

## Second report of the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee – 2011

Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee: Frédéric Jiguet (chairman), Mindy Baha el Din, Sherif Baha el Din, Richard Bonser, Pierre-André Crochet, Andrew Grieve, Richard Hoath, Tomas Haraldsson, Ahmed Riad & Mary Megalli (secretary)

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The Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee (EORC) was launched in January 2010, to become the adjudicator of rare bird records for Egypt and to maintain the species list of birds recorded in Egypt. In 2011, the EORC was composed, as in 2010, of 9 voting members plus a non-voting secretary. Voting members were: Mindy Baha El Din, Sherif Baha El Din, Richard Bonser, Pierre-André Crochet, Andrew Grieve, Tomas Haraldsson, Richard Hoath, Frédéric Jiguet and Ahmed Riad. Mary Megalli acted as the committee secretary. In 2012, two members – Tomas Haraldsson and Ahmed Riad - tendered their resignation from the committee due to other ongoing commitments; we thank them for their involvement in the EORC. Three new members have recently been integrated into the EORC to complete the committee: Andre Corso (Italy), Manuel Schweizer (Switzerland) and Web Abdo (Egypt). Detailed information on the committee composition is available on the EORC website.

Furthermore, after two years of dedicated services as a secretary, Mary Megalli becomes an external advisor to the committee, while the former chairman, Frédéric Jiguet, will now undertake the role of secretary, as a non-voting member. EORC members have elected Sherif Baha el Din as the new chairman. For 2012, the EORC is therefore composed of 9 voting members, plus a non-voting secretary. In 2013, one member will be renewed. Interested candidates for this position are invited to send an email to the secretary ([eorc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:eorc.secretary@gmail.com)) by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

Any observer reporting a rare bird in Egypt (e.g. species on the EORC list or not listed in the updated national checklist) is invited to send details on the report to the secretary ([eorc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:eorc.secretary@gmail.com)) to help maintain the official national avifaunal list.

As stated in its first report (Jiguet et al. 2011), the EORC decided to use the checklist of the Birds of Egypt, as published in 1989 by Steve Goodman and Peter Meininger (excluding the hypothetical species) as a starting point to its work. Any addition to, or deletion from, this list will be evaluated and adjudicated by the EORC, as well as any record of species with less than 10 Egyptian records (a formal list of such species is available on the EORC website) and any change in category (e.g. B to A or D/E to C). The EORC follow the taxonomic recommendations released by the AERC TAC (Crochet et al. 2010, 2011) to define the new checklist of the birds of Egypt.

A dedicated website has been launched, with kind sponsorship from the French Rarities Committee, at [www.chn-france.com/eorc/](http://www.chn-france.com/eorc/). It is hosted by the new French RC website, and gives free access to the committee's role and composition. The site will also host EORC reports and updates of the checklist of the Birds of Egypt. A list of species which are considered by the EORC, as well as a rarity form proposed for record submission, can also be found of the committee's website.

The EORC is happy to receive detailed records of any species or subspecies not yet listed on the updated checklist, or listed within the EORC rarities, and recent reports of species not reported by Goodman & Meininger as having been recorded after 1950.

In 2011, 26 records were considered. 19 of these have been accepted, 3 considered as not proven and 4 are still pending. The proportion of accepted records in 2011 was therefore 72%, compared to 60% in 2010.

The updated checklist of the Birds of Egypt now includes 452 species: 435 in category A (including 7 observed only in the Halaib Triangle), 11 in category B and 6 in category C. We report below details of the accepted and not proven records. In this section, figures that follow the species' name represent: number of previous records and associated number of individuals, followed by the number of records/individuals accepted by the EORC since the last report.

## List of accepted records (category A)

### **BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors* (0/0) (1/1)**

- Lake Burullus (31°30N, 30°50E), 1 drake, shot, sold on market at Port Said, early March 1990 (G. Nikolaus, R. van Westrienen).

The corpse of this breeding plumaged drake was found on a market at Port Said on 11 March 1990, together with two pairs of Garganey *Anas querquedula*. According to the merchant, these birds had been shot the previous week at Lake Burullus. This record has already been published by the observers, with a colour photograph of the corpse (Nikolaus & van Westrienen 1991). It constitutes the first record of a Nearctic species in Egypt.

### **PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos* (0/0) (1/1)**

- Lake Zagam (30°15N, 30°20E), Wadi el Natrum, 1 ind., 14 May 1990 (F. Schepers, O. Pineau, R. Geene, A. I Abdelsamad).

