u>53</u>

Besides Thumamah, I encountered this species at the Al Hair Dam and Wadi Howtah. The W record was of one individual crossing the road on the way to Al Birk. Although numerous and widespread, it is not that easy to see.

**Common Quail** - *Coturnix coturnix* (Locally common resident and passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
8	3			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		6	1								1	<u>8</u>
		12	1								1	<u>14</u>

Heard calling in March - April. Four were flushed in the big central pivot, Thumamah, on 8 March 2001. One winter record from Thumamah on 8 December 2000. In SW one individual was seen E of Al Darb on 13 April 2001.

**Helmeted Guineafowl** - *Numida meleagris meleagris* (Introduced. Local in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

Probably only common in Wadi Jawwah, where they are more or less protected by the locals, which is a rare event in Saudi Arabia! At least 40 were seen during a couple of morning-hours on 20 July 2001. Earlier, the same morning, a small group were seen just outside Jizan. Close to Sahar Al Aasem in a valley W of Abha, I found four individuals, of unknown origin on 30 August 2001. They appeared to be wild, by not allowing me to approach them, but it can not be ruled out that they were of captive origin.

**Little Grebe** - *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Common resident and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
36		3	1	5								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	1	7	5	3	1	1		3	1	3	6	<u>36</u>
34	5	29	28	51	10	5		24	5	3	42	<u>236</u>

Flocks of more than 30 recorded. Juveniles were seen in March and May.

**Great Crested Grebe** - *Podiceps cristatus* (Scarce winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		

Four in Al Khobar, near the causeway to Bahrain 13 October 2000, was the only record

**Black-necked Grebe** - *Podiceps nigricollis* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		3		

Only one record from Central Province; one at Al Hair 19 November 1998. From Eastern Province; one at Al Uqair 12 October 2000, 34 at Half Moon Bay 13 October 2000 and four at Al Khobar 13 October 2000.

**Brown Booby** - *Sula leucogaster plotus* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	C

20+ Al Birk 28 December 1999. Numerous seen from the ferry between Jizan and the Farasan Island, 31 December and 1 January 2000. One seen off Jeddah 23 March 2001.

**Great Cormorant** - *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* (Common winter visitor to the Gulf region, scarce in the Central Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
8		5	-	1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	2	1	1	1	1						<u>8</u>
8	1	3	1	1	1	1						<u>16</u>

Eight birds seen together at Al Hair 13 January 2000, was the highest count in the Central Province. A late record was of a wintering immature bird, which was last seen on 8 July 1999 in the western outskirts of Riyadh. In May 2001, 8 individuals were seen in Dammam.

**Socotra Cormorant** - *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* (Common resident on islands in the Gulf region)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		4		

Two immatures at Jubail 4 April 1999, 5 adult + 2 juveniles at Half Moon Bay, Al Khobar 13 October 2000, 55 in small flocks Al Khobar - Dammam 10-11 May 2001. A distant, large flock of several thousand cormorants, seen early morning off Jubail in April 1999, was almost certain this species.

**Pink-backed Pelican** - *Pelecanus rufescens* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				C

Common at the coast. Two inland observations were made; 2 Malaki Dam 29 December 1999 and 2 were seen along the road to Bani Malik, sitting on pylons 23 July 2001. One of them was probably electrocuted and fell dead to the ground, with a loud bang.

**Little Bittern** - *Ixobrychus minutus* (Scarce breeder and a regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
19	2			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	2	2	4	3	2	1	3				<u>19</u>
1	1	2	5	6	10	5	1	11				<u>42</u>

A gathering of eight birds were found roosting at Thumamah on 7 September 2000.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** - *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* (Common migrant and now a regular breeder in the Riyadh area)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
25	1			3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1	2	1	4	1	2		2	2	5	3	<b>25</b>
1	1	16	4	14	2	7		9	4	24	7	<b>89</b>

A severely oiled bird spent a couple of months at a small pond in the Al Nakheel district in Riyadh. It was seen between 6 November 1998 and 19 February 1999. The highest counts were a flock of 15 at Al Hair 19 November 1998 and 12 in the same area 16 March 2001.

**Striated Heron** - *Butorides striata brevipes* (Common resident on the coasts of the Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
			2	1								

Two Jeddah 22 March 2001, two Jizan 18 July 2001 and 30+ at Al Birk 22 July 2001.

**Western Cattle Egret** - *Bubulcus ibis ibis* (Common migrant and winter visitor, might breed occasionally S of Riyadh)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
26	8		2	8								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	4	1		1	1		5	3	1	2	<b>26</b>
272	35	385	315		1	28		124	45	16	11	<b>1232</b>

Large congregations were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm, in the year 2000. 350 were counted 2 March, 315 on 6 April and 28 were still remaining 6 July. Another summer record was one at Thumamah, 18 June 1999. The highest count in the Al Hair area was 157 on 28 January 1999. One peculiar observation was when hundreds were trying to perch on telephone-wires at dusk, during a sandstorm, S Jizan in SW, 18 July 2001.

**Squacco Heron** - *Ardeola ralloides* (Common migrant and most likely a breeder south of Riyadh, a few overwinter)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
33	4	1		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	3	6	2	7	1	2	2	5	1		2	<b>33</b>
2	5	13	2	8	2	11	12	12	4		2	<b>73</b>

Ten at a dam W of Diplomatic Quarter, Riyadh, 27 August 1999 and 5 adults + 1 juvenile at Al Safi Dairy Farm 6 July 2000 are worth mentioning.

**Western Reef Heron** - *Egretta gularis schistacea* (Common, mostly resident coastal breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
		5	2	C								

Numerous in the E and SW Provinces. Only three individuals seen in Western Province, in Jeddah. One recorded inland at Malaki Dam 29 December 1999.

**Little Egret** - *Egretta garzetta garzetta* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
41	3		1	2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	5	4	2	1		1	1	5	4	4	6	<b>41</b>
58	21	35	7	2		3	2	88	30	15	13	<b>274</b>

The highest count of wintering birds was 34, seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 25 January 2001. During spring migration, 25 were counted at Al Hair 16 March 2001 and the highest number in autumn was 50+ recorded in Wadi Hanifah, W Riyadh, 16 September 1999.

**Great Egret** - *Ardea alba alba* (Rare migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
11		2		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	3	1							2	1	<b>11</b>
2	2	3	1							2	1	<b>11</b>

Seen every winter during the period. Probably few birds involved. The first one spent the winter at Al Hair between 19 November 1998 and 14 March 1999. The following winter, Al Hair hosted a bird, during 26 November 1999 to 17 March 2000. Later in spring, another bird was seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 2 March to 6 April 2000, at least. During the winter of 2001, 2 more observations were made; 1 Al Hair 18 January and possibly 2 in the same area 23 February. Other records were 1 Al Jubail 25 February 1999 and probably the same bird on 4 April 1999. Finally one at Malaki Dam 29 December 1999.

**Grey Heron** - *Ardea cinerea cinerea* (Common migrant and winter visitor, with a few remaining over summer)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
56	8	2	1	3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	6	4	3	2	1	2		6	6	10	8	<b>56</b>
80	25	76	8	3	1	6		20	58	24	56	<b>357</b>

The largest congregation was 50+ at Al Safi Dairy Farm 2 March 2000.

**Purple Heron** - *Ardea purpurea* (Common migrant and winter visitor, also a probable breeder in the Al Hair area)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
46	2			4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	6	6	2	1	2	1	2	5	1	6	7	<b>46</b>
21	7	16	2	7	7	7	5	37	2	16	32	<b>159</b>

Seen all year. The highest count was 15 at Al Hair 21 September 2000.

**Hamerkop** - *Scopus umbretta umbretta* (Resident breeder in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				4

One, Abu Arish 30 December 1999, 4 in the Tihamah foothills on the way to Abha on 1 January 2000, 1 Abha on 12 April 2001 and 3 E Ad Darb 13 April 2001.

**Black Stork** - *Ciconia nigra* (Rare winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
5				

3 Al Hair 28 January 1999, 1 Al Hair 26 November 1999-13 January 2000, 1 Al Safi Dairy Farm 2 March 2000 and 2 adults at the dairy farm on 25 January 2001.

**White Stork** - *Ciconia ciconia* (Rare migrant in Central Province, winter visitor to SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				2

1 Wadi Mehdia, W Riyadh, 24 September 1999 and 30-40 at a rubbish dump near Abu Arish 29-30 December 1999 were the only records.

**Glossy Ibis** - *Plegadis falcinellus* (Regular migrant and winter visitor, some oversummer)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
9	1			3

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3		2	2			1			1			<u>9</u>
40		23	22			16			16			<u>117</u>

Highest count was 100+ at Malaki Dam backwaters 29 December 1999. In the Central Province, 22 were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 2 March 2000. On my consecutive visits to the dairy farm, about the same number of birds were present. On 6 July 2000, 16 were still around and in January 2001 the total was 20.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** - *Platalea leucorodia* (Common resident breeder in the Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

According to Stagg, Birds of the Riyadh Region, second edition, it is a regular winter visitor to the Central Province. I did not record any during my stay. Might have become scarcer in recent years. Highest counts in SW were 30+ at Malaki Dam backwaters 29 December 1999 and 25+ Jizan 22 July 2001.

**Greater Flamingo** - *Phoenicopterus roseus* (Common visitor, predominantly in winter, to all coasts)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		5	1	7

100+ N Dammam 11 May 2001. Commonly recorded in July 2001 in SW.

**Black-winged Kite** - *Elanus caeruleus caeruleus* (Rare visitor to SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

1 adult NE Jizan 24 July 2001 was a memorable observation.

**Black Kite** - *Milvus migrans* (Regular migrant and winter visitor in Central and Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
15	2			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	4	2	1	1				1	1	1	2	<u>15</u>
20	8	28	1	1				1	1	1	5	<u>66</u>

Observed 16 September-17 May in the central region. The highest numbers were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm with 23 individuals on 2 March 2000 and 19 on 25 January 2001.

**Yellow-billed Kite** - *Milvus aegyptius aegyptius* (Regular breeder in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			X	X

Seen in good numbers in W and SW

**Egyptian Vulture** - *Neophron percnopterus percnopterus* (Localised resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
24	24			C

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	6	7	5	1			1				<u>24</u>
3	6	9	17	10	2			1				<u>48</u>

Very common on Farasan Island 31 December 1999. One juvenile at Wadi Jawwah, in SW, 20 July 2001. All other records are from Thumamah, with a maximum of 5 there on 9 April 1999.

**Griffon Vulture** - *Gyps fulvus fulvus* (Status unclear in Central Province, regular in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			5

One observation from Thumamah; a single on 9 March 2000. In SW, one was at Al Kubah, close to the Yemeni border on 30 December 1999. Another one was seen SW Abha 1 January 2000. In 2001, 4 were seen at Malaki Dam on 19 July and at least 4 in the Bani Malik area on 23 and 24 July.



**Short-toed Snake Eagle - *Circaetus gallicus*** (Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5	4		1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1		1		1						1	1	<u>5</u>
1		1		1						1	1	<u>5</u>

Singles seen at Thumamah 11 March 1999; 18 May 2000; 16 November 2000 and 8 December 2000. In Wadi Hanifah, W Riyadh, one was seen on 20 January 2000. South of Al Birk, 3 were recorded on the Tihamah on 28 December 1999.

**Western Marsh Harrier - *Circus aeruginosus aeruginosus*** (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
49	7	3		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	11	8	4	1				5	5	4	4	<u>49</u>
19	20	22	4	1				20	7	5	13	<u>111</u>

Recorded between 9 September and 6 May. The SW record was of two individuals at Malaki Dam on 29 December 1999.

**Hen Harrier - *Circus cyaneus*** (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2				

One juvenile at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 19 October 2000 and one adult female on the same site 25 January 2001.

**Pallid Harrier - *Circus macrourus*** (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
24	12	2		2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	5	6					4	3	2		<u>24</u>
4	2	5	8					6	3	2		<u>30</u>

Recorded between 7 September and 14 April, about 35% were adult males.

**Montagu's Harrier - *Circus pygargus*** (Scarce but regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	4	1		2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	3	1		1		1				<u>7</u>
		1	4	1		1		1				<u>8</u>

One off season record was of a female/immature bird at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 6 July 2000. The two winter records from SW consisted of 1 pair, Malaki Dam 29 December 1999 and one adult male near Abu Arish, 30 December 1999.

**Dark Chanting Goshawk** - *Melierax metabates ignoscens* (Locally common resident on the Tihamah in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		1

One adult, S Al Birk on 28 December 1999 and 3 between Jizan and Al Birk, 22 July 2001.

**Gabar Goshawk** - *Micronisus gabar niger* (Uncommon resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

The single record was of one adult in Wadi Jawwah on 20 July 2001.

