

TRIP REPORT

Sinai, Red Sea, Oases, North Coast Oct. 4-19, 2011

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Steve (Istvan) Moldovan arrived in Egypt from Romania Oct. 2, and departed Oct. 21. We covered some 4600 kms, and were offroad some of the trip in Sinai, and briefly from Bahariya Oasis to Siwa. The following account gives brief trip and birding notes.

4-6 Oct 2011

Wadi Dome (82 kms S of Suez, 24kms S of Ayn Sokhna taftish) to St. Katherine

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* 10 near pipeline leak, lower W. Feiran
Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* Many, incl. many juveniles, in acacia trees and on ground throughout W. Feiran; bedouins confirmed abundance following two comparatively rainy years

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* All immature; adults have different migration pattern, or continuously overfly Sahara, while juveniles rest (?)

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* Abundant; saw no Mourning (*O. leucura*)

“Green Garden,” Feiran

Palestine Sunbird *Osea nectarina* breeding plumage

White-spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonnotus xanthopygos*

Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* One individual seen



Nectarinia osea fem. 2011 ©István Moldován

Wadi Feiran

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* 1

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* 3 imm, 1 ad

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* 1

St. Katherine area

Palestine Sunbird *Osea nectarina* ~20, m&f, m's breeding plumage

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 1 imm



Oenanthe monacha 2011 ©István Moldován

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* 4

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* 3

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* 4

Tristram's Starling *Onychognathus tristramii* ~20

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* 1

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* 1 juv

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* 14

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* 3

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* 5

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* 15

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* 1 juv

Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* ~20 (one "flock")

Redstart *Phoenicurus p. samamisisicus* 1

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* 2

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 8

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* 6

House Martin *Delichon urbica* 10

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* 4

Blackstart *Cercomela melanura*



Cercomela melanura 2011 ©Moldován István

In a remote tributary of Wadi Feiran, a Hume's Tawny Owl was found and pellets were collected; they will be analyzed for contents. Territorial calls were heard only pre-dawn (0445-0509). Three individuals called from 3 different wadis.



Strix butlerii 2011 © István Moldovan

El Qaa plain, approx. 24 kms NW of Sharm el Sheikh

This area, a designated IBA (extending from Wadi Feiran south to El Tor between the S.Sinai massif and the coastal low Qabiliat hills ending in a higher bluff at Hammam Musa on El Tor's northern border, and continuing S. from El Tor to the N. entrance of the Ras Mohammed Nat'l Park), is 100+ kms long trending NW-SE, and 4-20 kms wide E-W. High voltage electric pylons run the entire length of the IBA (beginning 2007) at approx. 500m from the 2-lane highway, and 4-6 kms E. of the coast. We traveled on the eastern reaches of the plain from approx. 20 kms S of El Tor to approx. 63 kms S of El Tor, entering several wadis of the S. Sinai massif.

We traveled with Dr. Hilary Gilbert, Mohamed Khedr, and Ramadan Mohamed

Fawzy.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* 2
Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 2, on the plain, not mts
Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* ~60
Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* ~50
White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* ~10
Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* 7 imm
Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri* 1, perched on car at night
Steppe Buzzard *Buteo vulpinus* 2
Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* 2
African Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula [obsoleta]* ~10
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* 1
Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata* 2
Willow Warbler *Pylloscopus trochilus* 1 (tired migrant!)

10 Oct 2011

Safaga-Luxor (by new road from Safaga-Qena rd SW to Luxor Airport)

E. of Qift on this road were 2 **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis*, and a km farther on, a new sewage (?) pond with several ducks

12 Oct 2011

Gurna [W. bank, Luxor] S. to Rizeikat, and to Kharga Oasis

Mut Lake, Dakhla

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* ~56
Dunlin *Calidris alpina* ~320
Little Stint *Calidris minuta* ~20
Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* 22
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 3
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 5
Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* 15
Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* 1 [Megalli reports one Osprey present at Mut Lake over the past 4 years in spring months]
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* ~50
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* 8
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* 26
Redshank *Tringa totanus* 15
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* 5

14 Oct 2011

Very few birds (in El Heiz, and Bahariya proper). A Pharaoh's Eagle Owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*) was found in a location far from human habitation, with the help of Helal (local resident and proprietor of "Garden Under the Moon").

Up to the present this one is the driest habitat where a Pharaoh's Eagle Owl has been found breeding by the authors.



Habitat of *Bubo ascalaphus* 2011 ©Moldován István

Bandicoot Rat remains were found in the collected pellets, this species being last mentioned in literature in 1963 (Osborn&Helmy 1980, Gilbert&Zalat 2010).

