

# United Arab Emirates

20–27 February 2005

**Participants:**

**John Dyer,  
John Dickensen  
Adrian Fisher  
Maureen Masters  
Mick and Steph White**



**Striated Scops-owl**

**Leader: Colin Richardson**

**Day 1:** Overnight flight from London Heathrow to Dubai.

**Day 2:** After a quick transfer from Dubai Airport, check-in to the hotel and a freshen-up, we walked the Airport Hotel grounds and picked up two bulbuls, several Indian Silverbills and a couple of Hoopoes, before heading for Khor Dubai. We were given access to the Sanctuary by the Municipality officer and soon saw a good selection of species including Spotted Eagle, Osprey and Western Marsh Harrier. As we drove around the outside boundary we looked at flocks of Greater Flamingoes plus hundreds of roosting waders including Lesser Sand-plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Common Snipe and Pied Avocet. After a rest at the hotel we spent the afternoon at the Dubai Pivot Fields and Wimpey Pits. Before entering the pivot fields we walked around a desert reed bed and put up several Snipe, including a couple of Pintail Snipe, but their flight identity proved difficult for many of the group, not surprisingly! At the pivots we were rewarded with great views of White-tailed Plover, two Sociable Plovers, (rare visitors), Citrine, Black-headed, Grey-headed, Sykes's and Yellow-headed Wagtail. We walked around the fields and were surprised to find both Buff-bellied Pipit and Blyth's Pipit, feeding amongst the wagtails and other pipits. These are very rare winter visitors to Arabia. Then it was off to Wimpey Pits, a series of gravel lakes formed by a freshwater overflow from the treatment plant. There were hundreds of Common Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler, plus a few Ferruginous Ducks and many Black-necked and Little Grebes. Amongst other interesting finds here was a pair of Purple Swampheens with three swimming young and a Squacco Heron that dropped in at dusk. We returned to the pivot fields after sunset, and it wasn't long before we picked up the bright reflective eyes of an Egyptian Nightjar sitting on the ground about 20 yards away. It, and possibly one other, flew around us for several minutes, provided stunning views, so ending a very exciting and eventful first day.

**Day 3:** We checked out, entered the very busy Jebel Ali-bound traffic and reached the sandy desert of the Jebel Ali conservation zone by 8.15am. A walk over the windy dunes only produced a Desert Wheatear and very distant views of some Black-crowned Sparrow-larks, which couldn't be re-located on the ground. So we moved on to the Ghantut Polo Club where our first target bird, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse performed very well as several pairs flew around and landed on the stony bank of the ornamental lake. The lake itself produced some more Ferruginous Ducks, Common Pochard and a Whiskered Tern. There were several Pacific Golden-plovers on the polo fields and many Isabelline and Desert Wheatears perched on the side of the racetrack. We then walked through the plantation at Ghantut, which had, in previous years in March, produced Grey Hypocolius. However none were present this time – we were probably too early or there was not enough fruit on the bushes after several years of drought – but we were compensated by a couple of smart red-bellied 'Eastern' Black Redstarts and several parties of Red-vented and White-cheeked Bulbuls. After our picnic lunch, we drove 100 miles south, deep into Abu Dhabi Emirate and visited the vast irrigated fields at Al Wathba camel track. We were not disappointed, as there was plenty to find. We watched groups of Lesser Short-toed Larks on the farm tracks, two autumn-plumaged Pied Wheatears and had views of a *homeyeri* race of Great Grey Shrike, a form only recently proven to winter in the country in small numbers. A Common Quail was spotted briefly in the open beside the track and Maureen had some difficulty flushing it, before it finally erupted and rocketed over the fields at high speed. There were dozens of pipits, including Richard's and Tawny Pipit, many of which we looked at closely in case we overlooked a Long-billed Pipit, seen earlier by a group of independent Norwegian birders. We found an interesting pool, which attracted a few Bimaculated Larks, and late in the afternoon dozens of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flew over heading for water. A distant Steppe Grey Shrike (the pale-billed *pallidirostris* form) and a confiding Blyth's Pipit provided more interest, before it was time to head east to Al Ain, where we arrived at our hotel, the Ain al Faydah Rest house at about 7.30pm.

