

BIRDING WORLD

Volume 19 Number 5



Issue No. 233

May 2006 Bird News

Calandra Lark on the Isle of May

Are dark morph Rough-legged Hawks overlooked in Europe?

A Trinidad Petrel in the Azores

Birding Egypt's southern Red Sea coast

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BIRDING WORLD



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Published June 2006

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes syriacus*, Lesvos, Greece, May 2006 (Rebecca Nason).

The distinctive tail pattern is not immediately obvious in this side-on view, but the identification is still straightforward. The jaunty pose, cocked tail and bold face pattern are typical enough while, upon closer inspection, the white tips to the red-brown tail feathers are visible (and would doubtless be obvious enough in the field).

This eastern European form, *syriacus* (which breeds from the Balkans and Turkey south to Lebanon), is relatively dull grey-brown on the upperparts and rather dingy grey on much of the underparts, whereas the nominate western form (which breeds in Iberia and from Morocco eastwards to southern Syria and Jordan) is brighter rufous-buff above and cleaner, creamy-buff, below. The closed wing contrasts are correspondingly less striking in *syriacus* too. As shown here, *syriacus* also differs from *galactotes* structurally; not only is the wing more pointed, but it is shorter-tailed.

This rather late spring migrant arrives on its European breeding grounds in mid May, which might help to explain why all but two of the eleven British records fall in the September–October period. With only five sightings in the last 50 years (the last in 1980), Rufous Bush Robin certainly rates as one of Britain's 'most-wanted' birds.



Bird News May 2006

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May's weather was very unsettled, but at last the 18-month run of below average rainfall was broken: May's rainfall was well above average as a near constant stream of depressions crossed the country from the Atlantic.

Highlight of the month was a Calandra Lark in Fife that instigated the Isle of May's first ever major twitch. Rarer still, but too brief to twitch, was a male Caucasian Stonechat in Shetland. Shetland also hosted a White-throated Sparrow, a male Collared Flycatcher and one or two Scops Owls. In addition, the same islands hit the headlines with a dead Brünnich's Guillemot, a dark-morph Rough-legged Hawk and the spring's only Ortolan Bunting.

May was a frustrating month for many as an American Robin was belatedly reported in Scotland and the Black-browed Albatross returned to its far-flung rock way out in the Atlantic. Also, a Bulwer's Petrel was reported flying by off West Sussex, a Turkestan Shrike in County Durham moved on far too quickly, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was the subject of a missed fund-raising opportunity in Norfolk. With collectable rarities few and far between, birders had to be grateful for the singing male Iberian Chiffchaffs in Lothian and Devon. A male Wilson's Phalarope was a handy Bank Holiday rarity in Buckinghamshire, while other waders included a spotty Spotted Sandpiper in Cornwall, nesting Black-winged Stilts in Lancashire, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Lothian, and a handful of Broad-billed Sandpipers.

Passerine migration was very much dampened by adverse weather, although a scattering of Bee-eaters, Red-rumped Swallows, Hoopoes, Golden Orioles and Woodchat Shrikes still managed to brighten up many a dull May day. The occasional Short-toed Lark, Bluethroat, Subalpine Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Common Rosefinch and Serin also put in appearances here and there, while a female Citrine Wagtail in Essex and singing Great Reed Warblers in Angus, Suffolk and East Yorkshire added some rarity value. An itinerant Black Stork, a dozen Purple Herons and several Gull-billed Terns kept birders busier, as did a scattering of Laughing Gulls and a peppering of Black Kites. The best of the rest around Britain included a Gyr Falcon in Orkney, a Red-footed Falcon in Kent, a White-

winged Black Tern in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, a Blue-winged Teal in Cumbria and a Lesser Scaup in Suffolk.