**Northern Goshawk** - *Accipiter gentilis* (Uncommon migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	2			

A 3<sup>rd</sup> calendar-year bird was seen at Thumamah on 5 November 1999. At Al Hair a pair was seen on 17 March 2000. The third observation was of a juvenile, again at Thumamah 5 October 2000.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** - *Accipiter nisus nisus* (Common on passage and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
48	24	1		2

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	9	9	3					1	6	9	4	<b>48</b>
11	12	10	3					1	12	22	6	<b>77</b>

Recorded between 30 September and 14 April. Highest numbers were seen at Thumamah, e.g. 10+ on 5 November 1999.

**Shikra** - *Accipiter badius sphenurus* (Scarce resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

One breathtaking, beautiful juvenile, seen perched at close range at Bani Malik on 23 July 2001. **UnEurasian**

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk/Shikra**

Two individuals in female/juvenile plumages were seen briefly at the Raydah escarpment, Abha, on 12 and 15 April 2001.

**Levant Sparrowhawk** - *Accipiter brevipes* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

1 adult male seen well, overhead at Thumamah on 27 October 2000. This species is not mentioned in Birds of the Riyadh Region. However, in Dick Forsman's The Raptors of Europe and the Middle East, there is a reference to a record of an adult female, collected in Riyadh (now at British Museum of Natural History, Tring).

**Common Buzzard** - *Buteo buteo vulpinus* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7	7		1	

In 1999, Thumamah produced four records of this probably overlooked species. One adult, dark rufous morph, 9 April, another grey-brown, buteo like individual on 16 April, 1 adult fox-red morph on 5 November and 1 juvenile fox-red morph 9-10 December. East of Taif, Western Province, one grey-brown individual was seen on 25 December 1999.

**Long-legged Buzzard** - *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* (Scarce resident. Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
35	22	1		7								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	5	6	4	2				3	4	4	2	<u>35</u>
8	7	8	6	3				4	6	4	3	<u>49</u>

Recorded between 2 September and 26 May. 4 individuals of the brown-blackish morph were noted.

**Common/Long-legged Buzzard**

One blackish adult was seen at Thumamah on 29 April 1999.

**Greater Spotted Eagle** - *Aquila clanga* (Regular winter visitor in central Saudi Arabia, scarcer in E and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
32	3	1		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	7	5							3	3	6	<u>32</u>
20	9	11							4	9	9	<u>62</u>

Recorded between 14 October and 29 March. One individual at Dammam 26 February 1999 and 1 immature Malaki Dam 29 December 1999 were the only sightings outside the Central Province.

**Steppe Eagle - *Aquila nipalensis orientalis*** (Common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
45	26			2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
11	8	5	1					1	7	8	4	<u>45</u>
29	27	8	1					2	36	50	16	<u>169</u>

Recorded between 28 September and 19 April. Largest congregation was 27 Al Hair 20 November 1998. One, possibly injured bird, at Thumamah on 19 April 2001, had big white symmetrical patches of downy feathers on shoulders.

**Steppe/Greater Spotted Eagle**

Two at Al Hair 17 December 1998

**Tawny Eagle - *Aquila rapax belisarius*** (Scarce, resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

Two records. 1 adult Wadi Jawwah 20 July 2001 and 1 adult Bani Malik 24 July 2001.

**Steppe/Tawny Eagle**

1 Abu Arish 30 December 1999

**Eastern Imperial Eagle - *Aquila heliaca*** (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
38	25											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
10	9	6							4	6	3	<u>38</u>
31	18	6							4	10	14	<u>83</u>

Recorded between 14 October and 25 March. 5-8 individuals present at Thumamah each winter, e.g. 7 immatures + 1 adult on 10 December 1999. Singles also recorded at Al Hair and Al Safi Dairy Farm.

**Booted Eagle - *Hieraaetus pennatus*** (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
9	6			2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		5	2					1	1			<u>9</u>
		5	2					1	2			<u>10</u>

Out of 10 recorded individuals in the Central Province, 5 belonged to the pale morph, 4 were dark and one was of intermediate morph. Seven spring records were made between 4 March and 14 April, whilst the only two autumn records were on 30 September and 8 October (2 individuals), both in 1999.

**Bonelli's Eagle** - *Aquila fasciata fasciata* (Rare resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

One juvenile in Wadi Mehdiya, in the western outskirts of Riyadh, on September 24 1999, was the only record.

**Western Osprey** - *Pandion haliaetus* (Regular migrant and winter visitor. Locally common breeder in coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
13		1		C

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3	4	2							1		3	<u>13</u>
1	1	2							1		2	<u>7</u>

One over-wintered at the Al Hair Dam, and was seen between 31 December 1998 and 18 March 1999. A second bird, on passage in early spring, showed at Wadi Hanifah on 12 March. Other records in the Central Province were: 1 Al Hair Dam 21 October and 1 W Riyadh on 17 December. In SW it was common on Farasan Island 31 December 1999 and 1 January 2000. In the following winter, one individual was seen three times in the Al Hair area from 7 December 2000 to 23 February 2001. The only record in E was 1 at Ras Tanura on 11 May 2001. Finally, 4 were seen along the coast at Jizan and Al Birk 18-22 July 2001.

**Lesser Kestrel** - *Falco naumanni* (Rather scarce but regular migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
10	5			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	3	2					1	2	1		<u>10</u>
	1	3	2					1	3	1		<u>11</u>

Recorded between 11 February and 9 April in spring, and between 28 September and 12 November in autumn. Only singles seen with the exception of one pair at Thumamah, 8 October 1999. 55 % were adult males. None recorded in 2001.

**Common Kestrel** - *Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus* (A resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
65	38	2	1	10

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
11	10	7	8	5				2	6	6	10	<u>65</u>
22	19	19	11	8				3	12	10	16	<u>120</u>

Several observations during breeding season at Thumamah, in suitable nesting habitat, were made.

**Lesser/Common Kestrel**

Eight more individuals, seen in the Riyadh area, were not identified to species. A distant observation of more than 20 individuals, seen at a large farm, south of Al Hair on 21 October 1999, was perchance Lesser Kestrels.

**Merlin** - *Falco columbarius* (Rare visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3				

Three records. One female/imm. at Al Hair 26 November 1999, one adult male Mansouriyah 7 December 2000 and one female/imm. on 25 January 2001 at Al Safi Dairy Farm.

**Eurasian Hobby** - *Falco subbuteo subbuteo* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	3	1		

Three records at Thumamah; one individual on 1 October 1999, another one on 28 October 1999 and 1 on 24 March 2000. In the Eastern Province 1 adult was seen in the Hofuf area on 12 October 2000. The very last noteworthy bird observation I made in the Kingdom, was an adult Eurasian Hobby, passing over my balcony in the Diplomatic Quarter, on 14 September 2001.

**Sooty Falcon** - *Falco concolor* (Breeds on islands in the Red Sea and the Gulf)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

A definite inclusion on my Saudi top-ten most memorable observation list is the adult Sooty Falcon, flying overhead at close range in the fishing harbour of Jizan, in the early morning of 21 July 2001.

**Lanner Falcon** - *Falco biarmicus tanypterus* (Scarce resident, declining due to falconry)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			1

One adult was found sitting on the main road inside the Thumamah estate, in the early morning of 25 March 1999. It had a very strange-looking strip of cloth attached to one of the legs. Evidently an escaped bird. It had great difficulties in flying because of this extra weight, while it struggled its way out in the desert. In SW one adult (no strings attached) was seen N Jizan on 22 July 2001.

**Saker Falcon** - *Falco cherrug cherrug* (Rare migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One adult, sitting on a pile of sand, Thumamah 16 November 2000, was the sole record of this popular falcon. After a while it took off, and flew past me, headed north into the barren region. It showed no real evidence of being an escape, but I'm pretty sure that the likelihood of finding a genuine migrant in central Saudi Arabia is much less these days. A heavy, large falcon crossing the road in front of my car at Thumamah, 27 January 2000 was most likely this species.

**Peregrine Falcon** - *Falco peregrinus* (Rare migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				1

In SW, one adult was seen at Malaki Dam, 29 December 1999. One juvenile spent some time, watching and distressing waders, at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000.

**Barbary Falcon** - *Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides* (Scarce resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

Only three sightings, all at Thumamah. 1 ad 7 January 1999, 1 ad 18 May 2000, drinking at the Central Pivot, and another adult 8 December 2000.

**Peregrine/Lanner Falcon**

1 Al Hair, 20 November 1998, 1 Thumamah, 22 October 1999, 1 Wadi Howtah, 1 February 2001 and 1 Abha, 12 April 2001

**75. Water Rail** - *Rallus aquaticus aquaticus* (Scarce breeder and winter visitor in Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		3		

One heard, Dammam, 26 February 1999. At the Hofuf marshes, a probable breeding site, 5 were heard on 12 October 2000 and one on 10 May 2001.

**Spotted Crake** - *Porzana porzana* (Regular migrant and a possible breeder at Al Hair)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

Only one single record, an individual seen along the Riyadh watercourse, Al Hair, on 8 April 1999. I have spent many hours in suitable habitats, during migration peak time and I have spent fruitless nights in efforts to hear this species. It may not be well established as a breeder, but I had expected it to be more regular during migration than I found it to be. Maybe the frequent reed-burnings in Al Hair area have played a negative role for this species.

**Little Crake** - *Porzana parva* (Rare migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One juvenile at old Dairy Farm, Thumamah 12 November 1999. This very obliging bird allowed careful study for a lengthy time, while feeding in a mud-pool.

**Baillon's Crake** - *Porzana pusilla* (Vagrant)

One flushed bird, believed to be this species, gave only a brief view, before hiding in vegetation, at a small pond E of Abu Arish in SW, 30 December 1999.

**Common Moorhen** - *Gallinula chloropus chloropus* (Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C		C	X	X

Very common all year where there is permanent water with some vegetation. Seen in 100+, e.g. Al Safi Dairy Farm, 25 January 2001.

**Eurasian Coot** - *Fulica atra atra* (A scarce resident and common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	1			4

Common, especially in winter, in Al Hair area. One record from Thumamah, at the old Dairy Farm, 12 November 1999.

**Demoiselle Crane** - *Grus virgo* (Passage migrant in W and NW Saudi Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	

It is a well known fact that, on their migration, Demoiselle Cranes passes right over the city of Jeddah. In spring, the main movements take place in the second half of March. On a two-day visit to Jeddah, 22-23 March 2001, I saw approximately 1400 Demoiselle Cranes. I spent the first day cruising up and down the beautiful Cornice Road. At 4.<sup>15</sup> p.m. I spotted the first flocks coming in from the Red Sea, heading NE. A total of 800 birds in 5 flocks. The following day, I counted 600 more passing the Jeddah airport (!), while I was waiting for my flight back to Riyadh.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** - *Haematopus ostralegus longipes* (Regular winter visitor in coastal areas, some overwinter)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		7	1	3

In SW at least 15 were seen on 22 July 2001, along the coast between Jizan and Al Birk. During winter, not very numerous but seen in numbers up to 30. In Eastern Province 10+ were still around 11 May 2001.

**Black-winged Stilt** - *Himantopus himantopus* (Common resident and migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
28	2	4	1	3

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	5	3	1		2	1	1	3	3	1	<b>28</b>
305	105	307	173	3		900	16	1	206	22	5	<b>2043</b>

One of the most encountered waders in Central Province. Al Safi Dairy Farm held the largest congregation of this species. More than 900 individuals were counted on 6 July 2000, approximately 100 were juveniles.



**Pied Avocet** - *Recurvirostra avosetta* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

Only seen in SW. At least 75 at Malaki Dam Lake on 29 December 1999.

**Crab-plover** - *Dromas ardeola* (Locally common breeder in SW and a regular visitor to Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	5

Seen in good numbers, 30-50 in a day, both winter and summer in SW. Especially Jizan-Al Birk area and the Farasan Island.

**Eurasian Stone-curlew** - *Burhinus oedicnemus* (Scarce migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	2		1	

Two records from Thumamah; singles on 28 October 1999 and 24 March 2000. One unexpected observation, to say the least, was of one (exhausted individual that I saw in the Cave Park at King Faisal Specialist Hospital during noontime, on 13 March 2001. East of Jeddah one was seen on 23 March 2001. An off season record was 2 at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 6 July 2000. The fact that one was a juvenile makes it really interesting, and suggests breeding, at least nearby.

**Cream-colored Courser** - *Cursorius cursor cursor* (Uncommon resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

Three records, in different remote areas of the Thumamah Estate. Four adults on 21 May 1999 and 16 July 1999. One adult with 2 pulli were seen on 4 May 2001.