**Day 4:** Five keen group members assembled at 6.30am for the early morning drive up Jebel Hafit, one of the country's highest mountains. Within the first 5 minutes we had already seen our first Hume's Wheatear, a very handsome black-and-white bird, and as we started the road ascent John spotted an adult Egyptian Vulture soaring along the mountain edge, strangely not needing any thermal at that time of the morning. At the first vast (and empty) car park we were treated to good views of a small group of Sand Partridges which had been calling just below us. Then several Desert Larks approached, followed by a Pale Crag Martin and another Hume's Wheatear. At the lofty Mercure Hotel, the rather remote luxurious hotel perched on the summit edge, we walked around the garden. After obtaining a brief view of a Blue Rock-thrush, we spent some time looking at our first 'Persian' Red-tailed Wheatear, the very pale-throated *chrysopygia* form that winters in eastern Arabia, and another couple of Eastern Black Redstarts. On returning to our hotel at 10am, we checked out, stocked up with provisions at the nearby petrol station and headed into the Omani enclave of Buraimi. A short drive around the rather dry Fossil Valley did not provide anything new, although another Blue Rock-thrush was spotted by John, so we headed for the sewage treatment plant, where reed beds and a large amount standing water on the desert attracted many wetland species. There were several dapper and very active Citrine Wagtails, plus a number of Common Snipe, a Wood Sandpiper, some Little Stints and surprisingly, a Ruddy Shelduck which we only saw briefly at first, but we obtained better views after driving over the desert, negotiating a herd of camels, to reach the far side of the reed bed. Then we bumped our way up the track to Hanging Gardens, where a busy flock of ground-feeding Trumpeter Finches and several small parties of very streaky House Buntings greeted us. After picnicking under a large *Sisyphus* tree, we had great views of a very obliging Plain Leaf Warbler, a tiny species, but nevertheless full of character, contrary to its rather dull reputation. After returning to the main road we headed north through the Oman foothills. We stopped very quickly when a couple of Black-crowned Sparrow-larks flew over the road in front of us, the male showing its diagnostic black underbody and wings. We managed to locate them on the ground and had excellent views while John and Adrian were even able to 'digiscope' them. Onward towards Jebel Rawda, where we stopped for petrol and ice creams. We finally arrived on the East Coast, at the end of the new, almost empty highway through the mountain pass, in the late afternoon. While crossing a new causeway, cutting through the centre of the mangroves, we stopped to 'scope some gull roosts. Here we

found our first Great Black-headed, Sooty, Caspian, Siberian (Heuglin's) Gulls and a Baltic Gull (*fuscus*). The tide was low and several White-collared Kingfishers were very active, feeding and chasing on the mudflats at Khor Kalba. There were several Indian Pond Herons too, plus one or two Greater Sandplovers and even a turtle, which kept showing breaking the surface, first spotted by Maureen. Later on the sandbank at the entrance to the khor there were hundreds of seabirds, including a number of Lesser Crested Terns and Swift (Greater Crested) Terns. With all these new species, exhaustion was setting in so we departed for the Sandy Beach Motel, situated 70km to the north, arriving there at about 7.15pm.

**Day 5:** We set off southwards at 7.30am and reached the artificial raised beach near Fujairah Port at about 8.30am. Things were rather quiet on the fishing front, with almost no seabirds on the beach, but after a thorough scan of the buoys, on which a couple of dozen Socotra Cormorant were lounging, once again John was the first to spot a rarity. There was a Brown Booby on one of the marker buoys! Soon it took off and flew around like a small gannet, showing off its large brown bib and head. After this surprise, things began to liven up as fishing activities started and soon numbers of White-cheeked Terns arrived, all in non-breeding plumage. Offshore four Black-necked Grebes joined the fray and dozens of Sooty Gulls sat on the water as the 1km net pulled tighter into the shore. Then we drove on to the newly-constructed Gurfa breakwater, which took us 800metres out to sea. There were hundreds of Persian Shearwaters sitting on the sea and flying around as shoals of fish appeared beneath them. A couple of Lesser Crested Terns were patrolling and soon a Pomarine Skua arrived and chased one of the terns until it finally disgorged its fish. Then it was on down the coast to the small, enclosed fishing harbour at Kalba. We had great views of an adult Striated Heron hunting from the boat moorings and several Swift Terns were perched on the buoys. A couple of Western Reef-egrets were perched on the boats quite close to us. There were hundreds of gulls and terns at our next stop along Kalba beach, mostly Slender-billed and Sooty Gulls and immature White-cheeked Terns, taking easy pickings as the long nets were dragged on shore. We took our picnic lunch on the savannah gravel plain, hoping to see Arabian Babbler, which soon appeared. A walk around the plain also turned up our first Eastern Orphean Warbler. This kept our attention for some time, before we drove across the new corniche lagoons to the old mangroves. We finally located Sykes's Warbler, two or three in fact, which proved quite difficult to see even though they were singing and quite active. And a close, loud Clamorous Reed Warbler refused to reveal itself properly to the group. Our last port of call was the scrubby harbour beachhead, where we saw a pair of Black-crowned Sparrow-larks, a few Desert Wheatears and a very cute Desert Warbler. We returned to the Sandy Beach hotel, an hour before sunset, for a well-appreciated break before a delicious dinner of Lebanese mezze.

**Day 6:** After a 7.15am departure we visited the Fujairah National Dairy Farm, where a walk through the fields provided many Bank Mynahs and a few Rose-coloured Starling. Several Bluethroat showed very well at the field edges and many Citrine Wagtails erupted from the drainage ditch adjacent to the pens. However, after searching the cow pens we failed to find the elusive Masked Wagtail, but consoled ourselves with a visit to the local ADNOC service station to stock up with juices and sandwiches. We headed for the foothills near Masafi, which were alive with weekend visitors enjoying the cool weather. We found a quiet spot in the hills and walked slowly up a dry wadi and were soon surrounded by the calls of Long-billed Pipit. One was perched on the very top of a nearby peak, with food in its bill, indicating it probably already had young in the nest. Due to the long dry spell this was the first time I had seen them here for many years. We also found a couple more Desert Larks, Plain Leaf Warblers and a Red-tailed Wheatear. After a relaxing picnic and a chat with a visiting German birder – who was delighted to be shown the pipit by some of the group – we headed on towards the Gulf Coast. At Hamraniyah we drove along a track and after stopping and scanning around, we noticed a couple of distant raptors soaring high over the nearby fields. They were a first-year Montagu's Harrier and a Long-legged Buzzard, both new to our list. We entered the private fodder farm of the Ruler of Ras al Khaimah. After driving the length of the field we approached from the south and scanned the doves on the wires. The first surprise we encountered was a male Namaqua Dove sitting amongst the hundreds of Eurasian Collared-doves and Laughing Doves. It provided good views, before it dropped down into the long grass. Further on we found a large flock, 74 in all, of Red-rumped Swallows, which fed and