May - new highlights at a glance

- 4th Brünnich's Guillemot** found dead, West Sandwick, Yell, Shetland
- 5th Rose-breasted Grosbeak** first-summer female, Holme, Norfolk (*until 7th*)
Iberian Chiffchaff singing male, Pressmennan Lake, Lothian (*until 11th, with another at Challa-combe Farm, Dartmoor, Devon on 7th-28th*)
- 6th American Robin** photographed, Auchgourish Gardens, Boat of Garten, Highland (*and also at nearby Glemore Forest Park on 4th*)
- 7th Caucasian Stonechat** first-summer male *variegatus*, Virkie Willows, Shetland
- 9th Collared Flycatcher** adult male, Brow Marsh, Shetland (*until 10th*)
- 10th Scops Owl** Swining, Shetland (*with it or another trapped on Fair Isle on 16th*)
- 12th Calandra Lark** Isle of May, Fife (*until 14th*)
- 13th White-throated Sparrow** Sumburgh, Shetland (*and at nearby Quendale 14th*)
- 14th Turkestan Shrike** male, Whitburn CP, County Durham
- 23rd Black-browed Albatross** Sula Sgeir, Outer Hebrides (*last year's bird returning; until the month's end*)
- 25th Spotted Sandpiper** summer adult, Newlyn Harbour, Cornwall (*until 28th*).
- 27th Wilson's Phalarope** male, Hillesden, Buckinghamshire (*until 30th*).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Upton Warren, Worcestershire, May 2006 (Rob Wardle).



White-billed Diver One was seen off Handa (Highland) on 1st. On the Isle of Lewis (Outer Hebrides), singles were seen from Tiumpán Head on 5th and the Butt of Lewis on 28th.

Black-browed Albatross The adult returned to Sula Sgeir, 40 miles north of the Butt of Lewis (Outer Hebrides); on 23rd it was watched nest-building (see *Birding World* 18: 382-384) and it was still present on 31st.

Bulwer's Petrel One was reported off Selsey Bill (W. Sussex) at 11.45am and 1.10pm on 30th, both times flying west.

Storm Petrel Unprecedented spring numbers were storm-blown up the English Channel during the fourth week of the month, with about 1,000 passing Portland Bill (Dorset). At Dungeness (Kent), a site where there had been no spring records previously, nearly 400 were logged flying west.

Balearic Shearwater About 30 were reported, mostly from Cornwall and Devon, although a dozen were logged in Dorset (mostly past Portland Bill, where five passed on 29th) and half-a-dozen flew past Dungeness (Kent).

Night Heron Single first-summerers were near Garstang (Lancs) on 7th-9th and on St Agnes (Scilly) on 15th. Single adults were at Bridge of Allan (Forth) on 21st and flying over Port Erin (Isle of Wight) on 28th. In Ireland, a first-summer was at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 28th-31st.

Cattle Egret One remained near



Male Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Longtown, Cumbria, May 2006 (*Nick Franklin*). This same bird (sporting a metal ring on its right leg) was photographed in Northumberland in April (see page 137).

Beaulieu (Hants) until 4th and one was reported flying over Newington, near Ramsgate (Kent) on 21st.

Great White Egret Half a dozen were reported, including one at Roadford Reservoir (Devon) on 9th-10th. In Ireland, one was at Rosslare Back Strand (Co. Wexford) on 15th-16th.

Purple Heron At least a dozen were reported, several of which were in Devon, Cornwall and Scilly, including one at College Reservoir (Cornwall) on

20th-31st (with two there on 28th-29th). Of those elsewhere, the most popular were singles which lingered at Titchwell RSPB Reserve (Norfolk) on 5th-15th, Cley NWT Reserve (Norfolk) on 8th-9th, and Court Lake, Frampton (Gloucs) on 14th-29th.

Black Stork One flew over Wester Clunes (Highland) on 9th before reaching North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 10th. Returning south, it was seen flying along the Spey Valley, near Aberlour

Male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, with Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, Bramford, Suffolk, May 2006 (*Alan Tate*). The second for Suffolk; the first was seen at the same site on 16th March 2004.