**Collared Pratincole** - *Glareola pratincola* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
12	7		1	

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	3		1		4	1			<u>12</u>
			6	4		2		35	1			<u>48</u>

Migrants recorded between 1 April - 17 May and again 7 September - 27 October. Highest count was 20 outside Al Kharg on 13 September 2001. One summer record; at Al Safi Dairy Farm, where 2 were seen on 6 July 2000. On 28 April 2000 I saw 3 individuals at Thumamah. Two of these, totally lacked the white trailing edge to wings. They also appeared darker above and seemed to have black underwing coverts. For a moment I thought they were Black-winged Pratincoles. Luckily, they were extremely tame, allowing me to get within 5 metres, and only moved short distances when I came too close. Being this close, I could see a suffusion of red-brown on underwing and the length of the tail also supported that they were Collared. From longer distances, abraded individuals like this may very well be misidentified as Black-winged Pratincoles, which I believe, is a really rare visitor to central Saudi Arabia.

**Little Ringed Plover** - *Charadrius dubius curonicus* (Fairly common resident and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
27	3											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	3	6	3	5	1		1	2	3		1	<u>27</u>
5	10	22	6	15	6		15	21	5		10	<u>115</u>

Seen in variable numbers most of year. Highest count on migration was 20 at Thumamah, 2 September

1999. **Common Ringed Plover** - *Charadrius hiaticula tundrae* (Common migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	1	2	1	2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	2	1	1					1	1		1	<u>7</u>
	6	50	30					1	20		1	<u>108</u>

Recorded between 23 February - 6 April in spring and 2 September - 19 October in autumn. One winter record; 1 at Al Hair 7 December 2000. In SW one was seen in Jizan on 21 July 2001.

In Riyadh area only singles seen, however Al Safi Dairy Farm hosted higher numbers, e.g. 50+ on 2 March 2000.

**Kentish Plover** - *Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus* (Common migrant and resident on all coasts)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5		8	1	5								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	1	2			1						<u>5</u>
	10	50	21			50						<u>131</u>

One individual at Al-Ilb Dam, NW Riyadh on 30 April 1999, was the only record in Central Province, besides Al Safi Dairy Farm, where 10-50+ were counted on each visit. Several pulli also seen on 6 July 2000.

**Lesser Sand Plover** - *Charadrius mongolus* (Common migrant and winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		3		

Only seen in Eastern Province, with highest number 50+ on 11 May 2001.

**Greater Sand Plover** - *Charadrius leschenaultii* (Common migrant and winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1	4		4

Less numerous than Lesser Sand Plover, seen in numbers 5-10 at the coasts. One, of the colombinus race, was present at Thumamah on 28 April 2000.

**Caspian Plover** - *Charadrius asiaticus* (Regular passage migrant in variable numbers)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2	2			

A flock was present for about a week in the big central pivot field at Thumamah. On 9 March 2000. I counted 11 individuals, and by 15 March, the number had increased to 16. About 50% were males.

**Pacific Golden Plover** - *Pluvialis fulva* (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		1		1

One individual seen outside Dammam 6 April 1999, 2 found on Farasan Island 31 December 1999, and at Al Safi Dairy Farm two were present on 6 April 2000.

They were all in winter/non-breeding plumage.

**Grey Plover** - *Pluvialis squatarola* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		6		5

Commonly found at the coasts, with numbers around 10-30 recorded in a day. **Northern**

**Lapwing** - *Vanellus vanellus* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10	2											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	1								1	1	2	<u>10</u>
136	6								1	7	28	<u>178</u>

Recorded between 19 October and 8 February, normally in numbers up to 25. However, at Al Safi Dairy Farm I counted at least 111 individuals on 25 January 2001.

**Spur-winged Lapwing** - *Vanellus spinosus* (Scarce resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7			1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	1	1			1		1	1			<u>7</u>
87	75	5	18			28		10	84			<u>307</u>

On my first visit to Al Safi Dairy Farm, 24 February 2000, I counted at least 75 Spur-winged Plovers. On my consecutive visits, I found that plovers probably are present all year. On 6 July 2000, I could verify that breeding also takes place, when I saw 2 pulli, about 2 weeks old. Highest numbers was seen in January 2001, when 87 were present. In the vicinity of the other huge dairy farm at Al Kharg, Al Marai Dairy Farm, 10 were seen on 13 September 2001. In Western Province, E of Jeddah, 3 were recorded on 23 March 2001.

**Red-wattled Lapwing - *Vanellus indicus*** (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2	1			

One individual wintered at Thumamah. It was seen between 5 November 1999 and 17 February 2000. From 27 January and onwards it was present at the old dairy farm. A second individual was seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 25 January 2001.

**White-tailed Lapwing - *Vanellus leucurus*** (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2				1

In SW, two were seen at a small pond E of Abu Arish, 30 December 1999. As many as 15 adults were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000, and 1 adult seen in the same locality on 25 January 2001.

**Red Knot - *Calidris canutus*** (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		

One individual found, in almost complete breeding plumage, on 11 May 2001, NW of Dammam. There are few records of this species in Saudi Arabia.

**Sanderling - *Calidris alba alba*** (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		4		1

Up to 10 seen in coastal areas. One winter record of 3 on 31 December 1999 at the Farasan Island.

**Little Stint - *Calidris minuta*** (Very common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
27	10	6	2	4

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	<u>Total</u>
1	1	2	7	7		1	1	2	1	2	2	<u>27</u>
95	15	150	330	43		1	1	30	50	6	5	<u>726</u>

One of the few wader species, commonly encountered in central Saudi Arabia. Again, the Al Safi Farm hosted high numbers both in winter and during migration. On 6 April I counted at least 300 birds there.

**Temminck's Stint** - *Calidris temminckii* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
6	1		1	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3					1	1		1	<u>6</u>
			3					1	1		1	<u>6</u>

Only singles recorded at inland sites e.g. Thumamah, Al Safi Dairy Farm and Al Hair.

**Curlew Sandpiper** - *Calidris ferruginea* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
8	3	4		3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	5								<u>8</u>
			6	6								<u>12</u>

I only recorded this species during spring in the Central Province. Numerous at coastal sites.

**Dunlin** - *Calidris alpina* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
9	1	7		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	1	1					3	1	1		<u>9</u>
2	1	1	1					4	3	1		<u>13</u>

Recorded only in small numbers away from the coast. Seen in hundreds in E and SW Province during winter.

106. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** - *Limicola falcinellus* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		2		

Three records; two at Dammam 26 February 1999, 1 S Jubail. 6 April 1999 and 1 at Al Hair, 21 September 2000.

**Ruff** - *Philomachus pugnax* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
13	1			3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	1	2			1	1	5	1			<u>13</u>
3000	150	1400	2300			1	2	22	500			<u>7375</u>

One of the birding highlights was to find the very high numbers of wintering Ruffs at the Al Safi Farm. Prior to this, I had only seen few individuals in the Riyadh and Al Hair area. On my first visit to the Dairy Farm, 24 February 2000, I saw 150+. A week later, I counted at least 1400 and on 6 April 2000 there was a flock of at least 2300 birds. During the following winter the number was even higher. On 25 January 2001, there were more than 3000 Ruffs present!

**Common Snipe** - *Gallinago gallinago gallinago* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
36	8	2	1	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	9	4	4					1	2	6	4	<u>36</u>
48	20	20	20					1	18	9	38	<u>174</u>

Another common species in Central Province. Recorded between 7 September and 21 April. The highest count during one day was 22 at Al Hair 18 January 2001.

**Eurasian Woodcock** - *Scolopax rusticola* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One individual seen 9-10 December 1999 at the old, disused Dairy Farm at Thumamah. From a very small pond, with a few trees and minimal vegetation, I accidentally flushed this bird. With its long straight bill, warm brown upperparts and “bellied” body, I instantly suspected it to be a Woodcock. It flew towards some bushes and landed near the fence that surrounds the farm. I approached it slowly, but was not able to see it well, before it took off again. I couldn’t find it again, and decided to go back early the next morning. To my luck it was still there. Once again I flushed it from the small pond and it repeated its behaviour from the day before, and landed exactly at the same spot, a couple of hundred meters away. When I tried to approach it again it flew back into the farm, this time to a dried out sludge pool, with some vegetation. After a while I located it on the ground and was finally able to see fully barred underpart and transversal bars on the head. This species is not mentioned in “Birds of the Riyadh Region” and thus may constitute the first record in the Central Province.

**Black-tailed Godwit** - *Limosa limosa limosa* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3		1		1

One juvenile at Al Hair Dam on 21 October 1999. Up to 3 individuals were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm on two occasions in 2000, on 2 March and 19 October. Outside Dammam 2 was found 6 April 1999 and in SW one was seen in the backwaters of Malaki Dam, 29 December 1999.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** - *Limosa lapponica* (Common migrant and winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		6		6

Common in Eastern Province during my visits in February, April and October, with numbers exceeding 50. Less common in May. In South-west, only singles seen in December: In July it was common with approximately 30 recorded in a day.

**Whimbrel** - *Numenius phaeopus* (Common migrant and winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		4		4

Small numbers, 1-3 individuals, recorded during winter and spring in Eastern Province. In SW it was common in December 1999, where singles also were seen in July 2001.

**Eurasian Curlew** - *Numenius arquata* (Common migrant and winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		6		5

One individual, seen outside Al Marai Dairy, Al Kharg, on 13 September 2001, was the sole record in Central Province. However, commonly recorded at all coasts.

**Spotted Redshank** - *Tringa erythropus* (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
6	1	1		1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2		1	1						2			<u>6</u>
5		2	2						5			<u>14</u>

Small numbers seen. The first, a juvenile, was seen at Thumamah 22 October 1999. Up to four individuals were seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000 - 25 January 2001. In Eastern Province, one was seen in Al Khobar area on 10 May 2001. Recorded in summer in SW, where 4 were seen on 18 July 2001 outside Jizan.

**Common Redshank** - *Tringa totanus* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2		6	2	4

Single individuals seen in Central Province, at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000 and Al Hair on 18 January 2001. Numerous in coastal areas, also in summer.

**Common Greenshank** - *Tringa nebularia* (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
6		3	2	4

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			2	1				1	1	1		<u>6</u>
			2	1				1	1	1		<u>6</u>

Seen in all provinces in small numbers, not exceeding 5 individuals. One summer record on 21 July 2001 in SW.

**Marsh Sandpiper** - *Tringa stagnatilis* (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
6		2		2

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	2	1						1			<u>6</u>
2	1	2	1						3			<u>9</u>

Three individuals recorded at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000, otherwise most singles seen in Riyadh area. Highest count in SW was 10 at Malaki Dam backwaters, 29 December 1999.

**Green Sandpiper** - *Tringa ochropus* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
70	14	2	1	2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	13	12	6	1		1	2	6	7	7	7	<u>70</u>
26	39	42	17	1		5	20	50	22	14	21	<u>257</u>

The most encountered wader species in Central Province. Highest count was 26 in Wadi Hanifah, W Riyadh on 24 September 1999.

**Wood Sandpiper** - *Tringa glareola* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
19	8	1	1	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1	2	6	2				2	1	1	2	<u>19</u>
8	1	3	23	4				21	21	1	62	<u>144</u>

Another common but more random species. Largest congregation was 60+ at Mansouriyah, Riyadh River 7 December 2000.

**Terek Sandpiper** - *Xenus cinereus* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2		6		3

Very common at coasts, recorded in hundreds in a day. Two records from Central Province, one at Al-Ilb Dam, NW Riyadh on 13 May 1999 and 2 at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 6 April 2000.

**Common Sandpiper** - *Actitis hypoleucos* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
30	6	1	2	7								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	4	3	9	2		1	1	3	2	3	1	<u>30</u>
2	6	4	29	2		8	7	13	3	3	2	<u>79</u>

Highest count was 16 at Thumamah on 16 April 1999.

**Ruddy Turnstone** - *Arenaria interpres* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		2		2

One record of one individual in Riyadh area, 20 May 1999 at Al-Ilb Dam. Common in SW, during a winter visit 1999.



**Parasitic Jaeger** - *Stercorarius parasiticus* (Uncommon migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

One adult was found lying on the water, seen from the ferry to Farasan Island, 31 December 1999. It was harassed by gulls before it took off.

**Sooty Gull** - *Ichthyaetus hemprichii* (Very common resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	7

Seen in large numbers all year, especially in the Jizan area.

**White-eyed Gull** - *Ichthyaetus leucophthalmus* (Widespread resident in the Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	3

Normally seen in numbers up to 40 in a day in SW. Fewer in winter.

**Pallas's Gull** - *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* (Scarce winter visitor to all coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1	1	

Two records. One adult Al Jubail, Easter Province, 25 February 1999.

In W, outside Al Qunfudhah, one adult was found on 27 December 1999.

**Black-headed Gull** - *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (Very common winter visitor to coastal areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7		2	2	3

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	1	1			1				1	2	<u>7</u>
	1	3	1			2				2	11	<u>20</u>

In Riyadh area a flock of 10 were seen at Al Nakheel, 4 December 1998. Other records are from Al Hair and Al Safi Dairy Farm, where it also was recorded in July.

