

# Kuwait

**29 November–7 December 2013**

## **Participants**

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**Leaders** Pekka Fågel and Peter Lansdown



**White-eared Bulbul**

The main body of this report includes only the more significant species recorded, though Laughing Dove, Pallid Swift, White-throated Kingfisher, Crested Lark, White-cheeked Bulbul and Common Myna have been omitted as all were seen on at least five of the seven days spent in the field. Every species encountered has been included in the appendix.

**Day 1** Overnight flight from London to Kuwait City.

**Day 2** By mid-morning the six members of the group and the two leaders assembled at a hotel in Kuwait City, having variously travelled from England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Wales and Kuwait itself. With the baggage stowed at the hotel, we left in our two 4x4 vehicles for our first taste of birding in Kuwait. We began at Jahra Farms, where we soon acquainted ourselves with some of the country's more widespread species and also saw Daurian Shrike. We quickly moved on to the more promising Jahra Pools, where we heard Clamorous Reed-warbler and Eurasian Penduline-tit and saw Spotted Eagle, Purple Swamphen, Whiskered Tern, Daurian and Turkestan Shrikes and Spanish Sparrow. We ended the day at Sulaybikhat Bay, which was teeming with birds including Western Reef-egret, Crab Plover, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, Slender-billed, Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's), Caspian and Caspian (Steppe) Gulls and Gull-billed and Caspian Terns.

**Day 3** A pleasant early-morning was spent on the artificial Green Island, where the two target species, Red-vented Bulbul and Hypocolius, both showed well. Next we paid a short visit to a site in the desert which produced Long-legged Buzzard and Mourning and Red-tailed (Persian) Wheatears. We returned to Sulaybikhat Bay, this time to coincide with high tide, and recorded all of the previous day's special birds plus Broad-billed, Marsh and Terek Sandpipers and Great Black-headed and Armenian Gulls. At Doha Spit we found Isabelline and Desert Wheatears and Asian Desert Warbler. Western Reef-egret, Crab Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Great Black-headed, Slender-billed, Caspian and Caspian (Steppe) Gulls and Caspian Tern were all seen again at the day's last locality, North Doha.

**Day 4** Our hope that the distant oasis of Al Abraq would produce something special was unfounded. Black (Black-eared) Kite and Steppe Eagle were seen on the outward journey across the desert while Steppe Eagle was seen at Al Abraq itself. More Black (Black-eared) Kites were seen at a rubbish tip in the desert as we returned. At Jahra Farms we recorded Steppe Eagle again, Daurian and Masked Shrikes and Spanish Sparrow.

**Day 5** The day started slowly, with Mutla'a Ranch and the bottling plant providing us with only Desert Wheatear and Spanish Sparrow respectively, then improved dramatically at the huge Abdaly Farms. After finding Daurian Shrike, Graceful Prinia and Hypocolius in no time at all we briefly heard our target species, Afghan Babbler. During the subsequent search an adult male Shikra flew past, shortly after which we found a family party of Afghan Babbler. The day improved further at Sabriya Farm, where we finally pinned down and identified an elusive Taiga Flycatcher (the first or second for Kuwait) and had brief views of a Striated Scops-owl. We called in at Jahra Pools on our way back to the hotel, hearing Clamorous Reed-warbler and Eurasian Penduline-tit and seeing Little Crake, Purple Swamphen and Daurian Shrike.

**Day 6** House Crow was seen from the vehicles on the journey to Jahra East Outfall, where we recorded Lesser Sandplover, Bluethroat, Graceful Prinia, Great Reed-warbler and Eurasian Penduline-tit. Several stops around the perimeter of Pivot Fields produced Black (Black-eared) Kite, Common (Steppe) and Long-legged Buzzards, Steppe Eagle, Black-winged Stilt, Citrine Wagtail, Bluethroat, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears and Daurian Shrike. We returned to Sabriya Farm and managed some further views of the Taiga Flycatcher then headed back to the hotel, driving slowly along a section of desert fence-line and seeing Isabelline, Desert and Mourning Wheatears, Asian Desert Warbler and Southern (Steppe) Grey Shrike.

**Day 7** At Fahaheel we saw Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's), Caspian, Caspian (Steppe) and Armenian Gulls and Caspian, Great Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Ahmadi Park produced little but at Fintas Park an Oriental Honey-buzzard flew overhead just above the tree-tops. The tide was against us at Sulaybikhat Bay, where we managed only Slender-billed, Caspian and Caspian (Steppe) Gulls and Gull-billed and Caspian Terns, but spot-on at Doha Spit, where we watched Western Reef-egret, Crab Plover, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, Broad-billed, Marsh and Terek Sandpipers, Slender-billed and Caspian Gulls, Caspian Tern and Isabelline Wheatear at close range.