called above us for the rest of the afternoon. There were Corn Buntings here too, some in song, but soon our attention was drawn to an adult Spotted Eagle, which had flown in to roost on a distant tree. We tried to approach it in the vehicle, but it was rather wary and soon flew off. It was soon time to head off and check-in to the Bin Majid Beach Hotel for the night.

**Day 7:** We checked out at our usual time of 7.15am after a good breakfast, and within 10 minutes found ourselves at the foot of the sand dunes at Al Jazeera Khor. Soon John and Adrian located a Ménétries' Warbler in the scrubby bushes and we set off up the sand dunes to see what else was around. There were several Eastern Orphean Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats, many chasing and then disappearing deep into the bushes. A Eurasian Sparrowhawk raced north putting up an Indian Roller and scaring several bulbuls. On the mudflats below we got our first views of several Crab Plovers and some rather distant Saunders' Terns, which we were able to approach more closely later. Here we also saw our first Ruddy Turnstones, Eurasian Oystercatchers and Sanderlings of the trip. Later at Dreamland Beach we had some great views of more Crab Plovers and our first Terek Sandpipers. After a comfort stop and purchase of lunch sandwiches – where an Isabelline Shrike and a pair of Little Green Bee-eaters hunted near the forecourt - we drove to Khor al-Beida, first to look for Greater Hoopoe Lark, two of which we soon managed to locate, by their very distinctive flight. Very good views were obtained as one fed a short distance in front of our battery of 'scopes. Then down at the shoreline, we parked and waited patiently for the tide to rise, pushing hundreds of Crab Plovers, Lesser Sandpipers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Grey Plovers and Terek Sandpipers towards us. Our target bird was soon in view: three winter-plumaged Great Knot sat amongst the flock and everyone was able to see their distinctive spotted breasts and subtle down-curved bills. We soon checked in again at the Airport Hotel and after an hour's break we set off inland to Qarn Nazwa. There were several Blue Rock-thrushes and Red-tailed Wheatears there, but unfortunately no Eastern Pied Wheatears, which must have already headed north. There was a disappointing and frustrating search for Desert Eagle Owl too. We changed location and missed a brief view of one on top of the escarpment at our first location, which I found but was unable to drive the group back there in time, before it disappeared from view. However all was made up at Mushrif National Park and hour later, where two charming Striated Scops-owls performed well under the floodlights of the admin block, swooping down to feed on beetles, then fly between us. Soon it was time to return to the hotel for a rest and a farewell dinner of fish & chips and steak & kidney pie.

**Day 8:** At 7.30am most of the group, except for Steph and Mick, who were leaving on the evening Air France flight, transferred to Dubai Airport for their British Airways flight back to London.

## **CHECKLIST – 186 species**

The list includes forms Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*, Steppe Gull *Larus cachinnans barabensis*, Yellow-headed Wagtail *M.f. lutea*, Grey-headed Wagtail *M.f. thunbergi*, Sykes's Wagtail *M.f. beema*, Black-headed Wagtail *M.f. feldegg*, Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca minula*, Steppe Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis pallidirostris*, Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus* and Turkestan Shrike *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides*, which are sometimes treated as full species.

NL = non-leader

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Largest numbers 200+ at Wimpey Pits on 21 Feb, with six at Ghantut polo club only others seen.

**BLACK-NECKED GREBE** *Podiceps nigricollis* 10+ at Wimpey pits on 21 Feb, four off Fujairah Port beach on 24 Feb.

**PERSIAN SHEARWATER** *Puffinus persicus* At least 250 swimming and flying off the end of Gurfa breakwater 24 Feb.

**BROWN BOOBY** *Sula leucogaster* One was first seen on Fujairah Port harbour buoy 24 Feb, and performed well by flying around for several minutes before disappearing over breakwater. The 11th UAE record.

**GREAT CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Over 70 of this fairly common winter visitor seen, including 20 at Khor Dubai Sanctuary on 21 Feb and 34 at Khor Kalba on 23 Feb.

**SOCOTRA CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* 24 on the marker buoys at Fujairah Port beach and 70 flying past Gurfa breakwater 24 Feb.

**STRIATED HERON** *Butorides striatus* One adult in fishing harbour at Kalba 24 Feb.

**SQUACCO HERON** *Ardeola ralloides* One immature Wimpey pits 25 Feb.

**INDIAN POND HERON** *Ardeola grayii* Up to five Khor Kalba 23 & 24 Feb.

**CATTLE EGRET** *Bubulcus ibis* Up to 20 at Dubai pivots and later roosting at Wimpey Pits 21 Feb; 30 at Fujairah National Dairy Farm 25 Feb, with singles on Dubai landscaped road verge and Hamraniyah fields.