This bird was observed down to 50 meters by experienced observers visiting Egypt with the Egyptian Wetland Project 1990. The Pectoral Sandpiper breeds in Arctic Siberia and North America, while birds recorded in eastern Africa and the Middle East probably originate from the Palearctic (Schepers *et al.* 1991). This record has already been published by the observers (Schepers *et al.* 1991). It constitutes the first record of the species for Egypt.

### **FRANKLIN'S GULL *Larus pipixcan* (0/0) (1/1)**

- Crocodile Island, Luxor, 1 adult, 12 March 2011 (M. Dennis).

This record constitutes the first record of this Nearctic gull in Egypt, and is well documented with numerous photographs (see <http://www.birdinginegypt.com/gallery.php?picture=99>). This is only the second Nearctic species recorded in Egypt, following a drake Blue-winged Teal shot in 1990 (also documented in this report). There are several records of Franklin's Gull away from the Atlantic coast in Europe and Africa, where it is recorded annually. Additional records in the Middle East include two accepted records in Israel in June 2003 and July 2006 (see [http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC\\_DB/](http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC_DB/)), Kazakhstan in July 2010 and Kuwait in June 2012.

### **ARMENIAN GULL *Larus armenicus* (0/0) (1/-)**

- wetlands of the Mediterranean coast, 442 ind., December 1989 and January 1990 (P. Meininger, U.G. Sørensen).

While the species was not reported in Egypt by Goodman and Meininger (1989), a later publication (Meininger and Sørensen 1994) provides evidence of the winter presence of large numbers of this species at least along the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. A winter survey of Egyptian wetlands

reported a minimum of 442 individuals. This is the basis for the addition of the Armenian Gull to the checklist of Egyptian birds. The species is now proven to be regular in winter in northern Egypt and will not be further considered by the EORC.

**MOURNING COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decipiens* (0/0) (1/2)**

- *Abu Simbel, 2 ind., 28 December 2010 to 11 May 2012 (K. de Rouck, D. Colin et al.).*

This species is common and widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and breeds close to Egypt in the Nile valley in Sudan. The discovery of two individuals, including a singing male, in the village of Abu Simbel constitutes the first record of this species for Egypt and the Western Palearctic. The original observers have already published the record with photographs of both birds (de Rouck 2011). Pictures of the birds can be found online at [http://www.netfugl.dk/pictures.php?id=listpictures&species\\_id=1111](http://www.netfugl.dk/pictures.php?id=listpictures&species_id=1111). The colour of the iris and eye-ringing of these birds raises questions as to the subspecific identity of these birds, and their potential origin, though it appears current knowledge on geographical variation in bare part coloration is quite poor (de Rouck & Colin 2012). Two birds were still reported at the same site in May 2012 (G. Joynt, pers com.). Identification of these birds were straightforward but origin was more open to discussion. However, this record fits in a well-established pattern of Sudanese species occurring in southern Egypt (especially Abu Simbel), and the EORC could not find any evidence of recent importation of live birds from sub-Saharan Africa. The EORC has therefore placed this species in category A of the Egyptian list.

**ORIENTAL TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia orientalis* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Nefertari hotel, Abu Simbel, 1 ind., 20 October 1990 (S.C. Madge).*

This dove is the Asian counterpart of the European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* in the eastern Palearctic. The western race, *meena*, breeds just into the Western Palearctic region. The eastern nominate race, *orientalis*, has resident southern populations, but most other birds migrate south to winter in Pakistan, India, south-east Asia, and southern Japan. The species is a regular winter vagrant to the Arabian Gulf states and Oman, and has occurred as a vagrant in Israel (November 2002, October 2003; see [http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC\\_DB/](http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC_DB/)) and Kuwait. A detailed report of this first record for Egypt has been published by the observer (Madge 1992a) and found to be acceptable as the first for Egypt by the EORC (category A). The EORC did not validate a sub-specific identification for this record.