Female Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* or hybrid, Seaforth LWT Reserve, Merseyside, May 2006 (*Chris Galvin*). The following caption is based primarily on information kindly supplied by Martin Garner. This diminutive duck shows the characteristic white tail-sides and typically petite bill of female teal, but a rather extraordinary head pattern. The pale loreal spot is isolated in an area of dark facial feathering, and a pale 'bridle' apparently runs down the cheek, inviting comparison with female Baikal Teal. A glimpse of the tawny-orange greater covert bar initially seems to support the contention that it could be a Baikal Teal, but there is another explanation: this colour of wing-bar is perhaps a pointer to it being a Green-winged Teal. It has long been considered that female Green-winged Teal could never be identified in Europe with any degree of confidence unless it was one of those rare individuals which showed an extreme character suite. Well, here we have a bird which immediately attracts attention. The wing-pattern appears typical, with the greater covert bar being washed with orange along its whole length (richest on its inner portion and fading slightly towards the distal end), and with the buffy-white secondary tips being narrower than on Baikal Teal. Further distinctions from Baikal Teal include the buff colouration on the base of the bill (the bill is all-grey on Baikal Teal) and the internal markings on the round-tipped scapulars visible in this photograph (on Baikal Teal the scapulars are plain dark brown, fringed with rust, and more lanceolate in shape). The brownish-toned legs shown by the Seaforth bird raise an interesting point, as this matches the description given for the legs of Green-winged Teal in the *Handbook* (Witherby *et al.* 1944); Common Teal, of course, has grey legs. This bird was also identified by some experts as an unequivocal Baikal Teal, which is just testament to how different to our familiar-looking Common Teals it is. Some female Green-winged Teals show a surprisingly distinct head pattern recalling that of Garganey or even Baikal Teal, and to encounter a vagrant or possible hybrid duck showing such a pattern has raised several identification issues.

(Moray) on 13th, and then over Northumberland and County Durham on 16th and 17th. On 23rd, it flew over Wykeham Forest and Filey (North Yorkshire), still heading south. One was then reported in flight at Tonbridge (Kent) on 28th.

White Stork A handful of sightings from Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Yorkshire and Cleveland probably concerned a couple of wandering individuals, but at least one of them was of captive origin.

Spoonbill At least 40 were reported, with singles and groups of up to three being seen at many sites, while a flock

of four toured Norfolk and Lincolnshire mid month and a flock of 11 visited Pegwell Bay (Kent) on 21st. In Ireland, one was at Inch (Co. Kerry) on 10th-17th.

Grey-bellied Brant An adult was at Dundrum Inner Bay (Co. Down) on 12th.

Black Brant In Norfolk, late adults were at Snettisham RSPB Reserve on 6th and Stiffkey on 16th-20th.

Green-winged Teal Seven drakes were reported at as many sites between Devon (where one was on Lundy on 10th-11th) and Orkney. A female or hybrid was at Seaforth LWT Reserve

(Merseyside) on 14th-16th.

Blue-winged Teal A female was at Stromness (Orkney) on 3rd and a drake was at Wilkin's Pool, near Longtown (Cumbria) on 16th-19th. The latter sported a metal ring on its right leg and had previously been seen at two east coast sites in May (see page 137). In Ireland, a drake was at Fearville Lake (Co. Tipperary) on 1st and a drake was at Castle Espie WWT Reserve (Co. Down) on 5th-25th.

Ring-necked Duck Although six (three drakes and three females) were seen between 1st and 8th, only two were seen later in the month: a drake at Willington GP (Beds) on 23rd-25th and a drake at Duffield Carrs NR (N. Yorks) on 29th-31st. In Ireland, single drakes were on the Mullet (Co. Mayo) on 9th and at Patresse Lake (Co. Tipperary) on 16th.

Lesser Scaup The drake remained at Swithland Reservoir, Loughborough (Leics) until 3rd. The second for Suffolk, a drake, was at Suffolk Water Park, Bramford, on 10th-17th (the first was at the same site on 16th March 2004).

King Eider In Aberdeenshire, a drake commuted between Blackdog and the Ythan Estuary on 4th-28th and was joined by a female at Blackdog on 27th. In Ayrshire, the drake remained in the Irvine and Saltcoats Harbour area until 25th. In Shetland, a drake was still in Tresta Voe on 25th.

Surf Scoter A drake (along with a probable female) was seen briefly in St Austell Bay off Porthpean (Cornwall) on 19th. In Scotland, single drakes were in Gosford Bay (Lothian) on 4th-16th, at Blackdog (Aberdeenshire) on 10th, off Kincaig Point, Elie (Fife) on 14th, and off Musselburgh (Lothian) on 26th-27th.

Hooded Merganser In Shetland, the drake was last seen at Loch of Quoys, Unst, on 2nd.