**WESTERN REEF-EGRET** *Egretta gularis* Over 70 birds logged, including nine at Khor Kalba, 10 at Al Jazeerah Khor and 35 at Dreamland beach lagoon.

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta* Up to four birds together at Khor Dubai, Wimpey Pits, Dubai Pivots, Khor Kalba, Fujairah Dairy Farm and Hamraniyah fields.

**GREAT EGRET** *Egretta alba* At least three Khor Dubai on 21 Feb, two Khor Kalba 23 & 24 Feb, two Al Jazeerah Khor and a few, uncounted, at Dreamland Beach and Khor al Beidah.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea* Greatest numbers, 50 at Khor Dubai 21 Feb. Fewer Wimpey pits, Al Jazeerah Khor, Dreamland Beach, Khor al Beidah and East Coast locations.

**GLOSSY IBIS** *Plegadis falcinellus* Two Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**EURASIAN SPOONBILL** *Platalea leucorodia* 15 at Khor Dubai 21 Feb and 11 at Al Jazeerah Khor 26 Feb.

**GREATER FLAMINGO** *Phoenicopterus ruber* Greatest numbers Khor Dubai, with 2000+ on 21 Feb. Also seen in small numbers Khor Kalba corniche lagoon and in distance at Dreamland Beach lagoon.

**EGYPTIAN GOOSE** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Two at Ghantut Polo Club lake 22 Feb.

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** *Tadorna ferruginea* One found at Buraimi sewage plant 23 Feb.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca* Surprisingly scarce, with six at Khor Dubai 21 Feb and 10 at the Fujairah Dairy Farm 25 Feb. Probably 50+ at Wimpey Pits, but not counted!

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos* 30+ each, at least, Khor Dubai and Wimpey Pits, with fewer Ghantut Polo Club and Fujairah Dairy Farm.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** *Anas acuta* 30+ at Khor Dubai and 40 at Wimpey Pits 21 Feb.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata* 30 at Khor Dubai 21 Feb with similar numbers at Wimpey pits on same day.

**COMMON POCHARD** *Aythya ferina* 20+ at Wimpey Pits 21 Feb and eight at Ghantut polo Club 22 Feb.

**FERRUGINOUS DUCK** *Aythya nyroca* three Wimpey Pits 21 Feb and two Ghantut polo Club 22 Feb.

**EGYPTIAN VULTURE** *Neophron percnopterus* Three around Jebel Hafit 23 Feb.

**WESTERN MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus* Up to three seen Khor Dubai, Wimpey Pits and Dubai Pivot Fields on 21 Feb, two Al Wathba Camel Track fields 22 Feb and two at Dreamland Beach 26 Feb.

**PALLID HARRIER** *Circus macrourus* One immature seen Al Wathba Camel Track fields 22 Feb.

**MONTAGU'S HARRIER** *Circus pygargus* One immature, ring-tail, over Hamraniyyah fields 25 Feb.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus* One Al Jazeera Khor 26 Feb.

**LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD** *Buteo ruffinus* One Hamraniyyah fields 25 Feb.

**SPOTTED EAGLE** *Aquila clanga* At least two immatures Khor Dubai 21 Feb and one adult Hamraniyyah fields 25 Feb.

**BONELLI'S EAGLE** *Hieraetus fasciatus* One adult over Hanging Gardens' escarpment 23 Feb.

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus* Two at Khor Dubai 21 Feb and one on salt flats at Dreamland Beach 26 Feb.

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus* Surprisingly uncommon, with two Masafi 25 Feb and singles at Hamraniyyah fields, Al Jazeera Khor and near Airport Hotel.

**SAND PARTRIDGE** *Ammoperdix heyi* Four at our first car park stop on Jebel Hafit on 23 Feb were the only birds seen.

**GREY FRANCOLIN** *Francolinus pondicerianus* Seen or heard almost daily, with best views of a pair in Hamraniyyah fields on 25 Feb.

**COMMON QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix* One seen at Al Wathba Camel Track fields on 22 Feb, one flushed at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm on 25 Feb and a few heard at Hamraniyyah fields on 25 Feb.

**COMMON MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus* Over 100 at Wimpey Pits, plus a couple at Dubai Pivots later on 21 Feb, were the only ones seen.

**PURPLE SWAMPHEN** *Porphyrio porphyrio* In late afternoon on the first day, a pair, with three swimming chicks seen at Wimpey Pits on 21 Feb.

**COMMON COOT** *Fulica atra* Over 40, probably many more, at Wimpey Pits 21 Feb and a couple at Ghantut Polo Club lake the next day.

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus* Finally found on the last day, with half-a-dozen at Al Jazeerah Khor and over 30 at Khor al Beidah on 26 Feb.

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** *Himantopus himantopus* Up to 20 seen at Khor Dubai, Wimpey Pits and Buraimi sewage reed beds, with less than five at other sites.

**PIED AVOCET** *Recurvirostra avosetta* 17 seen at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb.

**CRAB PLOVER** *Dromas ardeola* A star species, only encountered on the last day, with 14 at Al Jazeerah Khor, nine at Dreamland Beach and 88 at roost at Khor al Beidah.

**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius dubius* two pairs each at Dubai Pivot fields and the Fujairah National Farm.

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula* Max. 50 seen at Khor Dubai 21 Feb, with ones and twos elsewhere.