**Slender-billed Gull** - *Chroicocephalus genei* (Common winter and summer visitor, scarce inland)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		4	2	2

Seen in good numbers on my visits to Eastern and Western Provinces. Fewer in SW.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** - *Larus fuscus fuscus/heuglini/barabensis* (Scarce to common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		X	X	X

I have notes of single fuscus (Baltic Gull) in Dammam, Eastern Province, 25 February 1999. In Jeddah, 22-23 March 2001 and from Jizan 21 July 2001.

**Caspian Gull** - *Larus cachinnans* (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		X	X	X

Recorded in Eastern Province in February and October.

One juvenile seen at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 October 2000.

**Gull-billed Tern** - *Gelochelidon nilotica* (Mainly a winter visitor, present all year, possible breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		3	2	4

Commonly seen along coasts most of the year.

**Caspian Tern** - *Hydroprogne caspia* (Widespread breeder and a common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		6	2	5

Seen in good numbers, with up to 30 in a day, in the Gulf and Red Sea.

**Greater Crested Tern** - *Thalasseus bergii velox* (Locally common breeder, breeds on islands in the Gulf and S Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1	1	1

Only three records. One adult seen outside Al Jubail, Eastern Province, on 25 February 1999. One south of Jizan, 18 July 2001 and at least three between Jizan and Al Birk, 22 July 2001.

**Lesser Crested Tern** - *Thalasseus bengalensis* (Common breeder on islands in the Gulf and southern Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		4		1

Scarce in winter. All my records are between April and October, when it is common.

**Sandwich Tern** - *Thalasseus sandvicensis* (Scarce winter visitor and migrant, breeding has occurred)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		

Surprisingly only one record, one individual outside Dhahran, 6 April 1999.

**Common Tern** - *Sterna hirundo* (Spring and autumn passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		3		1?

I failed to record this species in Riyadh area. In previous years noted as “usually very common between March and June”. Apparently less common now. My records are limited to Jeddah where single immatures were seen in December 1999 and March 2001. In SW one, believed to be this species, was seen on 22 July 2001.

**White-cheeked Tern** - *Sterna repressa* (Breeding summer visitor to all coasts)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		3		1

The first one I saw was an adult moulting to winter plumage, on 13 October 2000, near the causeway to Bahrain, Al Khobar. Most have left the region by September. On my next visit in May the following year, it was common. A single observation of one individual in SW, Jizan 21 July 2001.

**Bridled Tern** - *Onychoprion anaethetus antarcticus* (Breeds on offshore islands in the Gulf and Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		2		

300+ offshore Ras Tanura, close to a small island on 11 May 2001. Given the fact that the day before only a single bird was seen in the Dhahran area, this was a nice surprise.

**Little Tern** - *Sternula albifrons* (Breeding summer visitor in Eastern Province, uncommon migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1		2		

Seen once in Riyadh area, at Al-Ilb Dam 13 May 1999. Singles seen in Eastern Province 10-11 May 2001.

**Saunders's Tern** - *Sternula saundersi* (Common breeder to all coasts, some are resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		5	1	3

Locally and seasonally very common, e.g. 300+ in a day, Al Khobar 13 October 2000.

**Whiskered Tern** - *Chlidonias hybrid hybrid* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2		1	1	

In Riyadh area, one moulting to winter-plumage, 27 August 1999 and one adult winter, along Riyadh water course, 28 September 2000. Outside Dammam a party of at least 7 were seen on 26 Feb 1999. Finally in Jeddah a single was seen on 22 Mar 2001.

**White-winged Tern** - *Chlidonias leucopterus* (Regular passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2			1	

One second summer, W Riyadh 25 Jun 1999. 15+ at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 19 Oct 2000 and 2+ c.40 km East Jeddah, 23 Mar 2001

**Brown Noddy** - *Anous stolidus pileatus* (Breeding summer visitor in southern Red Sea)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

At least 20 in a flock, perching and flying around a small light bouy, approximately 15 km offshore Jizan. Seen from the ferry between Jizan-Farasan Island, 31 Dec 1999 and also seen on the return the following millennium, 1 Jan 2000! Very unexpected to find this maritime species during this time of year.

**Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** - *Pterocles lichtensteinii arabicus* (Wide-spread but evasive, resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

In the wadi leading to Malaki Dam at least 20 were seen 19 July 2001. The following day, two more were seen in Wadi Jawwah.

**Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** - *Pterocles exustus erlangeri* (Common resident, with the same distribution as previous species)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	4

Small flocks seen early mornings or late afternoons flying to drinking places. Largest flock seen was 40+ on 28 Dec 1999. Much easier to find than Lichtenstein's.

**Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon** - *Columba livia/domestica* (Very common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	A	C	C	C

Apparently genuine Rock Doves were frequently seen in good numbers in barren, mountainous areas. Huge numbers of domestic forms were seen in many places in Riyadh and Thumamah.

**African Olive Pigeon** - *Columba arquatrix* (A scarce resident in SW highlands)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

After much effort and a very long walk (no 4WD) down the Raydah escarpment, I finally found 4-6 individuals on 31 Aug 2001.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** - *Streptopelia decaocto* (Abundant in central and eastern Saudi Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	A	A		

Very common everywhere.

**African Collared Dove** - *Streptopelia roseogrisea arabica* (A recently established breeder in the Riyadh region)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
	1			8

In SW it is common in summer, with some remaining in winter. In Central Province, at Thumamah on 19 Apr 2001, I saw a sole dove coming to drink at a pool in the desert. It did not stay many seconds, but from what I managed to see, it looked like an African Collared.

**Red-eyed Dove** - *Streptopelia semitorquata* (Local resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

I only found this species in the Bani Malik area. During three visits in July 2001, I counted 30+ each day.

**European Turtle Dove** - *Streptopelia turtur* (Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5	3											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	1				1				<u>5</u>
			4	1				1				<u>6</u>

Surprisingly few records. Perhaps overlooked due to the vast numbers of doves everywhere! Seen only in Al Hair: one 13 May 1999; Mansouriyah: one 21 April 2000 and Thumamah: one 9 April 1999; two 21 April 2000; one 15 September 2000.

**Dusky Turtle Dove** - *Streptopelia lugens* (Local breeder in the highlands of Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

Seen in Abha area, where it is not uncommon. On 12 April 2001, I found 3 NW Abha. Appears to be more numerous in autumn. In the same area I counted 12 on 31 August 2001.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** - *Streptopelia orientalis* (Vagrant)

During a visit to the Al Safi Dairy Farm, 25 Jan 2001, I saw a dark, heavy built Turtle Dove, equal in size to Collared that I immediately suspected to be an Oriental Turtle Dove. It did not allow approach, thus I could not make a positive identification.

**Laughing Dove** - *Spilopelia senegalensis* (Common to very common in most places)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C		C	C

**Namaqua Dove** - *Oena capensis capensis* (Locally common in cultivated areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
46	22	1	2	9

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	6	9	9	1	2	1	1	3		4	4	<b>46</b>
71	18	47	78	5	24	15	7	35		17	41	<b>358</b>

Recorded in good numbers in all provinces except for the Eastern, where only two were seen.

**Bruce's Green Pigeon** - *Treron waalia* (Local, resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

Seen in Bani Malik area 23-24 July 2001, 49 individuals all together. Outside Sahar Al Aasem, in Abha region, I found three individuals on 30 August 2001.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** - *Psittacula krameri* (Introduced. Common, mostly resident in larger cities)

\*outside Riyadh

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
19*		2	1	1

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	5	2	2		1		1	4		1	2	<b>19</b>
10	10	6	25		1		5	31		7	6	<b>101</b>

This species is relatively common in Riyadh. Outside the capital it is less frequent and rather scarce in SW. Highest count was 24 in the Al hair area on 21 April 2000.

**Diederik Cuckoo** - *Chrysococcyx caprius* (Scarce breeding summer visitor to Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

One female seen outside Bani Malik, 21 July 2001.

**Common Cuckoo** - *Cuculus canorus* (Scarce migrant in Saudi Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	3			

Seen only once in spring, 2-3 birds at Thumamah 16 April 1999. The same locality produced two more records later in 1999, when a juvenile was seen 8 October and another one on 14 October. In Al Hair area one juvenile was found on 9 September 1999.

**White-browed Coucal** - *Centropus superciliosus superciliosus* (Resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

Five records in Southwest: 1 Malaki Dam 29 Dec 1999, 1 Abu Arish area 30 Dec 1999, 3 Wadi Jawwah 20 July 2001, 2 Bani Malik 23 July and 1 in the same area 24 July 2001

**Western Barn Owl** - *Tyto alba erlangeri* (Localised resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

Seen once during daytime on 15 March 2000, when 2 adult birds suddenly appeared in the "Pharaoh Eagle Owl-gorge" at Thumamah.

**Eurasian Scops Owl** - *Otus scops* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One individual found day-roosting on 3 Feb 2000 at Thumamah. It was seen again on 11 Feb and the last time on 17 Feb, each time sitting on the same branch.

**Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** – *Bubo ascalaphus* (Widespread, resident and winter visitor, in northern and central regions)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
9	9			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	1	1	2				1	2			<u>9</u>
2	1	1	1	4				2	2			<u>13</u>

I only found this species at Thumamah. Most of my records are from an area, north of the estate, where they breed. Unfortunately this is also a popular picnic place for Saudi families during weekends, but it seems that the owls are doing well. During migration time, I also found one owl inside the estate and one further out in the northern desert. On 4 May 2001, one juvenile was seen together with an adult in the breeding-area. One calling male, of the pale colour morph, "desertorum", was seen well on 22 Jan 1999. This individual was very pale overall with only faint breast markings. A female responded, but was never seen.

**Desert Owl** - *Strix hadorami* (Scarce resident in most regions)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				1

Two heard calling in the evening at Wadi Howtah on 1 February 2001. In SW one bird was heard calling from the valley W Raydah escarpment, just after sunset, on 12 April 2001.

**Plain Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus inornatus* (Local summer visitor and probably a breeder in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

One observation of a bird flushed and later seen on the ground, in a wadi leading to Malaki Dam, 19 July 2001.

**Montane Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus poliocephalus poliocephalus* (Resident at higher altitudes in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

Another memorable highlight. In the evening of 12 April, 2001, Kurt Johansson and I were driving on the road at the top of the Raydah escarpment, almost 2800 m above sea level. We made frequent stops to listen for the call of Montane Nightjar. We never managed to hear any calls, but suddenly I saw a nightjar lying on the road, just a few metres in front of us. We could see it very well for a couple of minutes in the headlights of our car, before it took off.

**European Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus europaeus* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4				

One flushed c. 20 km SW of Thumamah on 29 April 1999. One in flight over the car park at Euromarché Supermarket in Riyadh on 1 May 2000. The Al Hair area produced two records; singles on 11 May 2000 and 3 May 2001.

**Egyptian Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus aegyptius* (Rare passage migrant)

One unidentified nightjar was seen briefly at dusk on 2 March 2001, some 310 km W of Riyadh. It gave a very pale impression suggesting an Egyptian Nightjar, which also the early date indicates.

**Common Swift** - *Apus apus* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	1			1

Three at Al Hair, 18 March 1999. At least 5 at Rawdhat Khuraim, 3 April 1999. In SW a winter record was made in Jizan, 31 December 1999, with 1-2 individuals seen. At least 10 at Thumamah, 31 March 2000.



**Pallid Swift** - *Apus pallidus* (Common passage migrant and breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
32	15	2	1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	8	8	4	1					1	2	<u>32</u>
133	64	169	156	70	1					1	9	<u>603</u>

Peculiar movement pattern. This species is common from late January to throughout May. Only one record in June (22<sup>nd</sup>) and after that strangely not recorded again until November (5<sup>th</sup>).

**Alpine Swift** - *Tachymarptis melba* (Regular passage migrant and localised breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
12	12											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	2	3	2	5								<u>12</u>
	6	4	4	16								<u>30</u>

Scattered observations of one up to five individuals, between 4 February and 26 May. I found May to be the best month for this species. All records are from Thumamah.

**Little Swift** - *Apus affinis* (Resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				6

Seen in good numbers in e.g. Abha and Bani Malik

**African Palm Swift** - *Cypsiurus parvus parvus* (Common resident breeder in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				10

Common in most lowland areas, the Tihamah, also in towns and villages.

**White-throated Kingfisher** - *Halcyon smyrnensis smyrnensis* (Rare winter visitor to the region, localised breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
11												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1		2	1	1		1	2		1		<u>11</u>
2	1		2	1	1		1	2		1		<u>11</u>

Several observations along the Riyadh watercourse, from Riyadh to south of Al Hair, involving 2-4 individuals. My observations suggest that one or two birds were present all year. The first I found in Wadi Hanifah, west of DQ, Riyadh, on 2 April 1999. Later same year in the same area, I saw one 1<sup>st</sup> calendar year bird on 27 August and again 16 September. In 2000, one individual was seen 10 February and 21 April at different locations in the Al Hair area. Not far from Mansouriyah, one individual was found on 22 June, this was a new individual, based on bill colouration, and was seen intermittently on this location until 18 January 2001. The same day another individual was seen much further south, close to Al Hair. This one was last seen on 3 May 2001.

