

United Arab Emirates

5–13 February 2012

Participants

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Black-crowned Sparrow-lark

Leaders Vaughan and Svetlana Ashby

Day 1: Leaving on a morning Royal Brunei flight from a snowy Heathrow we arrived into a warm, bustling Dubai early evening and despite at first going to the wrong hotel we were soon settled in and ready for a seven day trip to savour the delights of this birding hotspot. We met really friendly people, there's easy transport and some very special birds that, with a little effort, gave great views. There are the specialities that all come to see: Crab Plover and Great Knot, Pallas's Gull, Hooded, Hume's and Variable Wheatears, Plain Leaf-warbler wintering from Iran (where else can you see this little cracker?), four different lapwings in just 15 minutes, four species of majestic eagles and a chance to really hone your wader, pipit and lark identification skills.

Day 2: We ventured out on the first morning and soon had three showy Indian (Clamorous) Reed-warblers in a patch of reeds on a building site next to the hotel and quickly picked up the three bulbuls, Red-vented, White-eared and White-spectacled plus Indian Silverbills and the two birds vying for commonest in the Emirates, Crested Lark and Laughing Dove. On then to one of the special green oasis in this desert country, the famous Ghantoot Polo Club, haunt of princes and kings and birds attracted to the well watered green expanses of the polo fields. Looking through the gates we had our first of many Red-wattled Lapwings and the only Pacific Golden-plovers of the trip joined on the grass by Isabelline and Desert Wheatears, Tawny Pipits, Sky Larks and Grey Francolins. Graceful Prinias, Purple Sunbirds, Little Green Bee-eaters and Southern Grey Shrikes were common in the surrounding scrubby bushes. Unfortunately, the nearby palm groves are now no longer watered and the Hypocolius, for which the site was once so famous, no longer occur. A fly-over female Crested Honey-buzzard was very welcome, a bird which is now wintering in small numbers. Vaughan's contacts and undoubted charm actually got us through the gates and we able to drive around the extensive site to bask in the luxury of this most exclusive club. Our perseverance was rewarded with some close up views of a couple of Cream-coloured Coursers as they did their stuff running across the well-manicured grass. We drove on across the deserts making for Al Ain. A lunch stop in the desert at Bab Al Sham did give us camels but little else, despite constant scouring, no Greater Hoopoe-larks, in fact no birds at all. This was to change as we hit Al Ain and had our first Indian Rollers perched up on the many well-watered roundabouts. We made for Green

Mubazzarah, a wonderfully verdant park with many dry side wadis and were met by a flyover Egyptian Vulture, Brown-necked Ravens, Black Redstarts, Chukars, Lesser Whitethroats, Desert Larks and then the birds we had come for, very showy Plain Leaf-warblers and then Hume's and Red-tailed Wheatears. Our hotel was spectacularly sited on the mountain top of Jabel Hafeet and had Rock Martin nest building in the eaves.

Day 3: A pre-breakfast walk in the hotel grounds gave us Sand Partridges feeding on scraps around the poolside plus Blue Rock-thrushes and more Hume's Wheatears, Black Redstarts and Indian Rollers. We drove to the summit car park, popular with tourists so getting there early was critical and we were not disappointed. Desert Larks were everywhere feeding on picnic remnants and they were joined by our only House (Striolated) Buntings of the trip plus a stonking Hooded Wheatear, the toughest of the wheatears to find in the Emirates. A very early male Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush was a surprise, the splash of colour in the morning sun just added to the spectacular location. We paid another visit to Green Mubazzarah and had Cattle Egrets on the grass with five Sacred Ibises and then much the same birds as the day before but we did eventually nail a fine Desert Lesser Whitethroat. We lunched in al-Fayeda Park at the junction of some woods and scrubby desert; many Arabian Babblers were in the trees along with a skulking Bluethroat. Then, with a little effort, watching out for perched up Desert Wheatears we soon located a pair of Asian Desert Warblers and then a fine male Ménétries's Warbler. South of Al Ain are the famous Zakher Pools, an incongruous expanse of water amongst rolling sand dunes, a magnet for water birds. Scanning the banks we picked up Great, Little and Cattle Egrets, Grey, Purple and Squacco Herons, Western Reef-egret, Black-crowned Night-heron and a solitary Glossy Ibis. Amongst the ducks were Ferruginous Duck, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler together with four Greater White-fronted Geese. There were also a few waders, mostly Little Stints but one Temminck's coming into summer plumage was particularly attractive. Amongst the passerines were Yellow and Citrine Wagtails and Water Pipits to round off another good day.