**KENTISH PLOVER** *Charadrius alexandrinus* c.100 at Khor Dubai , with up to five seen Khor Kalba, Al Jazeerah Khor and Dreamland Beach.

**LESSER SANDPLOVER** *Charadrius mongolus* At least 50 at Khor Dubai, 40 on polo field at Ghantut (!), 20 at Khor Kalba and a few at Al Jazeerah Khor and Dreamland Beach.

**GREATER SANDPLOVER** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Not so common as previous sp. About 5 at Khor Kalba and beach area, 5 each at Al Jazeerah Khor and Khor al-Beida.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** *Pluvialis fulva* 15 at Ghantut Polo club and 22 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb, were the only sightings.

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola* Quite common on mudflats and lagoon shorelines, with 40 at Khor Dubai and similar numbers at Al Jazeerah Khor, Dreamland Beach and Khor al-Beida.

**RED-WATTLED LAPWING** *Hoplopterus indicus* Seen at 6 sites, with 10 at Khor Dubai , 10 at Wimpey Pits, 20 at Dubai Pivot Fields and a few at Buraimi sewage and other places.

**SOCIABLE LAPWING** *Chettusia gregaria* These two rare birds had been wintering at Dubai Pivot Fields and we were fortunate to find them still there - excellent!

**WHITE-TAILED LAPWING** *Chettusia leucura* About 40 seen at Wimpey Pits and the Dubai Pivot Fields on 21 Feb where they are known to nest, at their only regular breeding site in Arabia.

**GREAT KNOT** *Calidris tenuirostris* After a scan through the large roost of Grey Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwits, three were found at Khor al-Beida 26 Feb.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba* Four found on the last day at Al Jazeera Khor, Dreamland Beach and Khor al Beida.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta* 20 at Khor Dubai 21 Feb with a few at Buraimi sewage works and Al Jazeera Khor at least.

**TEMMINCK'S STINT** *Calidris temminckii* Four at the Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb and one at Fujairah Dairy Farm 25 Feb.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea* One was at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb and five were at Khor al Beida 26 Feb.

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina* Hundreds at Al Jazeera Khor, Dreamland Beach and Khor al Beida on 26 Feb with at least 20 at Khor Dubai on the first day.

**BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER** *Limicola falcinellus* At least 25 counted amongst a mixed flock of roosting waders at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax* Singles at Wimpey Pits and Al Jazeera Khor only.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus* One at small puddle at Dubai Pivot Fields on 21 Feb.

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago* Good numbers together, including 40+ at desert reed beds near Dubai sewage works on 21 Feb, 16 at Buraimi sewage treatment plant and 12 at Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**PINTAIL SNIPE** *Gallinago stenura* Two - flying views only - at desert reeds near Dubai sewage plant on 21 Feb.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa* 30 at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica* Fairly common, but not counted, at Khor Dubai on the first day, then several hundred at Al Jazeera Khor , Khor al-Beida and Dreamland Beach on the 26 Feb.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus* Three at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb, one at Khor Kalba on 24 Feb and three at Khor al-Beida on 26 Feb.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata* Fairly common with max. 7 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb, 16 at Khor Kalba on 23 Feb and 5 each at Al Jazeera Khor and Khor al-Beida on 26 Feb.

**COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus* Over 100 birds seen, mostly at Khor Dubai , Al Jazeera Khor and Khor al-Beida.

**MARSH SANDPIPER** *Tringa stagnatilis* Two at Wimpey Pits on 21 Feb were our only sighting.

**COMMON GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia* Up to three birds each at Khor Dubai , Khor Kalba and Khor al-Beida.



**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus* Singles at desert reeds and Buraimi sewage works and two at Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola* Singles at Wimpey Pits and Buraimi sewage 'plant'.

**TEREK SANDPIPER** *Xenus cinereus* Not seen until last day, with good views of three at Dreamland Beach and 20+ at Khor al-Beida on 26 Feb.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos* Up to two each at Khor Dubai , Dubai Pivot Fields, Ghantut polo club lake, Khor Kalba and Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres* Seen finally on last day, with 5 at Al Jazeerah Khor and 25 at Khor al-Beida.

**POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Two off Gurfa breakwater on 24 Feb.

**SOOTY GULL** *Larus hemprichii* Very common on East Coast, with at least 220 at Kalba on 23 & 24 Feb, plus 150 at Kalba harbour sand bank, 70 off Fujairah beaches and 60 at the Kalba fish market port on 24 Feb.

**GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ichthyaetus* 3 at Khor Kalba on 23 Feb, 2 next to Sandy Beach Motel on 24 Feb and one at Kalba beach 24 Feb, plus another passing the Bin Majid Beach Hotel on morning of 26 Feb.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus* Abundant, particularly with 200+ roosting on the interchange landscaped grass as we left the Airport Hotel in Dubai on 21 and 26 Feb.

**SLENDER-BILLED GULL** *Larus genei* 300+ in lagoon at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb and common on East Coast at fish nets, with at least 450 seen 24 Feb.