Update 2021: Now an established breeder in Al Hair area.

**Grey-headed Kingfisher** - *Halcyon leuccephala semicaerulea* (Locally common in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				4

A good place for this species is the Bani Malik area, where I counted 15 individuals on 21 July 2001.

**Collared Kingfisher** - *Todiramphus chloris abyssinicus* (Localised resident in mangroves in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	

The mangroves north of Al Birk are the best place to see this beautiful bird. This area is loaded with small crabs, which is reportedly the sole diet of the kingfisher. On 22 July 2001, 5 individuals were seen here and about 10 more heard.

**Common Kingfisher** - *Alcedo atthis* (Passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	2	1							1		1	<u>5</u>
	1	1							1		1	<u>4</u>

The first sighting was of one individual at a small dam in Al Nakheel in Riyadh, 22 October 1998. The following records were all from Al Hair area: One male 31 December 1998, one 11 February 1999 and probably the same again on 18<sup>th</sup>. In Mansouriyah one individual was found on 15 March 2001.

**Pied Kingfisher** - *Ceryle rudis* (Vagrant or rare winter visitor in E)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1	1		

As many as six Pied Kingfishers were found on 25 February 1999, outside Al Jubail in Eastern Province. Another unexpected record was of one stationary female at the old, disused Dairy farm, Thumamah. It was seen 14-22 October 1999. Seems like there was an influx of Pied Kingfishers into Arabia this year.

**White-throated Bee-eater** - *Merops albicollis* (Locally common summer visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				7

Good numbers seen in July and August mainly in Jizan, Bani Malik and Abha area.

**Green Bee-eater** - *Merops orientalis cyanophrys* (Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C	1	1	7

Recorded in high numbers throughout the region

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** - *Merops persicus persicus* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
23	12											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		2	3	2	1		1	6	3	5		<u>23</u>
		13	15	24	1		50	111	61	67		<u>342</u>

Spring migration commence in March (earliest 9<sup>th</sup>) and continues to May. An interesting record was of one adult bird on 22 June 2000 in Al Hair area. Autumn migration starts in August and continues to November, latest 16<sup>th</sup>.

**European Bee-eater** - *Merops apiaster* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
22	11	4		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		3	10	1			2	5	1			<u>22</u>
		52	403	10			65	125	1			<u>656</u>

Similar movement pattern as previous species, but fewer records in late autumn. More pronounced peaks in April and September. Earliest spring record was 18 March and the latest in autumn was 27 October.

**European Roller** - *Coracias garrulus* (Passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	3											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	1			1	2				<u>7</u>
			5	1			1	7				<u>14</u>

Seen both in spring and autumn on migration at Al Hair, Thumamah and Al Safi Dairy Farm. Highest number in one day was 6 at Thumamah on 2 September 1999.

**Abyssinian Roller** - *Coracias abyssinicus* (Common resident in south-west)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

Recorded on all visits to the Tihama. Highest count in one day was 10+ in Wadi Jawwah area on 20 July 2001.

**Indian Roller** - *Coracias benghalensis* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One adult spent most of winter 1999/2000 at Thumamah. I discovered the bird on 8 October 1999. On my next visit 14 October, it was still present. After this it moved around a bit and was also seen by the staff at the Research Centre, I was told later. Next time I saw it was on 27 January 2000, when it had returned to the original site. Here it stayed put to at least 17 February, when I saw it for the last time. This was the second record in Central Province according to Stagg, first was at Mansouriyah in 1989.

**Eurasian Hoopoe** - *Upupa epops* (Common migrant and scarce resident breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
35	19			6								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	8	12	4		1		1	5	1	1	1	<u>35</u>
2	15	41	12		4		1	42	4	1	1	<u>123</u>

At least 25 in the Al Hair area on 9 September 1999, was the highest total for one day.

**African Grey Hornbill** - *Tockus nasutus nasutus* (Resident in the Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				8

Up to fifteen seen in one day in the Bani Malik area, e.g. on 24 July 2001.

**Eurasian Wryneck** - *Jynx torquilla* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	1			

Four records of single birds. The first was at Thumamah on 16 April 1999, next at Al Hair 21 September 2000. A winter-record near Mansouriyah on 18 January 2001 was unexpected. Finally, at Rawdhat Khuraim, a bird was seen 5 April 2001.

**Arabian Woodpecker** - *Dendrocopos dora* (A resident endemic to western Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

Three sightings, two in the Abha region: One female 2 January 2000 and one in flight 15 April 2001. One was found at Bani Malik on 24 July 2001.

**Singing Bush Lark** - *Mirafra cantillans simplex* (Summer visitor in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

During a stop outside a farm, south of Jizan on 18 July 2001, Kurt Johansson and I noticed a trilling song we could not identify. We spotted an untiring bird in a strange song-flight close by. This was enough for us to immediately identify it as a Singing Bush Lark. We soon found two more individuals on the ground. They were all very cooperative and allowed very good views.

**Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** - *Eremopterix nigriceps melanauchen* (Occasional breeder in C, resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
8	7	2	1	6

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			4	3	1							<u>8</u>
			15	7	3							<u>25</u>

Apart from for Thumamah, I only saw this species at Rawdhat Khuraim; 4 males and 2 females on 5 April 2001. In SW 15+ were seen south of Jizan 18 July 2001.

**Dunn's Lark** - *Eremalauda dunnii eremodites* (Localised breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
5	5			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			1	2	1	1						<u>5</u>
			1	7	1	1						<u>10</u>

Found in the more barren parts of the desert at Thumamah. Only singles seen, except on 21 May 1999, when I counted 6 individuals.

**Bar-tailed Lark** - *Ammomanes cincture arenicolor* (Locally common, mainly resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
6	6	1										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	2			1		1					1	<u>6</u>
12	4			1		3					1	<u>21</u>

All my sightings in central Saudi are from Thumamah area. A flock of 12 there on 14 January 1999, was the highest count of this probably, easily over-looked species. The Eastern Province record was of one individual in the desert, about 250 km E of Riyadh.

**Desert Lark** - *Ammomanes deserti isabellina* (Very common resident in rocky areas)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
41	24	1		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	6	5	6	5	1	1	1	2	1	5	2	<u>41</u>
50	30	31	42	37	4	2	1	11	3	25	7	<u>243</u>

Can be found in good numbers in most suitable areas. More than 20 individuals found at some sites.

**Greater Hoopoe-Lark** - *Alaemon alaudipes desertorum* (Rather common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
15	11	1	2	3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3	1	1	1	3				2	1		3	<u>15</u>
16	1	3	2	18				2	2		3	<u>47</u>

Thumamah is a good site for finding this species. On 21 May 1999, 13 were recorded in a sandy desert area with low scrub.

**Thick-billed Lark** - *Ramphocoris clotbey* (Scarce winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

On top of the Buwayb escarpment (the eastern boundary of Thumamah estate) a flock of 10 was found on 1 January 1999.

**Rufous-capped Lark** - *Calandrella eremica* (Resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

At least 10 individuals were seen in a loose flock at a stony plateau, N of Abha on 14 April 2001.

**Greater Short-toed Lark - *Calandrella brachydactyla*** (Passage migrant, occasional breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
12	9											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		4	1					6	1			<u>12</u>
		237	10					61	50			<u>358</u>

I only had one day with really high numbers, 24 March 2000, when more than 200 Greater Short-toed Larks were present at Thumamah. Otherwise, only moderate numbers of 5-50 birds.

**Mediterranean/Turkestan Short-toed Lark - *Alaudala rufescens/heinei*** (Passage migrant, occasional breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
26	22	3										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	3	7	6	5		1		1	1		1	<u>26</u>
1	23	54	37	18		1		5	1		1	<u>141</u>

Increasingly common, especially at Thumamah, where it almost certainly breeds in the vicinity of the Big Pivot Field. Highest number at Thumamah was 30+ on 8 March 2001. Also Al Safi Dairy Farm hosted significant numbers during migration, e.g. 20 individuals on 6 April 2001

**Crested Lark - *Galerida cristata brachyura*** (Abundant resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	A	A	A	A

Common everywhere.

**Oriental Skylark - *Alauda gulgula*** (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

On 1 October 1999, during one of my visits to the Thumamah Estate, I found a lark that immediately drew my attention, while scrutinizing a big pivot-irrigated field, close to The King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre. The bird was seen well in good light for about one hour, mostly through a spotting scope with 30x magnification, at a distance of 20-25 meters. It looked very relaxed and was foraging constantly, partly concealed in low alfalfa together with 3 Short-toed Larks, *Calandrella brachydactyla*, allowing careful comparison of size and bill structure. After a couple of minutes the party suddenly flew up, possibly due to an approaching raptor, which I was too busy to try to locate. They landed again, however, only 20 meters away. During this short flight, I heard the lark call twice. It was a buzzing call: "biz-biz". At the same time I noticed the lack of white trailing edge to the wing. This finally convinced me that I was looking at an Oriental Skylark. Possibly a first for Riyadh area. On 8 December 2000, I briefly saw a lark that I believe also was an Oriental Skylark.

**Eurasian Skylark** - *Alauda arvensis* (Rare winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5	5											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1									1	1	<u>5</u>
17	5									5	6	<u>33</u>

Five observations, all at the Big Pivot Field, Thumamah. A flock of 16 on 27 January 2000 with 5 remaining on 3 February. In the following winter 5 individuals were found on 16 November, by 8 December 2000 they had increased to 6. One of these birds remained until at least 12 January 2001.

**Temminck's Lark** - *Eremophila bilopha* (Rare winter visitor and occasional breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
3	3											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	2			1								<u>3</u>
	5			11								<u>16</u>

Three records on top of the Buwayb escarpment: 10 adults + 1 juvenile on 21 May 1999. 2 adults on 11 February 2000. 3 adults on 8 February 2001

**Sand Martin** - *Riparia riparia* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
36	20	1		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		6	8	7	2			7	5		1	<u>36</u>
		27	99	400	4			300	170		2	<u>1002</u>

Earliest spring record was 2 March and latest 23 June. Autumn passage was in September (earliest 7<sup>th</sup>) through October (latest 28<sup>th</sup>). One December record; 2 individuals at Al Hair 18 December 1998.

**Pale Crag Martin** - *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta perpallida/arabica* (Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
42	19	1		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	4	2	7	2	1		2		3	10	6	<u>42</u>
C	C	C	C	C	C		C		C	C	C	<u>C</u>

Common in most areas. I did not make detailed counts for this species, since it is so numerous.



**Eurasian Crag Martin** - *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
20	12											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	9	6	1					2	1		<u>20</u>
	1	221	47	10					40	60		<u>379</u>

In spring, the earliest record was of a single bird on 19 February and the latest 18 May. The highest count was 70 at Thumamah 31 March 2000. Autumn passage was less pronounced, recorded only a few days between 27 October and 5 November, even though in significant numbers.

**Barn Swallow** - *Hirundo rustica* (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
56	22	4		9								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	8	7	6	4	2	1	1	9	6	4	1	<u>56</u>
21	58	200	300	200	57	5	30	200	200	28	2	<u>1301</u>

Most numerous from March- May in spring and September-October in autumn. At a small bridge, in the Al Hair area, more than 50 were seen including juveniles on 22 June 2000. At the Al Safi Dairy Farm, a potential breeding site, 5 birds were seen on 6 July 2000.

**Red-rumped Swallow** - *Cecropis daurica* (Regular passage migrant, occasional breeder. Resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
23	6	1		8								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	5	8	5	1	1	1	1	1				<u>23</u>
	36	67	9	3	17	2	15	1				<u>150</u>

Spring records dominate from February (earliest 11<sup>th</sup>) and numbers peaking in March. From late April to mid May 1999, I noticed 3-4 birds apparently inspecting a small bridge, S Al Hair. During my next visit, 9 July, I saw 1 adult + 1 juvenile, thus breeding could be suspected. On 22 June 2000, I counted 17 individuals including some juveniles at the same site.

**Common House Martin** - *Delichon urbicum* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
16	9											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	8	2	2	1				1	1			<u>16</u>
10	74	17	4	5				20	2			<u>132</u>

Spring movement from January (earliest 27<sup>th</sup>) to May (latest 18<sup>th</sup>). In autumn only recorded between 9 September and 1 October. Recorded in small flocks up to 20+, thus unexpectedly moderate numbers throughout my stay. Large numbers have been reported from Thumamah during spring migration, when flocks following the escarpment, descend and feed over the alfalfa fields.