Day 4: We left our mountain top hotel the next morning and headed south towards the Oman border and some extensive fodder fields. We were welcomed by some Namaqua Doves and then our quarry, a flock of Black-crowned Sparrow-larks, the only sexually dimorphic larks in the Emirates. They were very handsome birds giving prolonged and excellent views. Happy and packing up for the road to Khor Kalba Vaughan pointed out a drab brown solitary lark on the fence which was clearly not a female Black-crowned, it had a fat bill and looking short tailed and calling ziup as it flew and landed on its own away from all the other larks in the field. Sveta had managed a couple of pictures and we were pretty sure it was a Dunn's, if so just the second record for the Emirates. It will have to be submitted but I'm personally very confident. Pretty buoyant we headed north stopping for a fine adult Imperial Eagle by the roadside on the outskirts of Al Ain. Stopping for lunch at Qarn Nazwa, we soon found a pair of Variable Wheatears in the dry wadi plus Asian Desert Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats. It's a well-known site for Pharaoh Eagle-owl but no daytime luck and we moved on to the coast and Khor Kalba. Arriving at the coast we were met by hundreds if not thousands of gulls mostly Steppe and Sooty but with many beautiful Slender-billeds amongst them. Some concerted watching enabled us to sort out one or two Baltic and Heuglin's Gulls along with some magnificent adult Pallas's Gulls resplendent in summer plumage. The tide was out and a lot of mud was exposed in front of the mangroves and three Collared Kingfishers were perched up representing a fair percentage of the whole population. The reclaiming of the mangroves as the area develops has seen a fall in the population of this endemic subspecies to around 25 pairs in the Emirates with just a few at a couple of sites in Oman. The subspecies name *kalbaensis* says it all, this is the stronghold and we must do we all we can to support the efforts to conserve this emblematic bird. The muddy channels here also held around six Indian Pond-herons, another speciality worth travelling for. Our wader skills were tested but we were soon sorting out the hundreds of Greater and Lesser Sandplovers especially as some were coming into their summer finery. Next the beach and the local fisherman using 4x4s to haul in big trawling nets and attracting thousands of birds and our first terns of the trip: Sandwich and Common, then Crested and Lesser Crested and finally White-cheeked, all

whirring around us as they picked up morsels from the fisherman's efforts. Out to sea were some very close in Socotra Cormorants and then 1000s further out flying in their characteristic long lines. We looked hard for shearwaters but with the calm conditions we had no great expectations.

Day 5: A night in a local motel and we were out the next morning before breakfast scouring the mangroves this time for Sykes's Warbler as there are a few pairs resident here. Eventually a showy bird performed and we left it in peace. On the muddy areas again we had a very close Collared Kingfisher and then a solitary Crab Plover. Despite getting stuck in the sand to be hauled out by a friendly local fisherman we went to breakfast happy, especially as both Isabelline and 'Steppe' Grey Shrikes gave excellent views on the way there followed by several turtle species under the bridge. We were even happier when two Eastern Olivaceous Warblers popped up in the tree next to the café! Remarkably, they had wintered in the same tree the year before! Heading north we checked the gulls and terns all the way up the coast, always a spectacle and sometimes an i.d. challenge, but nothing new. We'd hoped to find a Saunders's Tern but there was no joy on this year's trip. We were making for Wamm Farms (Fujairah National Dairy Farm) another bird magnet with its cowsheds and well watered fodder fields. A tree full of Bank Mynas just before we arrived was a good start as was the Masked Wagtail at the gates of the farm. Friendly staff let us walk around, every sprinkler head had an Indian Roller and we stopped counting past 50, the cattle sheds had Cattle Egrets and a flock of Ruffs. A Gull-billed Tern patrolled the fields and at least 100 Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flew into the grass but we were never to see them again despite walking over the very spot where they had landed, they must be able to tunnel! A quartering female Hen Harrier was a good bird as was the Shikra that flew over as we ate our lunch to the calls of both Common and Siberian Chiffchaffs.