**BRUCE'S GREEN PIGEON *Treron waalia* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Kornish Al Nile, Luxor, 1 ind., 3 January 2011 (S.R. van der Veen).*

One was photographed in a tree on the shore of the Nile, where the cruise ship of the observer was docked. Photographed early in the morning, the bird was later identified from photographs and proved to be the first record of this African pigeon for Egypt and the Western Palearctic. The species breeds in a large belt across eastern Africa, from Sudan to Uganda and Kenya in eastern Africa, but also in southern Saudi Arabia and in Oman where it is at least partly a summer migrant (Hollom et al. 1988, Porter & Aspinall 2010). The plumage and bare parts of the individual observed in Egypt showed no visible damage, and there is currently no known bird trade between Egypt and Sudan because of bird flu constraints. Furthermore, Sudan received large rainfalls in 2010, so that a northwards dispersal of Columbidae could have been favored. As a consequence, this bird was considered by the EORC as of wild origin and admitted onto category A. It therefore constitutes the

first record of Bruce's Green Pigeon for Egypt and the Western Palearctic. The observer already published a report of this record (van der Veen 2011) and pictures can be found online at <http://rarebirdsinthewesternpalearctic.blogspot.fr/2011/01/bruces-green-pigeon-in-egypt.html>

**ORIENTAL SKYLARK *Alauda gulgula* (0/0) (1/2)**

- *Sharm el Sheikh, 3 km north of Naama Bay resorts, Sinai, 2 ind., 14 October 1990 (S.C. Madge).*

This constitutes the first record of this species for Egypt, with two individuals observed together in agricultural fields north of Naama Bay. Although rare in the Middle East, this Asian lark winters in small numbers in Israel and the Arabian Peninsula, where it remains rare. A detailed report of this record has been published by the observer (Madge 1992b) and found to be acceptable as the first record for Egypt by the EORC.

**ASIAN BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT *Anthus rubescens japonicus* (0/0) (2/2)**

- *Naama Bay sewage works, Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, 1 ind., 11-13 January 2009, photographed (S. Skaarup Lund).*

- *Naama Bay sewage works, Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, 1 ind., 30 December 2010 - 3 January 2011, photographed (J. & V. Mazenauer, W. Wind).*

These are the first two records of the species for Egypt. They both concern the Asian subspecies *japonicus*, which breeds across most of eastern temperate Asia and winters mainly from Pakistan to south-east Asia, with small numbers recorded annually in the Arabian Gulf states. In 2009, the observation concerned up to three individuals, but only one has been documented with photographs (see [http://www.netfugl.dk/pictures.php?id=showpicture&picture\\_id=25204&language=uk](http://www.netfugl.dk/pictures.php?id=showpicture&picture_id=25204&language=uk)) and the EORC received no description of the other two individuals. Therefore only one individual has been accepted here. The EORC welcomes any further detail from the observers for the other birds in 2009.

**CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola* (0/0) (2/3)**

- *Hilton Sharm Dreams Hotel, Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, 1 first-winter, 24 September 2007 (Anonymous).*

- *sewage pools, Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, 2 ind., 24 October 2010, photographed (N. Scatassi, M. Biasioli, M. Gagliardone, A. Corso et al.).*

The first record for Egypt has been accepted on the basis of a photograph of a first-winter individual published on a flickr webpage (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/shearwater2002/2424388837/in/set-72157604620911655/>). The second record originally reported four birds (2 or 3 at small sewage pools and 2 at the airport), but only two individuals can be validated in the absence of formal descriptions because of photographic evidence. If the observers have further evidence or descriptions of the other two individuals, the EORC will happily consider further documentation.

**GREY HYPOCOLIUS *Hypocolius ampelinus* (2/2) (1/1)**

- *Wadi Gemal, 1 ind., 2 March 2009, photographed (J. Sykes et al.).*

The Grey Hypocolius is the sole representative of its genus and family, breeding in dry semi-deserts of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and western India, wintering down to the Arabian Peninsula, mainly in Saudi Arabia. A few winter vagrants reached Israel. Goodman & Meininger (1989) considered the specimen of a female collected on 22 December 1938 in Wadi Shallal, south of Gebel Elba, as the only verifiable record for Egypt. The EORC previously validated another record from March 2009, in Sinai (Jiguet et al. 2011) Therefore this observation constitutes the third confirmed record of the species for Egypt.

**WINTER WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Gebel Afsar sewage, north-east of Cairo, 1 ind., 5 January 1990 (S.M. Lister, M.C. Hall).*

This species is a very common breeding species in Europe, with a high dispersive ability despite its short, round wings. It is locally a resident breeder in Lybia and northern Israel, and has been reported as a winter visitor to Eilat in southern Israel. Two observers, highly familiar with the species, have published a detailed report of this record (Lister and Hall 1992), allowing acceptance as the first record for Egypt.