Honey Buzzard About 30 migrants were logged, and several were on view from the Norfolk summer watchpoints by the month's end.

Black Kite At least a dozen were reported, including singles over various sites in Kent, one of which was photographed at Seaton on 20th.

White-tailed Eagle One flew over Finstown (Orkney) on 3rd.

Montagu's Harrier About 25 migrants were logged and several breeding sites were again active, with up to a dozen summering females keeping Britain's outpost populations viable. Three were seen in Ireland, including a male near Belfast Lough RSPB Reserve (Co. Down) on 1st-2nd.

Rough-legged Buzzard One flew over Skaw, Unst (Shetland) on 7th.

Rough-legged Hawk In Shetland, a dark morph adult was seen at Lerwick on 5th-6th and then at nearby Wester Quarff on 14th. It had been released from a ferry off the islands on 5th, having been transported from the Faeroe Islands, where it had been in captivity since October 2003 (see pages 208-209).

Red-footed Falcon A first-summer female was on Walland Marsh near Brookland (Kent) on 14th and another was reported at Fen Drayton GP (Cambs) on 18th.

Gyr Falcon In Orkney, a white morph was on South Ronaldsay on 23rd.

Quail At least 15 were reported, including a migrant on Blakeney Point (Norfolk) on 9th.

Spotted Crake Males were singing at Arne RSPB Reserve (Dorset) on 12th-14th and the Ouse Washes RSPB Reserve (Cambs) on 27th.

Common Crane Up to eight remained in Norfolk, while singles wandered to Essex, London and Oxfordshire, eight were seen in Suffolk, two reached Yorkshire and Cumbria, and five reached Scotland, where one flew over Toab (Shetland) on 22nd and one remained at Durness (Highland) all month.

Black-winged Stilt One was seen at Elmley RSPB Reserve (Kent) on 3rd-4th. Three first-summer visitors visited Far Ings NR (Lincs) on 4th before settling at Martin Mere WWT Reserve (Lancs) from 5th. One of them then moved to Upton Warren NR (Worcs) on 21st (and then disappeared), while the remaining nesting pair continued to incubate their four eggs until the month's end.

Kentish Plover Single males were at Dawlish Warren (Devon) and Worthing beach (W. Sussex) on 3rd, and at Snettisham (Norfolk) on 6th, and the pair remained at Marazion (Cornwall) until 14th. In Kent, one was at Sandwich Bay on 12th and Pegwell Bay on 15th-16th.

Dotterel About 120 migrants were reported, including a trip of 25 at St Combs (Aberdeenshire) on 12th. On 14th, 12 were at Choseley (Norfolk) and 16 were at North Cotes (Lincs).

American Golden Plover The first-summer remained at Cemlyn Lagoon (Anglesey) until 8th.

Temminck's Stint At least 45 were logged, with several sites hosting two, but parties of three being seen at Holland Haven NR (Essex) on 7th, Buckenham Marshes RSPB Reserve (Norfolk) on 8th-9th, and Titchwell RSPB Reserve (Norfolk) on 16th-17th. Later in the

month, one lingered at Paradise Pool, Saltfleet (Lincs) on 23rd-31st.

White-rumped Sandpiper One was reported from Saltfleetby (Lincs) on 14th.

Pectoral Sandpiper Singles were reported at Martin Mere WWT Reserve (Lancs) on 4th-19th, Backworth Flash (Northumberland) on 22nd-23rd, Cocklawburn beach (Northumberland) on 27th, Dungeness RSPB Reserve (Kent) and Inner Marsh Farm RSPB Reserve (Cheshire) on 28th, Loch of Hillwell (Shetland) on 29th-30th, and Christchurch Harbour (Dorset) on 30th.

Broad-billed Sandpiper Singles were on the Exe Estuary (Devon) on 1st, at Pennington Marshes (Hants) on 2nd, Over Fen, near St Ives (Cambs) on 19th, Spurn (E. Yorks) on 13th-15th, and on the Lune Estuary near Glasson (Lancs) on 15th-17th. In Ireland, one was at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 13th-16th.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper In Lothian, one visited John Muir CP on 4th before moving to Aberlady Bay on 4th-13th.