**Tawny Pipit** - *Anthus campestris campestris* (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
45	26			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	9	5					3	5	8	7	<u>45</u>
27	51	134	18					15	24	55	20	<u>344</u>

Numbers start to build up in February and peak in March with e.g. 50+ recorded at Thumamah. Latest observation in spring was 16 April. Earliest autumn record was 7 September.

**Long-billed Pipit** - *Anthus similis arabicus* (Resident in the highlands of Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
	?			6

Up to 5 recorded in one day in Abha region. At Thumamah, in December 1999 and March 2000, I saw and heard 2-3 individuals that resembled Long-billed Pipits, but they were never positively identified.

**Tree Pipit** - *Anthus trivialis trivialis* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
11	10	1										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	4					2	4			<u>11</u>
		20	27					3	15			<u>65</u>

Recorded in spring from 31 March to 29 April, in numbers up to 20 birds, and in lower numbers, during autumn between 15 September and 27 October.

**Meadow Pipit** - *Anthus pratensis pratensis* (Scarce migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1	1		

One outside Dammam 26 February 1999 and one at Thumamah on 15 March 2000 were the only records.

**Red-throated Pipit** - *Anthus cervinus* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
20	15	2		2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		2	9	5					2	2		<u>20</u>
		2	179	24					10	5		<u>220</u>

Recorded between 29 March and 26 May in spring, with a noticeable peak in middle of April. On 19 April 2001 at least 110 were counted at Thumamah. Low numbers in autumn between 22 October and 12 November.

**Water Pipit - *Anthus spinoletta coutellii*** (Regular winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	6	2										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	2	1									2	<u>7</u>
20	3	1									2	<u>26</u>

Common in the Gulf region during winter. Single wintering birds found at Thumamah from 9 December to 15 March. At Al Safi Dairy Farm as many as 19 individuals were counted on 25 January 2001.

**Western Yellow Wagtail - *Motacilla flava flava/feldegg/bema/lutea/thunbergi*** (Common passage migrant, some remain)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
44	29	2	2	3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1		8	8	6		1	1	11	7	1		<u>44</u>
8		93	194	44		22	30	700	1100	3		<u>2194</u>

Numerous, especially in autumn. Highest count was 500+ at Thumamah on 1 October 1999. Many different subspecies occur; feldegg, beema, flava, lutea and thunbergi are distinguishable. Main passage occurs from March to May and again from August to November. In spring, feldegg is the first subspecies to pass, with beema, flava, thunbergi and a few lutea to follow. In July 2000, I found evidence that breeding had taken place at The Al Safi Dairy Farm, when I saw 3 recently fledged juveniles, being repeatedly fed by adult birds. This is the first known breeding of Yellow Wagtail in Arabia. See The Phoenix Number 20 January 2004.

**Citrine Wagtail - *Motacilla citreola werae*** (Scarce winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5	2											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1									1		3	<u>5</u>
1									3		2	<u>6</u>

Singles seen at Al Hair and Thumamah. At Al Safi Dairy Farm 3 individuals were found on 10 October 2000.

**Grey Wagtail - *Motacilla cinerea*** (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
9	3			2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	2	5						1	1			<u>9</u>
	2	10						1	2			<u>15</u>

1-4 individuals recorded February to March in spring and again September to October.

**White Wagtail** - *Motacilla alba alba* (Very common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
37	16		3	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	6	6	1						4	6	8	<u>37</u>
3100	342	268	2						34	91	223	<u>4060</u>

Recorded between 8 October and 6 April. Extremely high numbers were found at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 25 January 2001, when I counted at least 3000 during one day. On 10 December 1999, at Thumamah, I saw a White Wagtail with prominent white wing-patches, resembling one of the eastern Siberian subspecies.

**White-eared Bulbul** - *Pycnonotus leucotis mesopotamia* (Introduced. Very common resident in Central and Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	3	2		

No detailed counts were made for this species. Abundant in Al Hair area. Up to 5 birds recorded in April 2000 and May 2001 at Thumamah.

**White-spectacled Bulbul** - *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* (Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
A	1		X	X

Another very common species, found in most areas, except for Eastern Province. The Thumamah record was of two individuals on 21 May 1999.

**Grey Hypocolius** - *Hypocolius ampelinus* (Regular winter visitor in variable numbers)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
22	13											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	6	7	1						1	2	1	<u>22</u>
43	65	34	1						11	36	1	<u>191</u>

One of my true favourites! Recorded between 28 October and 8 April. Highest counts were 60+ at Thumamah 4 February 1999 and 40+ at DQ, Riyadh 20 January 2000.

**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** - *Erythropgia galactotes familiaris* (Common migrant and breeding summer visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
25	16											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		2	11	7			1	4				<u>25</u>
		3	29	44			3	8				<u>87</u>

The earliest spring record was 25 March and latest autumn record was made 15 September. Most numerous during the first week of May, with more than 10 recorded in one day.

**Black Scrub Robin** - *Cercotrichas podobe melanoptera* (Common, resident but scarce in Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C		C	C

Recorded frequently August - April, but very few observations May - July. Maybe, there is a change to a more secretive behaviour post breeding? Most numerous in the Al Hair area along Riyadh watercourse.

**Common Nightingale** - *Luscinia megarhynchos* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	2			1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3					1				<u>4</u>
			7					1				<u>8</u>

Singles only recorded in April and September, with the exception of five individuals in Mansouriyah area on 21 April. Brief song was heard from a couple of these.

**Bluethroat** - *Luscinia svecica* (Regular migrant and fairly common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
20	7	1		

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	3	4						1		3	5	<u>20</u>
10	5	5						1		14	12	<u>47</u>

Highest count was 10+ on 19 November 1998, Al Hair along Riyadh watercourse, when song also was heard. Observations spanned between 2 September and 29 March.

**White-throated Robin** - *Irania gutturalis* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
6	3			3

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			5	1								<u>6</u>
			18	1								<u>19</u>

Nineteen individuals recorded in spring, between 9 April and 3 May. Best day for this species was 19 April 2001, when 8 males and 2 females were at Thumamah. In Southwest seen in both July and August.

**Eversmann's Redstart** - *Phoenicurus erythronotus* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

In 2000, a female was found on 27 January at Thumamah. It was seen several times throughout February and the last time on 9 March. To my knowledge, this is only the second record in Central Province; the first, a male, was in December 1990, also at Thumamah.

**Black Redstart** - *Phoenicurus ochruros ochruros/phoenicuroides/semirufus* (Scarce migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
15	11			3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	6	5	1								1	<u>15</u>
2	11	5	1								1	<u>20</u>

Wintering birds seen at Thumamah in December-January with migrants adding up from February. Latest spring record was 6 April 2000 at Al Safi Dairy Farm. Birds showing characters of ochruros and phoenicuroides/semirufus.

**Common Redstart** - *Phoenicurus phoenicurus phoenicurus/samamisticus* (Rather common migrant and scarce winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
29	20	1		2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1		7	8	6				1	3	2	1	<u>29</u>
1		17	34	20				1	3	2	2	<u>80</u>

Spring passage peaked in April. Seven of the subspecies samamisticus noted, all in March. Scarcer in autumn, with a few wintering.

**Blackstart** - *Oenanthe melanura melanura/neumanni* (Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
33	21		1	9								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	7	2	2					5	3	4	4	<u>33</u>
16	18	4	4					6	4	35	5	<u>92</u>

Up to 30 in a day. More frequent than my sporadic notes indicate. Absent in Eastern Province.

**Whinchat** - *Saxicola rubetra* (Scarce migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	6	1		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	3	3								<u>7</u>
		1	4	6								<u>11</u>

Only seen in spring, earliest 29 March and latest 21 May.

**European Stonechat** - *Saxicola rubicola rubicola* (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

This and following species are not separated in my counts.

**Siberian Stonechat** - *Saxicola maurus maurus/variegatus/hemprichii* (Regular passage migrant and winter visitor)

**European/Siberian Stonechat**

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
43	29	2	1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	6	13	3				1	3	3	5	4	<b>43</b>
10	22	91	4				1	3	3	13	11	<b>158</b>

Most numerous in March, a high percentage being maurus. Wintering birds accumulate from end of November.

**African Stonechat** - *Saxicola torquatus felix* (Resident breeder in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				X

Most records are from the mountainous Abha region, where it is pretty common

**Isabelline Wheatear** - *Oenanthe isabellina* (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
61	36	1	1	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	7	15	8	2				8	6	5	4	<b>61</b>
16	19	76	20	2				36	10	6	6	<b>191</b>

Most numerous in March and September. Latest spring-record was 21 May and earliest in autumn was 2 September. Highest count was 17 at Al Safi Dairy Farm on 2 March 2000.

**Red-breasted Wheatear** - *Oenanthe bottae bottae* (Resident in the highlands of the Southwest)

Thumamah	E	W	SW
			4

A total of six recorded in the Abha region.

**Northern Wheatear** - *Oenanthe oenanthe* (Common spring-migrant, scarce in autumn)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
19	13		1	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		8	9					2				<u>19</u>
		127	36					3				<u>166</u>

Records in spring restricted to March (earliest 11<sup>th</sup>) and April (latest 29<sup>th</sup>). Only two autumn records, both in September. Highest count was 50+ at Thumamah, 24 March 2000.

**Pied Wheatear** - *Oenanthe pleschanka* (Common spring migrant, rarer in autumn)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
45	20	2										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	4	19	10	1				2	5	4		<u>45</u>
	4	139	57	1				4	6	9		<u>220</u>

Recorded in spring between 11 February and 6 May, peaking in March, with numbers up to 27 in a day. Three records of the white-throated form vittata: Two on 11 March 1999 and one on 15 March 2000, all at Thumamah. Autumn records spanned from 7 September to 12 November.

**Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** - *Oenanthe melanoleuca* (Uncommon passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
13	8	1										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		12						1				<u>13</u>
		33						2				<u>35</u>

Highest number was 6 at Thumamah on 24 March 2000. Approximately 65% of the males were black-throated. Each spring there was a small number of unidentified pale-throated females that almost certainly were this species.

**Desert Wheatear** - *Oenanthe deserti deserti* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
33	20	1	1	2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
9	8	3							2	6	5	<u>33</u>
33	19	33							2	8	13	<u>108</u>

Recorded between 19 October and 22 March. Highest number at Thumamah was 10+ on 7 January 1999. During a stop in the desert, 310 km W Riyadh on 2 March 2001, at least 20 were counted.



**Finsch's Wheatear** - *Oenanthe finschii finschii* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

A 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year male was seen at Thumamah 15 March 2000.

**Red-tailed Wheatear** - *Oenanthe chrysopygia* (Rare winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

Three records of singles, all at Thumamah; 18 November 1999, 27 January 2000 and 8 December 2000.

**Kurdish Wheatear** - *Oenanthe xanthopygna*

A brief view of a male on 26 November 1999 in Al Hair area, showed characters of Kurdish Wheatear. However, the observation time was too short to make a positive identification. I have not found any information on this species occurring in central Saudi Arabia.

**Mourning Wheatear** - *Oenanthe lugens lugens/persica* (Regular winter visitor, breeds in northwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
24	16	1		

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	4								1	8	4	<u>24</u>
23	5								2	16	12	<u>58</u>

Observed between 5 October and 19 February. Highest number being 8 at Thumamah on 14 January 1999.

**Arabian Wheatear** - *Oenanthe lugentoides* (Common resident in the highlands of Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				6

Locally common in Southwest, with more than 10 seen in one day.

**Hooded Wheatear** - *Oenanthe monacha* (Scarce resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

Only three records, all at Thumamah in 1999; one female 4 February, another female 5 November and one 1<sup>st</sup>-winter male on 10 December.

**White-crowned Wheatear** - *Oenanthe leucopyga ernesti* (Common resident, scarce in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
35	17			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	8	1	3	4			1	3	1	6	4	<u>35</u>
20	22	1	7	6			2	6	2	25	18	<u>109</u>

Locally very common in rocky areas.

**Little Rock Thrush** - *Monticola rufocinereus sclateri* (Mainly resident in Southwest)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				4

Up to eight seen during one day in the Abha region.

**Common Rock Thrush** - *Monticola saxatilis* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
6	3	1										
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	4	1								<u>6</u>
		2	4	1								<u>7</u>

Recorded between 26 March and 6 May, in ones or twos. No autumn records during my stay.

**Blue Rock Thrush** - *Monticola solitarius* (Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
11	4			2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
3	2	3							2	1		<u>11</u>
2	1	6							2	1		<u>12</u>

Earliest observation in autumn was 5 October and the latest in spring was 8 March.

**Yemen Thrush** - *Turdus menachensis* (Endemic to the SW Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				7

All records are from the Abha region, where it is quite common.

**Black-throated Thrush** - *Turdus atrogularis* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One subadult male was seen near the escarpment at Thumamah on 19 April 2001.