**BLACK SCRUB ROBIN *Cercotrichas podobe* (4/4) (1/1)**

- *Fantasia Resort, Marsa Alam, Wadi Gemal, 1 ind., 5 to 11 December 2010, photographed (A., P. & G. Bujanowicz).*

This is the fifth confirmed record of this species in Egypt. The last three records have been obtained in gardens of tourist resorts near Marsa Alam. There are two subspecies of Black Scrub Robin: nominate *podobe* breeding across the Sahel, from southern Mauretania to Sudan, and *melanoptera* (with stronger orange colour on inner primary webs) on the Arabian Peninsula. Both are sedentary with some winter/spring dispersal. The record accepted in this report was not attributed to subspecific level.

**RED-TAILED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe chrysopygia* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Wadi Aidieb, Gebel Elba, 22°13'40"N 36°24'21"E, 1 male, 1 December 2010, photographed (S. Baha el Din, A. Badry Sayed).*

Red-tailed Wheatear breeds in mountainous areas of south-west and central Asia. Its breeding range extends from Armenia and Azerbaijan eastwards through Iran to Afghanistan, southern Tajikistan and western Pakistan. It winters in the Arabian Peninsula, Eritrea, Kuwait, southern parts of Iraq and Iran, Pakistan and north-west India. With dark lores, brownish ear coverts and rufous bases to the outer tail feathers, the bird observed in Gebel Elba could be confidently separated from first-winter Kurdish Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopygma*. This is the first record of this species for Egypt, of a wintering bird which was intermittently singing.

**DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Nama Bay, Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, 1 ind., 12 October 1988 (M. Baha el Din)*

The Dusky Warbler is an eastern Palearctic species which winters in the Indian subcontinent and in south-east Asia, occurring as a vagrant in Western Europe, but also in Israel (e.g. 30 October 1996, 18 October 1997, 6 December 1997) and Kuwait. This record has already been published by the observer (Baha el Din 1996) and constitutes the first record of the species in Egypt.

**STEPPE GREY SHRIKE *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *Fantasia Resort, Marsa Alam, 1 first-winter, 5 to 11 December 2010 (A., P. & G. Bujanowicz).*

The species breeds in central Asian steppes and winters mainly in the Indian subcontinent, while it is a common winter visitor to Arabian Gulf states. Although currently still listed as a subspecies of Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*, it is now widely recognized that it is more closely related to Northern Grey Shrike, while the Iberian taxon *meridionalis* is a monotypic species. There are numerous vagrancy records of this taxon in Israel, mainly in October and November ([http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC\\_DB/](http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/IRDC_DB/)). Therefore the addition of this species to the Egyptian

national list seemed overdue. This observation constitutes the first documented record of a Steppe Grey Shrike for Egypt.

**VILLAGE WEAVER *Ploceus cucullatus* (0/0) (1/1)**

- *El Faros Garden, Abu Simbel, 1 male, 1 May 2006, photographed (P.-A. Crochet, E. Didner, P. Geniez).*

This constitutes the first record of this African species in Egypt and the Western Palaearctic. The committee considered that a wild origin was most plausible, with no sign of any damage potentially caused by captive origin. As mentioned previously for African Mourning Dove and Bruce's Green Pigeon, there is no recent evidence of bird trade between Sudan and Egypt, because of former cases of bird flu. This record fits within an emerging pattern of vagrancy for Afrotropical species along the southern Nile valley.

## Records considered as Not Proven

The following records have been considered as not proven by the committee. As a consequence, the following species are not considered to have occurred in Egypt.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*.** Quseir, 24 November 1983.

The description of the observed individual is considered too brief for acceptance as a first record for Egypt, given the absence of any other record of the species in the Western Palearctic. There is another Egyptian claim for this species (at Port Said on 10 March 1988); a record which is currently under examination by the EORC.

**Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*.** Hamata mangroves, 20 March 2004. This record was reported by a single observer, and the bird seen in flight was not documented by photographs. Since it would constitute the last known world record for this species, and given the identification pitfall of small pale Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata*, the EORC was unable to consider this record due to insufficient evidence based on the potential magnitude of the record globally.

**Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*.** Hamata, Red Sea, 1 first-year, 18 September 2005. Despite the description of upperpart coloration seemingly corresponding with this species, the described size did not fit Sooty Tern - which should be larger than Bridled Tern.

## Acknowledgements

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