**BALTIC GULL** *Larus fuscus fuscus* One typical dark-backed individual in new dredged lagoon at Khor Kalba 23 Feb.

**HEUGLIN'S GULL** *Larus heuglini* Apparently more common than Caspian Gull, presumably on passage. 200+ at Khor Kalba sand bank 23 Feb and up to 10 seen on coast on 24 Feb. Five were lounging beside ornamental pond at Ghantut Polo Club on 22 Feb.

**CASPIAN GULL** *Larus cachinnans* Max. 90 seen at Khor Kalba harbour roost on 23 Feb, including many *barabensis* - see below. This nominate race had long snouty head with powerful large bill and several were identifiable.

**STEPPE GULL** *Larus cachinnans barabensis* This form appeared to be in the majority on East Coast beaches. We looked at a dozen adults at mixed roost on Fujairah beach, typical appearance included medium grey back, rounded head, small dark eye and delicate bill. Total c.20 birds seen.

**GULL-BILLED TERN** *Gelochelidon nilotica* 3 at Khor Dubai on 21 Feb, 4 at Al Jazeerah Khor, similar numbers at Dreamland Beach and 10 at Khor al-Beida on 26 Feb.

**CASPIAN TERN** *Sterna caspia* 5 at Khor Dubai and 3 at Khor al-Beida were the only sightings.

**SWIFT TERN** *Sterna bergii* 2 sitting on oil drums at Khor Kalba on 23 Feb and 3 in Kalba fishing harbour on 24 Feb.

**LESSER CRESTED TERN** *Sterna bengalensis* 4 at Khor Kalba roost on 23 Feb, with further 14 seen at Sandy Beach and Fujairah on 24 Feb.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis* A little more common than previous with max. 40 on beaches between Fujairah and Kalba on 24 Feb.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo* Sometimes amongst *repressa*, but most feeding well offshore. Two definite adults seen on Kalba beach 24 Feb.

**WHITE-CHEEKED TERN** *Sterna repressa* Only non-breeding birds present. At least 200 birds seen at 3 locations on beaches between Fujairah and Kalba on 24 Feb.

**SAUNDERS' TERN** *Sterna saundersi* 12 seen at Al Jazeerah Khor lagoon 26 Feb, mostly distant but occasional flight views obtained, when birds showed diagnostic dark rumps and long black primary shafts to primaries.

**WHISKERED TERN** *Chlidonias hybrida* 2 at Wimpey Pits 21 Feb And one at Ghantut Polo Club 22 Feb.

**LICHTENSTEIN'S SANDGROUSE** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* One bird flushed from side of track at Hanging gardens 23 Feb.

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE** *Pterocles exustus* 12 came to drink at Ghantut Polo Club on 22 Feb and later in day over 70 birds flew over at Al Wathba Camel Track.

**ROCK DOVE** *Columba livia* Many impure forms noted daily, but probably genuine birds seen at Jebel Hafit and in Masafi.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto* Very common, often hundreds seen daily.

**LAUGHING DOVE** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Even more ubiquitous than Collared dove. Seen even in remote, dry and mountainous areas.

**NAMAQUA DOVE** *Oena capensis* This male was a surprise find at Hamraniyyah Fields on 25 Feb.

**RING-NECKED PARAKEET** *Psittacula krameri* Heard most days, but not often seen well. At least 20 seen on 25 Feb at Fujairah National Dairy Farm and Hamraniyyah Fields.

**STRIATED SCOPS-OWL** *Otus brucei* Great views of at least two birds feeding at our feet, in Mushrif Park after dark on our last day.

**DESERT EAGLE-OWL** *Bubo bubo ascalaphus* One bird appeared as a silhouette at Qarn Nazwa for the leader only! It sank out of view when the group arrived 2 minutes later....

**EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Two seen on ground and flying, by spotlight at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**COMMON SWIFT** *Apus apus* At least 10 very dark birds, probably this species, seen in Al Ain and at Hanging Gardens on 23 Feb.

**PALLID SWIFT** *Apus pallidus* Very common. At least 200 wheeling around 'Snoopy Island' at Sandy Beach hotel at dawn and late afternoons of 23 - 25 Feb.

**WHITE-COLLARED KINGFISHER** *Halcyon chloris* 6 on 23 Feb and 4 on 24 Feb at Khor Kalba, the only known world site of this very endangered subspecies.

**COMMON KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis* Up to two at Khor Kalba 23 & 24 Feb and one at Kalba fishing harbour 24 Feb.

**LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER** *Merops orientalis* Up to 5 seen daily.

**BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER** *Merops persicus* 3 which flew over Khor Kalba lagoon 23 Feb, were not seen well by all the group.

**INDIAN ROLLER** *Coracias benghalensis* Rather absent until we reached the East Coast, where 70 birds, at least, were seen at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm and Hamraniyyah Fields on 25 Feb. Small numbers also found at other sites and on many roadside wires. A pair appeared to be nesting at Al Jazeerah Khor.

**EURASIAN HOOPOE** *Upupa epops* A max. four were at Dubai Pivot Fields and the Fujairah National Dairy Farm. Ones and twos were in the Airport hotel gardens, Kalba Plain and Qarn Nazwa.

**BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK** *Eremopterix nigriceps* After some distant flyovers, we finally encountered several pairs on gravel plains amongst the Oman foothills near Mahdah on 23 Feb. Another pair were seen well at Khor Kalba 24 Feb.