Long-billed Dowitcher The first-summer remained at Old Hall Marshes RSPB Reserve (Essex) until 1st, while singles also visited Nosterfield Quarry



Adult Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Newlyn, Cornwall, May 2006 (*Mashuq Ahmad*).

(N. Yorks) on 1st and Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 9th.

Spotted Sandpiper A summer-plumaged adult was at Newlyn Harbour (Cornwall) on 25th-28th. In Ireland, an adult visited Menlough (Co. Galway) on 19th.

Wilson's Phalarope A summer-plumaged male was at Hillesden (Bucks) on 27th-30th.

Male and female King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Blackdog, Aberdeenshire, May 2006 (*Andy Webb*). The female was seen on only one day.





Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Far Ings NR, Lincolnshire, May 2006 (Graham Catley).
 These two photographs portray two of the three Black-winged Stilts which visited this site the day before they arrived in Lancashire, 100 miles to the west (see below). A pair then settled down to nest, ousting the third bird, which moved to Worcestershire later in the month (see page 178).

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Martin Mere, Lancashire, May 2006 (Stephen Menzie).
 A precursor to nesting at this site.

Adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Aberlady Bay, Lothian, May 2006 (Tristan Reid).
 This bird remained at this locality for ten days.





Male Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Hillesden, Buckinghamshire, May 2006 (Mark Stirland).

Red-necked Phalarope Single females were at Neumann's Flash, Northwich (Cheshire) on 24th and Gouthwaite Reservoir (N. Yorks) and Marshside RSPB Reserve (Merseyside) on 29th, and one was off North Galson, Isle of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 30th. The first returned to Fetlar (Shetland) on 23rd.

Grey Phalarope An adult female was on North Rona (Outer Hebrides) on 23rd.

Pomarine Skua Small numbers were seen in the English Channel, but northern



Adult Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Aird an Runair, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, May 2006 (Mark Darlaston). Good numbers of spring passage birds were noted at various sites in late May.

routes were more productive, as counts of 60 past Skinburness (Cumbria) and 128 past Loch Eye, Tain (Highland) on 19th demonstrated. On 19th, 558 passed Aird an Runair, North Uist (Outer Hebrides).

Long-tailed Skua About 35 were seen from various English sites, including eight past Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) on 19th. Scotland fared much better, with 50 being logged mid month and then 700 seen, mostly in the north and west, during the latter

part of the month. Peak counts included 163 past Mangersta, Isle of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 22nd and 173 off Saltcoats Harbour (Ayrshire) on 24th.

Laughing Gull In Cornwall, single first-summers were at the Hayle Estuary on 1st, Restronguet Creek on 2nd and Marazion on 7th, while an adult visited Penzance on 4th. A second-summer was reported in Christchurch Harbour (Dorset) on 5th and a near-adult commuted between Cromer and Cley

Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Aird an Runair, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, May 2006 (Mark Darlaston). Some of the 558 counted passing this site on 19th May. Of these 13 birds, note the eighth is a dark morph.





Adult summer Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Salthouse, Norfolk, May 2006 (Steve Gantlett).
One of two confiding Little Gulls at Salthouse beach carpark in early May; the other was a first-summer.

Near-adult Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Cromer, Norfolk, May 2006 (Richard Millington).
Up to seven Laughing Gulls were reported in May; this bird commuted between Cromer and Cley for two days.



NWT Reserve (Norfolk) on 7th-8th (and was reported at nearby Blakeney on 9th). A first-summer was reported passing Dungeness (Kent) on 12th, and an adult was reported at Holm (Orkney) on 18th. In Ireland, an adult was in Galway (Co. Galway) on 4th-17th, a first-winter was at Penrose Wharf, Cork (Co. Cork) on 9th-16th, one passed St John's Point (Co. Down) on 18th, and a first-summer was at Bunbeg Harbour (Co. Donegal) on 28th.

Franklin's Gull In Devon, the first-summer remained at Northam Burrows (Devon) until 13th.

Sabine's Gull Singles were reported flying past Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) on 19th, Forby Point (Merseyside) on 24th and Little Orme (N. Wales) on 28th. In Ireland, singles were reported off Five Mile Point (Co. Wicklow) on 12th and Carnsore Point (Co. Wexford) on 20th.