Day 6: After another night in Khor Kalba, we headed northeast to Wadi Massafi for some dry area specialists. Finding a pristine wadi, a slow hot walk produced a pair of showy Striated Scrub-warblers, then some Variable Wheatears and pair of very pale Little Owls that we have to assume were of the *lilith* subspecies. On we went and the drive back to Dubai and the famous Pivot Fields. We were not to be disappointed as again friendly staff allowing us in to walk around this nursery growing turf, trees and flowers for the gardens of the Emirates. We were met by well-watered lawns covered in birds mainly Yellow and White Wagtails but also Blyth's, Tawny, Richards, Water, Red-throated and Meadow Pipits. And how about four species of lapwing in fifteen minutes, is there anywhere else in the northern hemisphere that could be achieved? There were many Red-wattled and then the White-tailed that now breed, a handful of visiting Northern and best of all three Sociable Lapwings in all their finery. Checking in to the right Dubai hotel this time another satisfied group of birders eat and slept well.

Day 7: The next morning it was to the west coast with the tide out at Khor al-Beida and the mud covered in waders as far as the eye could see. We started scanning and picked out some very showy Terek Sandpipers amongst the hundreds of Curlew Sandpipers, Kentish Plovers and both Lesser and Greater Sandpipers. There was just a single Marsh Sandpiper and then Eurasian Curlews, Whimbrels, Common Greenshanks and Common Redshanks but no sign of the key bird we had particularly come to find. We enjoyed the flocks of Greater Flamingos, a few Eurasian Spoonbills and up to 50 Crab Plovers. There was a single Caspian Tern, a few Gull-billed Terns patrolling, an Osprey sat waiting for the tide to bring in the fish and a Greater Spotted Eagle drifted by. We moved on up the vast tidal inlet stopping and frequently scanning until at last four close Great Knots, some looking pretty spotty, giving excellent views. A tough bird to find amongst the thousands of birds but worth it as it becomes increasingly rare. We waited and watched the tide come in remarkably fast driving all the birds right up to us in fact hundreds then just flew up and roosted in the desert! On then to Umm al-Qawain, which was pretty quiet but worth it for some more Socotra Cormorants and Pallas's Gulls and a few Sanderling on the beach. We moved on to Mushrif Park and took an early dinner as we waited for dusk and the hoped for Pallid Scops-owl. The park slowly cleared of the picnicking families and darkness soon fell. The owls hunt for moths and other insects around the many street lights, the problem for us were there were no insects, so would there be an

owl? An hour, then two went past and then a ghostly shape landed in a nearby tree soon to be spotlighted in Vaughan's capable hands, a delightful Pallid Scops-owl which showed well for up to 10 minutes. We were lucky as the weather had been unusually cold, hence the lack of insects and most of the owls must have moved south.

Day 8: For our final day we revisited the Pivot Fields and enjoyed the spectacle once again and then looked over Al Warsan Lakes, another area surrounded by the ever developing city but being turned into a reserve and rural park. There were literally thousands of Steppe Gulls and hundreds of Great Cormorants, a good selection of ducks and waders, both Squacco and Purple Herons and many Western Marsh-harriers. It was a good spot which will be even better when the work is completed and the site is secure. On to Ras al Khor, a brilliant sanctuary with the skyscrapers of the city behind looking somewhat incongruous but not to the birds which flock here in their thousands. Greater Flamingos are the speciality but there was a great selection of ducks, herons and waders and it's the key location for Greater Spotted Eagle, which didn't disappoint with at least five in the air joined by two Steppe Eagles. It was a memorable end to a great trip with some wonderful birds all of which were seen really well by everybody a testament to Vaughan and Svetlana's leadership and skill. I for one will be returning but next time in the midst of migration, which must be truly special. I can't recommend it enough, friendly people, easy travel, good accommodation and approachable birds with always the chance of something really special what more could any birder want?