An analysis of the Eagle Owl pellets will be performed.

We did not note any Wheatear species. The area needs more attention. The "Basalt Wheatear", black morph of the Mourning Wheatear, should logically have a small population here, as it occurs in similar "black" habitats in Jordan and Syria.

15 Oct 2011

Bahariya to Siwa road, 425 kms, in convoy arranged through Peter Wirth, operator of International Hot Springs; Siwa Oasis

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* 10
Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* 4
Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* 15
Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* 1

A pair of presumably breeding (resident) Sooty Falcons *Falco concolor* were found, a slightly different addition to the published distribution.

Siwa Oasis:

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* 35 (all adults)
Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* 3

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 15
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 8
Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* 1
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 15
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* 5
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* ~70
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* 10
Green Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 5
Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* 8

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* 50+, some imitating Reed Warbler and blackbird songs!

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 50+

Bir Fuad [or "Bir al Nuss," c.150 kms N of Siwa, main road]

Temminck's Lark *Eremophila bilopha* 2



Eremophila bilopha 2011 ©István Moldován

Finsch's Lark *Oenanthe fichii* 1



Oenanthe fichii 2011 ©Moldován István

Hoopoe Lark *Alemon alaudipes* 1

Little Owl *Athenae noctua* About 30 kms S of Matruh; pellets were collected; perch was in pile of large rocks (created by bulldozer) 30m off highway. Does the owl spend time there, rather near the highway, in hopes of cars stirring up insects (plants often grow near the road, due to the splash or runoff of rain from a paved road), that he can catch?

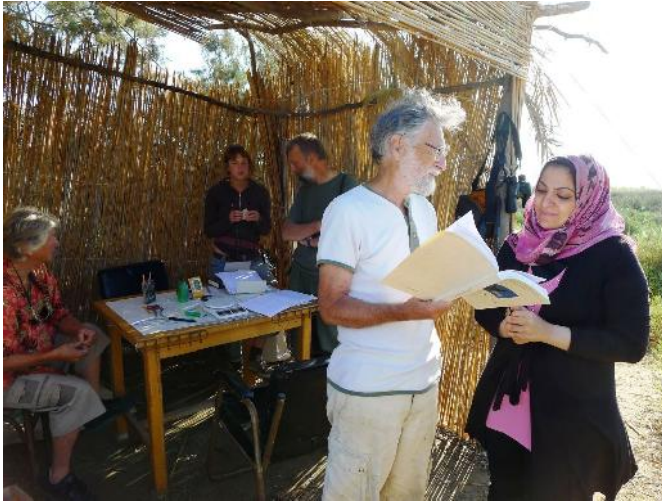


Pearching place of Athene noctua on the North Coast.

19 Oct 2011

We visited Prof. Przemyslaw Busse's ringing camp at Ashtoum El Gamil Protectorate, just west of Port Said, with Basma Sheta and Mamduh Ahmed of New Damietta. The staff of the ringing camp had only three members: Prof. Przemyslaw Busse, Dr. Wojciech Kania and Annalena Jolch.

As usually, a tremendous amount of new information on migration patterns and orientation has been generously shared with us. Any help or donation to the camp for the following spring and fall seasons would be welcomed by the ringing camp. For more details please visit the web site of the South East European Network (SEEN) at: <http://www.seen-net.eu/index.php?id=4>



Ringing camp of SEEN at Ashtoum 2011@István Moldován

Very few birds have been caught in this period, the maximum numbers in Sept.-October were around 100 birds/day. Some outstanding caught were the following:

Hipollais olivetorum 1

Sylvia rüPELLI 1

Locustella fluviatilis (!) 3

Regarding this last mentioned species personally (I.M) I am a bit skeptical. River Warbler is mentioned in Egypt as a Pasange visitor, but personally I have never captured and ringed any in at least 10 years in Egypt.

Due to my long previous –in hand- experience with the Locustella species in Egypt, I think that this species has been misidentified with the Easter sspp of the Savi's Warbler (Locustella luscinioides fusca) which use to have stripes on the breast and the undertail covers have obvious white tips as in the case of the River Warbler (Locustella fluviatilis). Ringers should pay a bit more attention to this details in the future.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Mary Megalli for this extraordinary trip through Egypt and for her support of my birding activity in the past decade. Dr. Hilary Gilbert and her staff gave us full logistical support in Sinai. I can't recall having better companions in the desert. Wholehearted thanks to Prof. Busse and Dr. Kania for sharing their great knowledge -- their example should be followed by ornithologists all over the world