**DESERT LARK** *Ammomanes deserti* 8 on Jebel Hafit and 7 in Hanging Gardens area 23 Feb, and 2 at Masafi wadi 25 Feb.

**GREATER HOOPOE-LARK** *Alaemon alaudipes* Great views of a pair at Khor al-Beida 26 Feb.

**BIMACULATED LARK** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* 5 were at a drinking pool at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb.

**GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla* Only 2 at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella rufescens* At least 30 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb.

**CRESTED LARK** *Galerida cristata* Common, seen daily.

**EURASIAN SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis* 6 at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb, 12 at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb and 3 at Fujairah National Dairy Farm 25 Feb.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia* 20 feeding adjacent to Wimpey Pits on 21 Feb.

**PALE CRAG MARTIN** *Hirundo obsoleta* At least 10 resident birds seen at Jebel Hafit, Hanging Gardens and around Ain al Faydah Hotel 23 Feb. One was at Qarn Nazwa 26 Feb.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica* 10 at Wimpey Pits, 2 at the nearby Dubai Pivot Fields and 20 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb were the only sightings of this migrant, whose passage peaks from mid-March.

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** *Hirundo daurica* A noteworthy 75 were at Hamraniyyah Fields on 25 Feb. One reported at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb (NL).

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica* 2 at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**RICHARD'S PIPIT** *Anthus richardi* Singles seen at Dubai Pivot Fields and Fujairah National Dairy Farm with 2 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb.

**BLYTH'S PIPIT** *Anthus godlewski* One was found at the Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb and 2 were at the Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb. A rare winter visitor, first recorded in the Emirates only in 1993.

**TAWNY PIPIT** *Anthus campestris* A peak of 23 counted at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb. Fewer Dubai Pivot Fields and Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**LONG-BILLED PIPIT** *Anthus similis* A dramatic summit songster, possibly 2 birds, found at Masafi Wadi on 25 Feb.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis* One flew by, calling at Al Wathba Camel Track....but quickly dropped down and out of view.

**RED-THROATED PIPIT** *Anthus cervinus* 6 at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb and at least one at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**WATER PIPIT** *Anthus spinoletta* Up to 4 each seen at Dubai Pivot Fields, Al Wathba Camel Track, Buraimi sewage plant and the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT** *Anthus japonicus* A good discovery was one at the Dubai Pivot Fields on 21 Feb. This bird had been wintering for several weeks, but not always obliging to observers.

**BLACK-HEADED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla f. feldegg* 10 at the Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**SYKES'S WAGTAIL** *Motacilla f. beema* The most common form occurring. 10 at the Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla f. thunbergi* 2 at the Dubai Pivot Fields on 21 Feb.

**YELLOW-HEADED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla f. lutea* One bright individual was seen at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola* 4 at Wimpey Pits and 3 Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb, 5 at Buraimi sewage plant 23 Feb and 5 at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm 25 Feb.

**WHITE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba* Over 50 seen in various locations, particularly at Dubai Pivot Fields and the Fujairah National Dairy Farm cow pens.

**WHITE-CHEEKED BULBUL** *Pycnonotus leucogenys* Seen daily, with up to 10 seen in hotel gardens, particularly at Millenium Airport Hotel Dubai.

**YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL** *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* The indigenous bulbul, with pairs seen at Ain al Faydah, Jebel Hafit, Kalba Plain, Fujairah National Dairy Farm, Masafi, Hamraniyyah Fields and Al Jazeerah Khor.

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** *Pycnonotus cafer* Another introduced species, though well-established, with 10+ resident in Airport hotel gardens and at Ghantut.

**BLUETHROAT** *Luscinia svecica* At least 8 seen at Fujairah National Dairy Farm on 25 Feb.

**(EASTERN) BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides* The red-bellied form occurs. At least one at Ghantut plantation 22 Feb, three 23 Feb Jebel Hafit and two at our Kalba Plain picnic place.

**COMMON STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata* Two at Ghantut Polo Club 22 Feb and 4 at Fujairah National Dairy Farm 25 Feb.

**ISABELLINE WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe isabellina* Quite common with over 50 seen, including 36 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Four at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb.

**PIED WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe pleschanka* At least two males at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**DESERT WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe deserti* Common, with nearly 40 seen, including 9 at Ghantut Polo Club, 20 at Al Wathba Camel Track on 22 Feb and 3 at Khor Kalba 24 Feb.

**RED-TAILED WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe (xanthopyrma) chrysopygia* Most seen in the Al Ain area, with 4 at Jebel Hafit, 5 in Fossil Valley and 5 at Hanging Gardens on 23 Feb. 3 were at Qarn Nazwa on 26 Feb.

**HUME'S WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe alboniger* Four on Jebel Hafit 23 Feb, were the only birds seen.

**BLUE ROCK THRUSH** *Monticola solitarius* One on Jebel Hafit and one in Fossil Valley 23 Feb, and two at Qarn Nazwa 26 Feb.

**GRACEFUL PRINIA** *Prinia gracilis* Heard daily in most gardens and cultivated areas. A pair seen well at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**CASPIAN REED-WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* Several heard and two seen at the desert reeds near the Dubai sewage treatment Plant 21 Feb.

**CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Heard at Wimpey Pits and Khor Kalba, with one seen well at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**EASTERN OLIVACEOUS WARBLER** *Hippolais pallida elaeica* One being mobbed by a Sykes's Warbler at Khor Kalba mangroves 24 Feb.