Day 9: Early morning departure from Dubai, arriving back in London a few hours later at the end of the tour.

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Systematic List

1. **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*: 4 at Zakher Pools.
2. **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*: A single at Ras al Khor of this introduced bird.
3. **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*: 12 at Ras al Khor.
4. **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*: 4 at Zakher Pools.
5. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*: 22 at Zakher Pools, 12 at Khor al-Beida and just 2 at Ras al Khor.
6. **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*: 1 at Zakher Pools, 9 on Al-Warsan Lakes and a single at Ras al Khor.
7. **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*: A female at Zakher Pools and 2 pairs at Ras al Khor.
8. **Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*: The commonest duck seen with 8 at Zakher Pools, over 50 on Al Warsan Lakes and several at Ras al Khor.
9. **Common Pochard** *Aythya farina*: 24 at Zakher Pools and 14 on Al Warsan Lakes.
10. **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*: 8 at Zakher Pools of this uncommon winter visitor listed as 'near threatened' by Birdlife International.
11. **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*: Just 1 on Zakher Pools and then 24 on Al Warsan Lakes.
12. **Chukar** *Alectoris chukar*: A maximum of 40 in the Jebel Hafit/Green Mubazzarah area; almost certainly introduced birds.
13. **Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus*: First seen with up to 20 birds in the Ghantoot area and then frequently throughout the tour.
14. **Sand Partridge** *Ammoperdix heyi*: Up to 8 seen really well in the hotel grounds at Jebel Hafit and then a couple at Wadi Masafi and Green Mubazzarah.
15. **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: 24 at Zakher Pools and then around 20 at Al Warsan Lakes.

- 16. Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus*: 600+ at Khor al-Beida and then at least 2,000 at Ras al Khor.
- 17. Continental Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*: A few at Khor Kalba and Ras al Khor with 100+ on Al Warsan Lakes.
- 18. Socotra Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*: This important bird seen really well at Khor Kalba with some individuals close in shore and a 1000+ offshore more distantly, then 200 in flight at Umm al-Qawain. Considered 'vulnerable' by BirdLife International the world population of 110,000 pairs breeds at only 13 known colonies.
- 19. Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: Really common in both fresh and brackish water areas
- 20. Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*: 2 at Zakher Pools and a further 2 at Al Warsan Lakes.
- 21. Great Egret** *Ardea alba*: The least common of the Egrets with scattered singles throughout the trip and then 12 on the final day at Ras al Khor.
- 22. Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*: A maximum of 30 at Khor Kalba with significant numbers at Khor al-Beida and frequent ones and twos throughout the tour.
- 23. Western Reef-heron** *Egretta gularis schistacea*: The dark morph was the most usual with 12 at Khor Kalba, 15 at Khor al-Beida and then 30+ at Ras al Khor.
- 24. Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*: One of the successes of the bird world with Cattle Egrets now found on every continent but Antarctica. 8 at Green Mubazzarah and then 30+ appropriately amongst the cattle at Wamms Farms.
- 25. Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*: 1 at Kakher Pools and a couple at Al Warsan Lakes.
- 26. Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii*: Six close birds at Khor Kalba giving plenty of opportunity to understand the finer identification pointers. This species, first described by Colonel W.H. Sykes in 1832, was named in honour of John Edward Gray, the keeper of Zoology at the British Museum until 1874. His 1832 book also introduced the nightjar and warbler that also carry his name.
- 27. Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*: 1 at Kakher Pools another flying at night around Khor Kalba and then another single at Al Warsan Lakes
- 28. Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*: An uncommon winter visitor so pleasing to see 1 at Zakher Pools and 5 at Al Warsan Lakes.
- 29. Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*: 9 at Khor al-Beida and 33 at Ras al Khor all doing what Spoonbills do, asleep with bills hidden.
- 30. Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*: 1 at Khor al-Beida waiting for the tide to come in and then a couple at Ras al Khor.
- 31. Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus*: Good close views of a fine female at Ghantoot of this uncommon wintering species.
- 32. Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*: An adult and a juvenile over the hills at Green Mubazzarah.
- 33. Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*: Undoubtedly the commonest raptor with ones and twos throughout the trip culminating in 5 together at Al Warsan Lakes and then another five at Ras al Khor.
- 34. Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*: A single female of this rare winter visitor at Wamms Farms.
- 35. Shikra** *Accipiter badius*: A single female showing well, again at Wamms Farms.
- 36. Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*: A single adult at Khor Kalba, 2 adults at Khor al-Beida and then 3 adults and two juveniles all together at Ras al Khor. Considered 'vulnerable' by BirdLife International this species world population is estimated at no more than 10,000 individuals and breeds over a huge range stretching from Poland to Ussuriland. So we picked up 0.1% of the world population!
- 37. Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*: An adult and 2nd year at Ras al Khor of this scruffier eagle but good to see nevertheless.
- 38. Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*: A fine adult from the roadside north of Al Ain.
- 39. Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciatus*: An eagle over the Oman hills at Wamms Farms picked up by Clive and Svetlana was almost certainly of this species.
- 40. Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*: Odd singles throughout the tour.
- 41. Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: Just one bird at Al Warsan Lakes