**Song Thrush** - *Turdus philomelos* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	4			2

Three records in 1999 at Thumamah on 11 March, 12 November and 9 December. One record in 2000, two at Thumamah on 2 February. Also seen in Abha region, 2-3 January 2000.

**Zitting Cisticola** - *Cisticola juncidis uropygialis* (Locally common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

Recorded in good numbers at Malaki Dam and Wadi Jawwah. "Zitting" birds were heard in January 2000 at Malaki Dam.

**Graceful Prinia** - *Prinia gracilis yemenensis/hufufae* (Widespread. An established breeder in the Riyadh region)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7		6	1	10

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	1	2		1			1	1				<u>7</u>
2	2	22		20			15	5				<u>66</u>

My first record of this species in Central Province was two on 25 January 2001 at the Al Safi Farm. The first two individuals along Riyadh River, turned up NW Mansouriyah, c. 2 Km downstream from the Sewage Treatment Plant, on 23 February, and already by 1 March, there were 12 singing. The highest number of singing birds was counted on March 15, when I heard 22 individuals. In May still about 20, in August I heard 15 singing and on my last visit on 13 September I saw 5 birds. First known breeding population in the Central Province!

**Scrub Warbler** - *Scotocerca inquieta grisea/buryi* (Scarce resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
5	4			1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	2	2								<u>5</u>
		2	3	4								<u>9</u>

Most records from Thumamah. Two were seen collecting nest material in the escarpment on 25 March 1999.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler** - *Locustella naevia*

Two records of very skulking, dark warblers with striped backs, on 14 October 1999 and 31 March 2000, all at Thumamah, were most likely Grasshopper Warblers. However, good views could not be obtained, thus no positive identification could be made.

**Savi's Warbler** - *Locustella luscinioides* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2				

Song heard at different localities in Al Hair area on 15 and 29 March 2001.

**Moustached Warbler** - *Acrocephalus melanopogon mimicus* (Local breeder in Eastern Province)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		

Two at the Hofuf marshes on 12 October 2000 was the only certain record.

One possible in song at Al Safi Farm 6 April 2000.

**Sedge Warbler** - *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7	7			

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			1	5				1				<u>7</u>
			1	36				1				<u>38</u>

Recorded at Thumamah between 19 April and 26 May in spring. Only one autumn record, one on 2 September 1999. Highest count was 22, on 18 May 2000.

**Marsh Warbler** - *Acrocephalus palustris* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

More common than my records indicate. My records are all made in May and at Thumamah. Many *Acrocephalus* warblers were naturally left unidentified. After a massive fall in beginning of May, there could be 25+ individuals, showing a weak supercillium, short bill and yellowish underpart indicating this species.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus scirpaceus scirpaceus/fuscus/avicenniae* (Common migrant and common breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
36	8	1		2

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	5	8	5	3	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	<u>36</u>
15	45	105	131	15	15	10	15	33	3	2	1	<u>390</u>

Seen and heard all year. I have noted (mostly singing) Reed Warblers during winter months, when they are supposed to be absent. To me they sounded like the Reed Warblers in Europe, and it never struck me at that time, that it could be anything else. After a while, I noticed when the numbers started to build up in Feb-March, the song changed slightly, to become a little speedier and also a little more varied. I started to suspect that wintering birds could be *A. s. scirpaceus* originating from Russia somewhere, and later the breeding race *fuscus* arrived, with a slightly different song.

The south-western ssp *avicenniae* is now assigned to Eurasian Reed Warbler, according to IOC.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens* (Local resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1		1

At least 30 in song at Hofuf marshes, 10 May 2001. Good views of several. In SW, four were heard and seen, south of Jizan on 18 July 2001.

**Great Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (Passage migrant and potential breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10	6											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	1	1	2				5				<u>10</u>
	1	1	2	4				16				<u>24</u>

Seen only at Thumamah six times (migrants) and Al Hair area on four occasions (singles). Two in song: 23 February 2001 Al Hair and 29 March 2001, Mansouriyah. Highest number was 10+ at Thumamah on 3 September 1999.

**Basra Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus griseldis* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
5	3											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			1	1				3				<u>5</u>
			1	3				7				<u>11</u>

Up to 5 seen at Thumamah on 2-3 September 1999. At least 3 there on 18 May 2000. Singles seen in Al Hair Area, 9 September 1999 and 21 April 2000. This species can be quite numerous during falls. It has been recorded in hundreds at Thumamah e.g. in 1993 and 1994.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** - *Iduna pallida elaeica* (Common breeder and migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C			1

No detailed counts were made for this, during breeding season, common species. Recorded between 8 March and 7 September. Seen once in SW, a single at Malaki Dam, 29 December 1999.

**Booted Warbler** - *Iduna caligata* (Scarce migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	4			

Singles seen at Thumamah, 2-3 September 1999, 28 April 2000 and on 7 September 2000. I believe these to be caligata, due to the general short-billed, phylloscopus-like appearance, but Syke's Warbler, *Iduna rama*, can not be completely ruled out.

**Upcher's Warbler** - *Hippolais languida* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
12	7			2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		2	7	2		1						<u>12</u>
		2	8	2		1						<u>13</u>

Recorded between 25 March and 4 May in spring but only one autumn record, 16 July 1999. Mostly singles seen, but two at Thumamah 1 April 1999. Also seen in SW, singles at Malaki Dam 29 December 1999 and Bani Malik 23 July 2001.

**Eastern Olivaceous/Upcher's Warbler**

In July 2001, eleven were seen in SW Province that was not identified.

**Icterine Warbler** - *Hippolais icterina* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
2	1			

Two records. One at Thumamah, 3 September 1999 and one Al Hair area, 29 March 2001.

**Yemen Warbler** - *Curruca buryi* (Endemic to SW Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

Rather scarce, but up to 6 recorded in one day in Abha area on 2 January 2000.

**Menetries's Warbler** - *Curruca mystacea* (Regular migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10	4			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1	5	1						1			<u>10</u>
2	1	6	1						1			<u>11</u>

Recorded between 22 October and 1 April, mostly singles. In SW at least 10 were seen, Abu Arish, on 30 December 1999.

**Asian Desert Warbler** - *Curruca nana* (Rather common winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
19	13											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
7	4	5								2	1	<u>19</u>
21	13	10								3	2	<u>49</u>

Recorded between 5 November and 15 March. Up to seven counted in one day at Thumamah e.g. 7 January 1999.

**Arabian Warbler** - *Curruca leucomelaena leucomelaena* (Resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	4

One East Jeddah, 25 December 1999, two at Malaki Dam, 29 December 1999, two at Abu Arish, 30 December 1999, four at Souda, in Abha area, 14 April 2001, and finally one at Bani Malik, 21 July 2001.

**Eastern Orphean Warbler** - *Curruca crassirostris* (Scarce passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4	3			

Mostly singles. One male at Thumamah, 5 March 1999, a juvenile in Al Hair area, 9 September 1999, one at Thumamah, 11 February 2000 and two at Thumamah, 8 March 2001.

**Barred Warbler** - *Curruca nisoria* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
15	8			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1		9	3				1	1			<u>15</u>
	1		16	4				1	1			<u>23</u>

Spring passage occurs mainly in April, with highest count being 5 at Thumamah on 19 April 2001. One early record was of a single in Al Hair area on 11 February 1999. Latest record in spring was 18 May. Only two autumn records, one Al Nakheel on 22 October 1998 and one juvenile at Thumamah on 3 September 1999.

**Lesser Whitethroat** - *Curruca curruca curruca/halimodendri* (Common passage migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
72	43		2	1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
9	9	15	7					8	9			<u>57</u>
32	33	74	39					32	61			<u>271</u>

Recorded in numbers up to 20 in a day. Wintering birds, predominantly *halimodendri*, arrive mainly in October and are mostly gone by early April.

**Hume's Whitethroat** - *Curruca althaea* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

On 8 March 2001, I saw one individual of this distinctive, sturdy race. It was in a small bushy area in the more barren parts of Thumamah.

**Common Whitethroat** - *Curruca communis icterops* (Fairly common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
15	12			1

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	4				6	2			<u>15</u>
			15	14				17	3			<u>49</u>

Observed from 16 April to 18 May in spring and 2 September to 14 October in autumn. Up to 10 individuals seen in a day.

**Eurasian Blackcap** - *Sylvia atricapilla* (Regular but scarce migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
12	6	1	1	4

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		3	7	1					1			<u>12</u>
		3	11	1					1			<u>16</u>

Recorded in spring between 16 March and 6 May, with a maximum of three. Numerous on migration in SW, e.g. 55 on 13 April 2001, Abha-Al Darb area

**Brown Woodland Warbler** - *Phylloscopus umbrovirens yemenensis* (Locally common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				6

All my records are from Abha-Raydah escarpment area, where it is common all year.

**Wood Warbler** - *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One record, a single at Thumamah 8 October 1999.



**Common Chiffchaff** - *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus/tristis* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
43	23			4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	8	10	2					1	4	4	6	<u>43</u>
69	108	266	31					1	138	47	47	<u>707</u>

Very common, especially in March and October, e.g. 100+ on 27 October 2000. Recorded between 13 September and 9 April. Birds showing characters of and sounding like *tristis* were regularly noted.

**Willow Warbler** - *Phylloscopus trochilus* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
24	18	1		4								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		3	7	6				5	3			<u>24</u>
		5	327	110				8	11			<u>461</u>

Common in spring. Earliest 28 March and latest 26 May. Less numerous in autumn, when seen between 2 September and 14 October. Highest count was 200+ at Thumamah on 16 April 1999.

**Spotted Flycatcher** - *Muscicapa striata* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
22	16			1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			6	6				6	4			<u>22</u>
			39	38				39	7			<u>123</u>

Recorded between 8 April and 26 May in spring and 3 September to 28 October in autumn. Up to 20 seen in a day.

**Gambaga Flycatcher** - *Muscicapa gambagae* (Breeding summer visitor in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

3 in Bani Malik area on 24 July 2001 and 4 Sahar Al Asem in Abha area, 30 August 2001.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** - *Ficedula parva* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

One record of a female/juvenile at Thumamah. It stayed for two days, 30 September - 1 October 1999.

**Semicollared Flycatcher** - *Ficedula semitorquata* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			1?

An adult male was found at Thumamah on 11 March 1999. A female seen in Bani Malik area on 23 July 2001 was most likely this species.

**African Paradise Flycatcher** - *Terpsiphone viridis harterti* (Resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

One female seen and another one heard after a long walk down the Raydah escarpment on 31 August 2001.

**Arabian Babbler** - *Turdoides squamiceps squamiceps/yemensis* (Locally common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
7	4			12

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	4	1		1						<u>7</u>
		15	33	3		4						<u>55</u>

Mainly found in small groups in scrub desert habitat. Four records of up to 5 birds, seen within the fenced area of Thumamah.

**Nile Valley Sunbird** - *Hedydipna metallica* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	9

Recorded in good numbers in SW. One record from W Province, W Taif, 24 December 1999.

**Shining Sunbird** - *Cinnyris habessinicus hellmayri/kinneari* (Common resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	11

Five seen E of Jeddah, 25 December 1999. Around 10 seen in a full days birding in SW.

**Palestine Sunbird** - *Cinnyris osea osea* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			3	16

Common, especially in Abha region.

290. **Abyssinian White-eye** - *Zosterops abyssinicus arabs* (Common resident, mainly in the highlands of SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				7

Common in Abha region.

291. **Eurasian Golden Oriole** - *Oriolus oriolus* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
7	5											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			1	1				5				<u>7</u>
			4	1				12				<u>17</u>

Two spring records, both at Thumamah, 1 female + 2 males (song was heard) on 29 April 1999 and 1 male on 4 May 2001. More frequent in autumn, with up to 6 birds present at Thumamah, in the beginning of September 1999. Besides Thumamah, Al Hair produced two records, 1 male on 9 September 1999 and one female 13 September 2001, which also was the latest autumn observation.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** - *Tchagra senegalus percivali* (Scarce resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

Three records of this elusive species: 2+3 in the Bani Malik area, 21 July and 24 July 2001 and 3 at Sahar Al Aasem on 30 August 2001.

**Isabelline Shrike** - *Lanius isabellinus* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

This and following species are not separated in my counts.

**Red-tailed Shrike** - *Lanius phoenicuroides* (Common migrant and winter visitor)

**Isabelline/Red-tailed Shrike**

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
71	32	3	1	3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	5	16	15	3			2	6	6	8	4	<u>71</u>
15	7	84	113	70			4	11	12	12	6	<u>334</u>

Arrives late in August (earliest 26 August) and departures in May (latest 5 May). Numerous from March to May. Highest count was 60 in Al Hair area on 3 May 2001.