**Day 8** Most of the day was spent in the desert, where we located Long-legged Buzzard, Bar-tailed Lark, Greater Hoopoe-lark, Isabelline, Desert, Finsch's and Mourning Wheatears, Asian Desert Warbler and Southern (Steppe) Grey Shrike. We decided to make Jahra Pools our final locality of the tour; Steppe Eagle, Little Crake, Purple Swamphen, Siberian Stonechat and Spanish Sparrow were all seen before we locked on to a small hirundine hawkling over one of the pools. Notes were made and photographs were taken, but it was only after we reached our hotel and looked more closely at the available literature that we realised we had discovered a first-winter Streak-throated Swallow – the first for Kuwait and only the second for the Western Palearctic. What a way to end a tour!

**Day 9** Early morning flight back to London at the end of the tour.

**Appendix** The following species and subspecies were recorded during the tour; the numbers in brackets represent the days seen and/or heard (out of seven): Little Grebe (3), Black-necked Grebe (3), Great Cormorant (5), Black-crowned Night-heron (1), Squacco Heron (2), Cattle Egret (1), Western Reef-egret (3), Little Egret (6), Great Egret (5), Grey Heron (6), Eurasian Spoonbill (3), Greater Flamingo (6), Common Shelduck (1), Gadwall (1), Green-winged Teal (4), Mallard (4), Garganey (1), Common Pochard (1), Ferruginous Duck (3), Tufted Duck (1), Oriental Honey-buzzard (1), Black Kite *lineatus* (2), Western Marsh Harrier (5), Hen Harrier (1), Eurasian Sparrowhawk (2), Shikra (1), Common Buzzard *vulpinus* (1), Long-legged Buzzard (3), Spotted Eagle (1), Steppe Eagle (3), Common Kestrel (4), Water Rail (2), Little Crake

(2), Eurasian Moorhen (4), Purple Swamphen (3), Common Coot (3), Eurasian Oystercatcher (2), Black-winged Stilt (1), Pied Avocet (1), Crab Plover (3), Common Ringed Plover (2), Kentish Plover (3), Greater Sandplover (3), Lesser Sandplover (4), Grey Plover (4), Northern Lapwing (1), Sanderling (1), Little Stint (2), Curlew Sandpiper (2), Dunlin (3), Broad-billed Sandpiper (2), Ruff (1), Common Snipe (4), Black-tailed Godwit (1), Bar-tailed Godwit (1), Whimbrel (1), Eurasian Curlew (4), Common Redshank (3), Marsh Sandpiper (2), Common Greenshank (2), Green Sandpiper (3), Terek Sandpiper (2), Ruddy Turnstone (2), Great Black-headed Gull (1), Black-headed Gull (6), Slender-billed Gull (3), Lesser Black-backed Gull *heuglini* (3), Caspian Gull *cachinnans* (3), Caspian Gull *barabensis* (3), Armenian Gull (2), Gull-billed Tern (3), Caspian Tern (3), Whiskered Tern (1), Common Tern (1), Sandwich Tern (1), Great Crested Tern (1), Lesser Crested Tern (1), Rock Dove (7), Common Wood-pigeon (1), Eurasian Collared-dove (7), Laughing Dove (7), Ring-necked Parakeet (4), Striated Scops-owl (1), Pallid Swift (5), White-throated Kingfisher (6), Common Kingfisher (3), Eurasian Hoopoe (1), Bar-tailed Lark (1), Greater Hoopoe-lark (1), Greater Short-toed Lark (1), Crested Lark (5), Sky Lark (2), Sand Martin (2), Eurasian Swallow (3), Streak-throated Swallow (1), Tawny Pipit (1), Meadow Pipit (3), Water Pipit (7), Citrine Wagtail (1), White Wagtail (7), White-cheeked Bulbul (6), Red-vented Bulbul (1), Hypocolius (2), European Robin (3), Bluethroat (1), Black Redstart (3), Siberian Stonechat (2), Isabelline Wheatear (4), Desert Wheatear (4), Finsch's Wheatear (1), Mourning Wheatear (3), Red-tailed Wheatear *chrysopygia* (1), Common Blackbird (1), Song Thrush (5), Cetti's Warbler (1), Graceful Prinia (2), Great Reed-warbler (1), Clamorous Reed-warbler (2), Asian Desert Warbler (3), Lesser Whitethroat (2), Blackcap (1), Common Chiffchaff (7), Taiga Flycatcher (2), Afghan Babbler (1), Eurasian Penduline-tit (3), Daurian Shrike (4), Turkestan Shrike (1), Southern Grey Shrike *pallidirostris* (2), Masked Shrike (1), House Crow (1), Common Starling (4), Common Myna (7), House Sparrow (7), Spanish Sparrow (4), Common Chaffinch (1) and Corn Bunting (2). The total number of species recorded was 135. Also seen were Brahminy Starling and Rüppell's Weaver; both are currently excluded from the Kuwaiti list.