- 42. Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*: Only seen at Zakher Pools with about 30 birds.
- 43. Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*: 7 of this uncommon winter visitor at the Pivot Fields giving us four lapwing species in just 15 minutes! Now where else could that be achieved?
- 44. Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus*: Ubiquitous bird seeming to like the green and well watered roundabouts across the Emirates. Maximum of 30 at both Green Mubazzarah and the Pivot Fields.
- 45. Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius*: Simply wonderful to see two adults and a juvenile at the Pivot Fields of this globally threatened species. A huge conservation and research effort is teaching us more about this brilliant bird and maybe we have reacted just in time to ensure its future. The latest estimate from BirdLife International is that there are around 5000 pairs remaining.
- 46. White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus*: A migrant and recent colonist first recorded breeding in 1996, 19 found lurking under the palms at the Pivot Fields was a good end to the day.
- 47. Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*: Widespread in brackish habitats with significant numbers at Khor al-Beida
- 48. Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*: Only found at the Ghantoot Polo Club with 7 birds strutting their stuff.
- 49. Lesser Sand-plover** *Charadrius mongolus* [atrifrons-group]: Very common at Khor Kalba, Khor al-Beida and Ras al khor.
- 50. Greater Sand-plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*: Smaller numbers than the Lesser. Significant numbers at the same sites, with some of both species coming into summer plumage, there was a good opportunity to make identification comparisons.
- 51. Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Very common at all the coastal sites with a few at the Pivot Fields.
- 52. Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*: Singles at Ras al Khor and the Pivot Fields.
- 53. Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*: A couple at the Pivot Fields and then 4 at Ras al Khor
- 54. Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola*: Close up views of an elegant singleton at Khor Kalba and then 48 at Khor al-Keiba. Crab-plovers nest in colonies in sand burrows on a couple of the Emirates islands and their scientific name means 'shining camel'. The iconic bird of the Emirates and front cover star of the new field guide.
- 55. Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*: 6 at Khor Kalba and then many more at Khor al-Keiba.
- 56. Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*: Common in scattered muddy pools with 10 at Zakher, 6 at Khor Kalba, many at Ras al Khor and a couple at Warsan Lakes.
- 57. Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*: Just a single bird at Ras al Khor .
- 58. Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*: Some great views of over 30 at Khor al-Beida.
- 59. Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*: Scattered single birds wherever there was water.
- 60. Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*: A single bird on the Pivot Fields and 2 at Warsan Lakes.
- 61. Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*: A few at Khor Kalba and many at Khor al-Keiba and Ras al Khor.
- 62. Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*: Just a single sighting of this most elegant wader at Khor al-Keiba.
- 63. Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*: 4 at the Pivot Fields and a couple at Warsan Lakes
- 64. Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus*: Common at Khor Kalba and then large numbers at Khor al-Keiba and Ras al Khor.
- 65. Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*: A few well scattered at the coastal sites.
- 66. Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*: A few at Khor Kalba, many at Khor al-Beida and then close views at Ras al Khor. The subspecies *orientalis* the most frequent in the region has a surprisingly long bill but the white rump soon scotched any idea of Far Eastern Curlew!
- 67. Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*: 6 at Ras al Khor.
- 68. Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*: 100+ at Khor al-Keiba.
- 69. Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*: At least 30 at Khor al-Keiba
- 70. Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*: After some diligent searching close views of 4 of these sort after