**SYKES'S WARBLER** *Hippolais rama* Two seen singing and chasing at Khor Kalba mangroves 24 Feb.

**MÉNÉTRIES' WARBLER** *Sylvia mystacea* Three at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb, one Hanging Gardens 23 Feb and about 7 in scrub on Al Jazeerah Khor dunes 26 Feb.

**ASIAN DESERT WARBLER** *Sylvia nana* One at Khor Kalba beach scrub 24 Feb, one in scrub at Dreamland Beach and at Qarn Nazwa on 26 Feb.

**EASTERN ORPHEAN WARBLER** *Sylvia hortensis* One at picnic stop Kalba Plain 24 Feb and 2 at Al Jazeerah Khor 26 Feb.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca* Many heard and seen, with good views obtained of birds by most of the group at Hanging Gardens and Al Jazeerah Khor.

**DESERT LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca minula* Singles of this small grey form seen at Ghantut plantation and Al Jazeerah Khor.

**PLAIN LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus neglectus* One seen well at Hanging Gardens 23 Feb and two heard at Masafi 25 Feb.

**SCANDINAVIAN CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus* About 7 birds seen, in Airport Hotel Gardens, Mercure Hotel gardens on Jebel Hafit, Khor Kalba mangroves and Masafi wadi. Race *abietinus*.

**ARABIAN BABBLER** *Turdoides squamiceps* 10 seen in two groups, on Kalba Plain on 24 Feb, one at Hamraniyyah Fields 25 Feb and 5 on Al Jazeera Khor dunes on 26 Feb.

**PURPLE SUNBIRD** *Nectarinia asiatica* They were very common, calling from trees at virtually every location, all males in breeding plumage. Some good views were obtained at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**ISABELLINE SHRIKE** *Lanius isabellinus* One could not be assigned to race with certainty at Dreamland Beach 26 Feb. Other birds were racially separated as follows:

**DAURIAN SHRIKE** *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus* This grey-backed form was seen at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb.

**RED-TAILED SHRIKE** *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides* The most common, rufous-capped form: Singles at Dubai Pivot Fields, desert reeds and Hamraniyyah Fields. Two were at Al Wathba Camel Track and Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor* One first identified as *pallidirostris*, was later re-assessed as the *homeyeri* race of the 'Northern' Great Grey Shrike complex, at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**SOUTHERN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius meridionalis* Several pairs were seen well at the Ghantut Polo Club on 22 Feb, then singles were seen at several sites including Hanging Gardens, Al Jazeera Khor dunes. One dead bird was found at Qarn Nazwa.

**STEPPE GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris* One was at Al Wathba Camel Track 22 Feb.

**WOODCHAT SHRIKE** *Lanius senator* Singles were at Al Wathba Camel Track and the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**HOUSE CROW** *Corvus splendens* Abundant at the East Coast, even on the beach scavenging for fish. Smaller numbers around Dubai.

**BROWN-NECKED RAVEN** *Corvus ruficollis* Two were in the Oman foothills north of Al Ain and one was near Hatta 23 Feb and one was at Masafi 25 Feb.

**COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris* 10 at Dubai Pivot Fields 21 Feb and one at Hamraniyyah Fields 25 Feb.

**ROSE-COLOURED STARLING** *Sturnus roseus* 7 were at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm on 25 Feb.

**COMMON MYNAH** *Acridotheres tristis* Common and widespread. seen daily.

**BANK MYNAH** *Acridotheres ginginianus* At least 70 at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm and over 150 at Hamraniyyah Fields on the 25 Feb.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus* Abundant, nesting everywhere even in mountain and desert locations.

**INDIAN SILVERBILL** *Euodice malabarica* First seen feeding at a puddle at the Airport Hotel. Max. numbers were a flock of over 65 flying over the grass at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm.

**TRUMPETER FINCH** *Bucanetes githagineus* A surprise find. 14 were found feeding on the stony ground at Hanging Gardens 23 Feb.

**HOUSE BUNTING** *Emberiza striolata* 10 were flying around at the Hanging Gardens on 23 Feb.

**CORN BUNTING** *Miliaria calandra* 18 birds, including several perched on the wires amongst Eurasian Collared-doves at Hamraniyyah Fields on 25 Feb.

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### **EXOTIC/INTRODUCED BIRD SPECIES**

**BLACK SWAN** *Cygnus atratus* One at Khor Dubai was introduced several years ago.

**YELLOW-BILLED STORK** *Mycteria ibis* One remaining at Khor Dubai, of several introduced a few years ago.

### **REPTILES**

**YELLOW-SPOTTED AGAMID** *Trapelus flavimaculatus* One large individual was found while walking around Kalba plain on the 24th.

### **BUTTERFLIES**

**PAINTED LADY** *Vanessa cardui*

**BLUE PANSY** *Junoneo orithiya*

### **BIRD OF THE TRIP**

1. **Crab Plover** (11 points)
2. **Brown Booby** (8 points)
2. **White-collared Kingfisher** (8 points)
2. **Striated Scops-owl** (8 points)
5. **Egyptian Nightjar** (7 points)
5. **Black-crowned Sparrow-lark** (7 points)

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