**Red-backed Shrike** - *Lanius collurio* (Common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
17	13	1		3								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			3	6				7	1			<u>17</u>
			10	154				15	2			<u>181</u>

Fairly common in spring, with records between 16 April and 26 May. An exceptional day was 3 May 2001, when I counted as many as 90 individuals (!) in the Mansouriyah and Al Hair area. The following day harboured 30+ at Thumamah and probably the whole region was loaded with shrikes after this major fall. Autumn migration is less pronounced with records between 2 September and 8 October, with maximum 5 seen in a day.

**Lesser Grey Shrike** - *Lanius minor* (Scarce but regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10	7											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
			1	4			1	4				<u>10</u>
			2	9			3	5				<u>19</u>

Passes the region from late April (earliest 29 April) to May (latest 26 May) in spring and again from mid August (earliest 28 August) through September (latest 13 September) in autumn. Highest number was 4 at Thumamah on 18 May 2000.

**Great Grey Shrike** - *Lanius excubitor aucheri* (A scarce resident and common passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
71	36	2	1	9								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	7	17	8	5	1	1		9	3	7	5	<u>71</u>
29	13	78	49	6	1	3		29	4	18	9	<u>239</u>

Spring passage peaks in March. The highest day total was 30+ at Rawdhat Khuraim on 3 April 1999.

**Steppe Grey Shrike** - *Lanius excubitor pallidirostris* (Winter visitor)

I have noted 15 records of pallidirostris, 27 Oct-5 April. These are included in the records for Great Grey Shrike.

**Woodchat Shrike** - *Lanius senator niloticus* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
27	13	1		1								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	1	16		1			2	7				<u>27</u>
	1	38		1			7	19				<u>66</u>

Recorded in spring between 25 February and 18 May (peaking in March) and in autumn between 26 August and 21 September. Up to six seen in one day.

**Masked Shrike** - *Lanius nubicus* (Scarce but regular migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
18	12		2	2								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	8	2	1			5	1			<u>18</u>
		1	12	3	1			12	1			<u>30</u>

Passes mainly in April and September. One June record of a single at Thumamah, 18 June 1999. Highest number was 4 at Thumamah, 7 September 2000.

**Arabian Magpie** - *Pica asirensis* (A scarce, local resident. Endemic to the Asir Mountains)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

Two records of this exotic Arabian bird. Two in the Abha region, 3 January 2000 and two more at Raydah 12 April 2001.

**House Crow** - *Corvus splendens* (Introduced. Locally common in coastal cities)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
		1	4	5

Common in Jeddah and Jizan. In Eastern Province, I saw 5 at a small police station, Ras Tanura, after being interrogated for 40 minutes.

**Brown-necked Raven** - *Corvus ruficollis* (Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C		C	C

Very common in all regions, even though I managed to avoid it during my trips to the Eastern Province. Recorded in 100+ e.g. Thumamah, 2 September 1999.

**Fan-tailed Raven** - *Corvus rhipidurus stanleyi* (Rather scarce resident in Central Saudi, common in SW highlands)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
10	2			11								
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	3	2	1	2								<u>10</u>
4	20	6	2	3								<u>35</u>

Two Thumamah records; 2 at the old dairy farm, 6 May 1999 and 2 drinking at the big pivot field, 24 March 2000. Largest congregation in Central Province was 15 at Wadi Howtah, 1 February 2001.

**Tristram's Starling** - *Onychognathus tristramii* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				11

Numerous at higher altitudes, e.g. in Abha and Bani Malik regions.

**Purple Starling** - *Lamprotornis purpureus* (A resident African species)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

I found this beautiful bird close to Al Hair Dam, 18 December 1998. Obviously an escaped cage bird.

**Violet-backed Starling** - *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster arabicus* (Breeding summer visitor to SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				6

A few seen in April 2001 on route Abha- Al-Darb. Numerous (100+) in July 2001 in the Bani Malik area.

**Common Starling** - *Sturnus vulgaris* (Uncommon, predominantly a winter visitor)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

Three at Al Safi Dairy Farm, 2 March 2000, was the only record.

**Common Myna** - *Acridotheres tristis tristis* (Introduced. Common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C		C	C	1

In Mansouriyah, I frequently saw odd coloured birds, in 2000-2001. The white in wing- and tail patches were replaced by bright, fluorescent red/pink or green. One record in SW, outside normal breeding range; one S Jizan 18 July 2001.

**Bank Myna** - *Acridotheres ginginianus* (Introduced. Probably a small population breed S of Riyadh)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
4				

In the Mansouriyah area, along Riyadh watercourse, I encountered this species four times, between 22 June 2000 and 13 September 2001, with a maximum of 10 individuals on 18 January 2001. One juvenile was seen on 30 November 2000.

**House Sparrow** - *Passer domesticus indicus/hufufae* (Very common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
C	C	C	C	C

Abundant in most areas. Huge numbers at Al Safi dairy Farm e.g.

**Spanish Sparrow** - *Passer hispaniolensis transcaspicus* (Common winter visitor and now an established breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
28	17											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	2	5	4	5					1	2	4	<u>28</u>
145	15	102	83	60					10	15	60	<u>490</u>

Recorded between 28 October and 21 May, in numbers up to 50 individuals at Al Safi Dairy Farm, Thumamah and Al Hair.

**Arabian Golden Sparrow** - *Passer euchlorus* (Resident on the Tihama in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				3

One male seen between Jizan-Abu Arish, 30 December 1999, 30+ in Jizan area, 18 July 2001 and 10+ at Sabia, 21 July 2001.

**Pale Rockfinch** - *Carpospiza brachydactyla* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
14	9		1									
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		9	5									<u>14</u>
		260	41									<u>301</u>

My records are only from spring and span from 2 March to 28 April. Highest count was 60, at Thumamah, on 9 March 2000. One record from Western Province, c. 40 E Jeddah, 23 March 2001.

**Rüppell's Weaver** - *Ploceus galbula* (Common resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			2	14

Great numbers seen in the Tihama, but also found in higher altitudes, e.g. in the Abha region.

**Streaked Weaver** - *Ploceus manyar* (Introduced. Breeder S of Riyadh)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
12												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		3	3	1	2		1	2				<u>12</u>
		13	7	13	3		40	8				<u>84</u>

The first record was of two females, Al Safi Dairy Farm, on 6 April 2000. A week later, I found a male collecting nest material at a site along the watercourse, S Mansouriyah. At this site following observations were made: 21 April: 4 males, 22 June: 1 female, 3 nests found, 23 June: 1 male nest building, 3 new nests found. Next time I visited the site it was completely destroyed by fire (reed-burning). Later, the same year, I found a new site further south in Al Hair area where following observations were made: 21 September: 5-6 individuals, feeding of juveniles seen, 28 September: 2 females In 2001, another group was found S of Mansouriyah: 15 March: 2 females, 16 March: 5 females, 29 March: 3 males building nests + 3 females seen, 3 May 2001: 13 individuals seen and finally on 9 August at least 40 individuals were counted on this, my last visit. Breeding have occurred irregularly before, but these high numbers at multiple breeding sites, suggest breeding twice a year.

**Baya Weaver** - *Ploceus philippinus* (Introduced. Probable occasional breeder S of Riyadh)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

On 22 June 2000 at Mansouriyah, I found 2 nests build by Baya Weaver(s). The following day I found two more nests and saw a beautiful male visiting one of the nests. Sadly, this was the only observation due to the reed-burning that followed. *See previous species.*

**Northern Red Bishop** - *Euplectes franciscanus* (A resident African species)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

A male and a female seen in Al Hair area, 9 August 2001, were certainly escapes.

**Arabian Waxbill** - *Estrilda rufibarba* (Endemic resident in southern Arabia)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				4

Five on 30 December 1999, between Abu Arish-Al Kubah, 1 Abha 12 April 2001, 20 in Wadi Jawwah on 20 July 2001 and 30+ in Bani Malik area 23 July 2001.



**Red Avadavat** - *Amandava amandava* (Introduced. Locally, fairly common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
17												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	4			1	<u>17</u>
6	3	7	5	3	37	2	25	25			10	<u>123</u>

Only encountered in Al Hair area, except for a record of 6, in Wadi Hanifah, W of Diplomatic Quarter, on 20 January 2000. In Al Hair, the highest count was 32 on 23 June 2000.

**Indian Silverbill** - *Euodice malabarica* (Common resident, introduced)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
46	24											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	7	5	4	3	1	1	2	8	2	5	4	<u>46</u>
55	70	55	35	20	30	7	23	165	30	37	74	<u>601</u>

Flocks (up to 56 individuals) recorded all year, in most areas in Central Province.

**African Silverbill** - *Euodice cantans orientalis* (Resident in W and SW region, mainly at lower altitudes)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	5

Recorded in good numbers e.g. on the Tihama.

**Scaly-breasted Munia** - *Lonchura punctulata* (Introduced)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				

A male together with an immature, seen in Mansouriyah area 15 March 2001.

**Arabian Serin** - *Crithagra rothschildi* (Endemic resident in W and SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
			1	5

One record from the W Province; 10+ E Jeddah, 25 December 1999. All other records are from Abha area with a maximum of 15 on 15 April 2001.

**Yemen Serin** - *Crithagra menachensis* (Scarce endemic in SW)

C	E	W	SW
			2

10+ NW of Abha, 3 January 2000 and 8 at the Raydah escarpment, 31 August 2001, were the only records.

**Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak** - *Rhynchostruthus percivali* (Scarce, resident endemic in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				1

Two individuals seen on 23 July 2001, at 1780 m altitude in the Bani Malik area.

**Yemen Linnet** - *Carduelis yemenensis* (Common resident in SW highlands)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				8

Very common, e.g. in Abha region.

**Desert Finch** - *Rhodospiza obsoleta* (Increasingly common winter visitor and a possible breeder)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
31	17											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	4	10	6	3	2						1	<b>31</b>
51	29	28	50	42	3						10	<b>213</b>

The highest numbers were seen at Al Hair and Thumamah, up to 30 individuals. Two records of potential breeders in Al Hair, 22-23 June 2000. At the latter date, two birds were seen collecting nest material.

**Trumpeter Finch** - *Bucanetes githagineus crassirostris* (Locally common resident)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW								
23	23											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
	6	2	3	4					3	4	1	<b>23</b>
	117	4	44	81					41	22	18	<b>327</b>

All my records are from Thumamah, where it breeds at the Buwayb escarpment. Largest congregation was 50+ on 26 May 2000.

**Common Rosefinch** - *Carpodacus erythrinus* (Uncommon passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
3	3			

Three sightings at Thumamah: 5 on 1 October 1999, 1 on 14 October 1999 and 1 on 15 September 2000.

**Striolated Bunting** - *Emberiza striolata striolata* (Scarce resident in Central Province, more common in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1				1

Surprisingly, I only encountered this species once in the Riyadh area; two in a wadi SW of Al Hair on 11 February 1999. Several seen in Malaki Dam area, 29 December 1999.

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** - *Emberiza tahapisi arabica* (Common resident in SW)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				5

Numerous in Malaki Dam area, 29 December 1999. Seen in good numbers, locally in Abha area, 30-31 August 2001.

**Ortolan Bunting** - *Emberiza hortulana* (Regular passage migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
13	11		1	3

  

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
		1	6					5	1			<u>13</u>
		1	155					13	10			<u>179</u>

Recorded between 29 March and 29 April in spring and between 2 September and 14 October in autumn. An outstanding good day was 19 April 2001, when 100+ were seen at Thumamah.

**Cretzschmar's Bunting** - *Emberiza caesia* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1		1	

A male and a female were seen well on 8 March 2001, N of the fenced Thumamah, in a bushy area. This species is not mentioned in Stagg's, Birds of the Riyadh Region, and may constitute the first record for the region. In Western Province, another pair were seen E of Jeddah, 23 March 2001.

**Red-headed Bunting** - *Emberiza bruniceps* (Vagrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
				2

One adult male, seen well in Mansouriyah area, on 15-16 March 2001. Another male (in moult) was found, further south along the watercourse on 3 May 2001. To my knowledge, this is the first documented record of this species in Riyadh region.

**Corn Bunting** - *Emberiza calandra* (Rare migrant)

C	Thumamah	E	W	SW
1	1			

A small flock of five were seen at Thumamah on 8 March 2001, in a small bushy area, N of the fenced area.

In a few minutes, this very restricted site produced three exceptional records; Hume's Whitethroat, Cretzschmar's Bunting and Corn Bunting!

Some species I had expected to see but never did:

Goliath Heron, Abdim's Stork, Lesser Flamingo, Lappet-facet Vulture, Golden Eagle, Corn Crake, Great Knot, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Little Owl, Bimaculated Lark, Red-vented Bulbul, Thrush Nightingale and Black-headed Bunting.

Well, maybe next time...Insha'Allah! إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Per Anders Bertilsson, Sweden

<https://www.hypocolius.se/>