birds at Khor al-Keiba .It breeds in North-east Siberia and the small wintering population in Arabia represents the westernmost limit of its range. Uplisted to 'vulnerable' by BirdLife International, owing to a rapid population decline caused by the reclamation of its non-breeding stopover grounds in eastern Asia.

71. Sanderling *Calidris alba*: Just a couple on the beach at Umm al-Qawain.

72. Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: A few at Zakher Polls and then large numbers at both Khor al-Keiba and Ras al Khor.

73. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: A couple with one coming into summer plumage at Zakher Pools and then 8 at the Pivot Fields.

74. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: Large numbers at Ras al Khor.

75. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: Very large numbers, the dominant small wader at Ras al Khor.

76. Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: A flock of 9 mixed ruffs and reeves in the cattle pens at Wamms Farms.

77. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: 40 under the palms at the Pivot Fields all unfortunately with white trailing wing edges!

78. Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*: A couple of this cracking bird at Ghantoot Polo Club only seen because we were allowed onto the hallowed turf to have a good look round.

79. Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*: Hundreds of this most beautiful gull, many flushed with pink at Khor Kalba and Khor al-Beida.

80. Common Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*: Hundred of this not so beautiful gull at the same sites.

81. Sooty Gull *Ichthyaetus hemprichii*: 100s all along the beaches at Khor Kalba and Fujairah.

82. Great Black-headed Gull *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*: Cracking close up views of this stunning gull with 3 full summer plumage adults and first and second year birds at Khor Kalba and then flybys at Umm al-Qawain.

83. Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: A few sorted out amongst the 100s if not 1000s of Steppe Gulls at Khor Kalba and Fujairah.

84. Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*: A couple of obvious definites at Khor Kalba.

85. Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini*: A clear single at Khor Kalba and then two more at Fujairah.

86. Steppe Gull *Larus barabensis*: The dominant gull with 1000's along the coast and then 1000+ at Warsan Lakes.

87. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*: Singles at Khor Kalba and Wamms Farms and then 15 at Khor al-Keiba.

88. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: A single at Khor al-Keiba.

89. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: A single at Wamms Farms.

90. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: 100s on the beaches at Khor Kalba and Fujairah.

91. White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*: A few distinctive individuals sorted out from the Common Terns on the Khor Kalba / Fujairah beaches, their grey rumps standing out very clearly.

92. Swift Tern *Thalasseus bergii*: Ones and twos at Khor Kalba with their huge distinctive bills, 'greater crested' feels a better name.

93. Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*: Up to 4 at Khor Kalba and Fujairah beaches.

94. Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*: 20 at Khor Kalba and then a couple at Khor al-Beida.

95. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*: A 100+ flew in at Wamms Farms and then disappeared! We walked the whole area thoroughly and never saw them leave!

96. Rock Dove *Columba livia*: Yes, of every shade and pattern.

97. Eurasian Collared-dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Everywhere in large numbers.

98. Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*: Everywhere in even larger numbers especially in Mushrif Park

99. Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*: 3 flying birds and a single perched at the fodder farm south of Al Ain.

101. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*: Common resident with up to 20 screeching around in Mushrif Park.

102. Pallid Scops-owl *Otus brucei*: 1 spotlighted at night in Mushrif Park after quite some searching,

gave excellent views.

- 103. Little Owl *Athene noctua*:** A pair found in a side wadi at Wadi Masafi seemed to be of the *lilith* subspecies significantly lighter and sandier than your normal little owl.
- 104. Common Swift *Apus apus*:** 1 at the Pivot Fields amongst the Pallids, early but pretty conclusive we felt.
- 105. Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*:** 10 at the Pivot Fields and many more distantly over built up areas.
- 106. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*:** A maximum of 7 at Khor Kalba.
- 107. Arabian Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris kalbaensis*:** 3 at Khor Kalba with one stunningly close bird on the mud giving great views of this Emirates / Omani endemic subspecies only found in coastal mangroves. It continues to decline due to habitat pressure, down to just 25 pairs in the Emirates.
- 108. Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*:** What a stunner, widely seen with up to 10 at Khor al-Keiba
- 109. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*:** Seen as soon as we hit Al Ain, another roundabout bird with 100+ sitting on every sprinkler head at Wamms Farms.
- 110. Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*:** Maximum of 7 at the Pivot Fields.
- 111. Rufous-tailed Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*:** Singles seen at Khor Kalba and the Pivot Fields of this nominate form.
- 112. Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*:** Several seen across the UAE of the form *aucheri*
- 113. Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*:** A cracker on the beach at Khor Kalba allowing an approach to just a few metres.
- 114. House Crow *Corvus splendens*:** Ubiquitous once we hit the East Coast towns.
- 115. Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*:** Not that many of this declining breeder with a maximum of 4 at Green Mubazzarah.
- 116. Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*:** The only regularly occurring sexually dimorphic lark in the Emirates, a flock of 20 giving really good views at the Fodder Farm south of Al Ain.
- 117. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*:** Should be called Rock Lark, seen in most dry rocky areas but best viewed at the Jebel Hafit car park where there were at least 30.
- 118. Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*:** 10 at the Fodder Farm south of Al Ain and then 4 at the Pivot Fields.
- 119. Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunnii*:** A single lark on the fence at the fodder farm south of Al Ain caught our attention, it was clearly larger than a female black-crowned so what was it? It flew and kept to itself in the fodder field, short tailed with a ziup flight call and a really impressive, distinctive bill. Photos were taken and it was clear to Vaughan, who has seen them before, that this could only be a Dunn's! This needs to be submitted and ratified by the UAE rare birds committee as it would be only the second ever record. It has to be said that in the grass it could so easily be overlooked.
- 120. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*:** Vying with Laughing Dove for the most abundant bird in the UAE.
- 121. Eurasian Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*:** 6 at Green Mubazzarah, 10 at the Pivot Fileds and 20 at Khor al-Keiba.
- 122. Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*:** A few, best seen nest building at the hotel at Jebel Hafit.
- 123. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*:** Just one on our last day at Ras al Khor.
- 124. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*:** Commonest around Al Ain with a few in Mushrif Park.
- 125. White-spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*:** Seen best at the hotel in Jebel Hafit.
- 126. White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*:** Everywhere!
- 127. Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*:** A cracking pair in an unspoilt wadi at Wadi Masafi and then another pair by the new road workings.
- 128. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*:** Odd singles then 3 at Wamms Farms and 2 at the Pivot Fields
- 129. Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*:** A single bird calling and showing well at Wamms Farms.
- 130. Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*:** Some great views of this miniature chiffchaff at Green Mubazzarah and Wadi Masafi.
- 131. Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama*:** Good views of a single bird in the Khor Kalba mangroves, no doubt

tired of being taped out! The birds in the Emirates occur strictly in these mangroves where there are thought to be about 15 pairs of resident breeders, unlike their Central Asian counterparts that winter in the Indian sub-continent. These birds were once considered a race of Booted Warbler *I. caligata*.

132. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*: A couple of wintering birds in Khor Kalba in exactly the same tree as the previous year. Even wintering birds can be that site specific, incredible.

133. Caspian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* : A single bird heard at the Pivot Fields.

134. Indian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens*: Three showed really well in a patch of reeds next to our Dubai hotel and then good views of others at Khor Kalba and the Pivot Fields. Recently proposed as a split from Clamorous Reed Warbler in Rasmussen and Anderton's *Birds of South Asia*, the birds in the UAE belong to the Indian form *brunnescens*. The flat-headed profile gives the genus its scientific name.

135. Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis*: Widespread, constantly calling in most habitats.

136. Desert Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*: 1 at Green Mubazzarah and then another at Wadi Masafi.

139. Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*: A good showing with a pair at al-Fayeda Park and then at Qam Nazwa and Wadi Masafi.

140. Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: 2 at Green Mubazzarah and 1 at the Pivot Fields. Low numbers this year.

141. Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*: A fine male at Al Fayeda Park. Edouard Ménétries was a French zoologist who also travelled in Brazil, where he has an antwren named after him. The warbler came from his time spent in Russia between 1829 and 30.

142. Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps*: 11 at al-Fayeda Park.

143. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: A single at al-Fayeda Park and then 4 at the Pivot Fields.

144. Eastern Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: Some lovely looking males at Green Mubazzarah, Jebel Hafit and in Mushrif Park of the subspecies *phoenicuroides*.

145. Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: An early migrant at Jebel Hafit.

146. Blue Rock-thrush *Monticola solitaries*: Just seen around the hotel at Jebel Hafit.

147. European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*: A single at Green Mubazzarah

148. Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*: A pair at the Pivot Fields.

149. Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*: Good to get this, the most difficult to find of the wheatears. Seen at the car park on Jebel Hafit.

150. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra*: 2 at Green Mubazzarah and 2 more at the Jebel Hafit hotel.

151. Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*: A pair first seen at Qam Nazwa and then two more at Wadi Masafi.

152. Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*: Good numbers in most of the dry habitats.

153. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*: Again good numbers in the dry habitats, commoner than Red-tailed and seemingly mostly males.

154. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: The commonest wheatear with 6 at Ghantoot and similar numbers at the Pivot Fields and Khor al-Keiba.

155. Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus*: Around 20 birds in a mixed flock with Common Myna on the road just before Wamms Farms.

156. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Common and ubiquitous.

157. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: 4 including a white (leucistic?) bird in a family party at the Pivot Fields.

158. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*: Common wherever there were flowering plants, call so distinctive.

159. Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: A great mixture of forms particularly at the Pivot Fields with *feldegg* and *beema* definitely identified. One particularly striking bird like a *lutea* with a thick black eyestripe was one unfamiliar to any of us, Citrine/*feldegg* perhaps?

160. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*: A single at the Pivot Fields.

161. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: Common on any grassy area.

162. Masked Wagtail *Motacilla alba personata*: Just one of this handsome race in the cattle sheds at

Wamms Farms.

163. Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: 7 at the Pivot Fields.

164. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: A single bird at the Pivot Fields.

165. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: Seen best at the Pivot Fields but also a frequent roadside bird.

166. Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*: A single bird at the Pivot Fields.

167. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*: A couple at the Pivot Fields, calling nicely.

168. Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*: The commonest pipit seen with up to 10 at the Pivot Fields with one coming into summer plumage.

169. Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata*: A pair at the Jebel Hafit car park the only ones seen. Recent split from House Bunting.

170. Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*: 10 in a flock at Wamms Farms.

171. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Very common predominantly of the *indicus* subspecies, Indian House Sparrow.

172. Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica*: Widespread with most seen at the Fodder Farm south of Al Ain with flocks of up to 30.

Butterflies Seen (thanks to Egge)

1. Desert white *Pontia glauconome*
2. Small Salmon Arab *Colotis calais*
3. Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*
4. Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
5. Mediterranean Pierrot *Tarucus rosaceus*
6. African Babal Blue *Azanus jesous*