Bonaparte's Gull In South Wales, an adult visited Kenfig Pool on 18th. In Ireland, the first-winter remained at Whitehouse Lagoon, Belfast Lough (Co. Antrim) until 5th, and a first-summer was at Blennerville (Co. Kerry) on 28th-31st.

Ring-billed Gull In Ireland, a first-summer visited Penrose Wharf, Cork (Co. Cork) on 9th, while two were reported in Galway (Co. Galway) during the month.

Gull-billed Tern Following one flying past Flamborough Head (E. Yorks) on 1st, one was seen at Exminster Marshes and Seaton (Devon) on 2nd before settling on the River Caen, Braunton (Devon) on 14th-18th. On 19th, it visited Lound GP (Notts) and nearby Kingsbury WP (Warwickshire). Meanwhile, two flew north past Hartlepool (Cleveland), Whitburn (Co. Durham) and various site in Northumberland on 9th. A sub-adult visited Dungeness RSPB Reserve (Kent) on 25th. In Ireland, an adult was at Ballymacoda, near Youghal (Co. Cork) on 20th-23rd.

Forster's Tern In Ireland, the adult remained off Nimmo's Pier, Galway (Co. Galway) until 11th, and a first-summer visited Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) on 22nd.

White-winged Black Tern A summer-plumaged adult was at Barton-upon-Humber GP (Lincs) on 23rd-25th and then Broomhill Flash (S. Yorks) on 26th-27th. In Ireland, two were reported at Lough Owel (Co. Westmeath) on 4th.

Brünnich's Guillemot In Shetland, one was found dead at West Sandwick, Yell, on 4th.



First-summer Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Northam Burrows, Devon, May 2006 (*James Packer*). Compared to the same bird pictured a month earlier (page 144), the moult has progressed a little in the wings; note the new white-tipped primaries and the paucity of retained juvenile wing coverts.

Adult Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Braunton Burrows, Devon, May 2006 (*Dave Stone*). At least five Gull-billed Terns were reported during May, with this being the longest stayer. On 9th, two were seen from a number of seawatching sites as they were tracked flying up the North Sea coast from Hartlepool to Northumberland.





Adult White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Barton Pits, Lincolnshire, May 2006 (Graham Catley).

Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Swinning, Shetland, May 2006 (Hugh Harrop).



Scops Owl In Shetland, one was at Swinning, near Vidlin (Mainland) on 10th and one was trapped and ringed on Fair Isle on 16th.

Snowy Owl In the Outer Hebrides, a male was seen again at Grenitote, North Uist, on 17th.

Alpine Swift Singles were over Arlington Reservoir (E. Sussex) on 1st and St Martin's (Scilly) on 2nd.

Bee-eater Following one flying over Sheringham (Norfolk) on 3rd, singles were reported over Fairburn Ings RSPB Reserve (W. Yorks) on 5th, and Stronsay (Orkney) on 6th. Singles were also seen at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 7th, Polgigga (Cornwall) on 11th, Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 13th, Grune Point (Cumbria) on 14th, Winterton (Norfolk) on 19th-20th, Maywick (Shetland) on 24th, and Dungeness (Kent) on 30th-31st. In Ireland, one was at Rosnackill, near Fanad (Co. Donegal) on 28th.

Hoopoe Of 17 reported, singles at Kilmarnock cemetery (Ayrshire) on 4th-5th, on Portland (Dorset) on 6th-9th, at Kilnsea (E. Yorks) on 6th-7th and Flamborough Head (E. Yorks) on 9th-10th were the only ones to linger.

Wryneck Up to eight were reported from Northamptonshire, Dorset,

Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Cleveland, while half-a-dozen more were seen in Shetland (including two on Fair Isle on 13th).

Calandra Lark One was found on the Isle of May (Fife) on 12th and lingered there until 14th, becoming the first major rarity ever to be twitched at this famous site. See pages 204-207.

Short-toed Lark Singles were on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 6th-11th, 13th-16th and 23rd-30th, at South Gare (Cleveland) on 7th-8th, and on St Mary's (Scilly) on 16th-20th.

Shore Lark Singles were on Noss (Shetland) on 5th, at Dorman's Pool (Cleveland) on 6th, at Girdleness (Aberdeenshire) and on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 6th-9th, at West Runton (Norfolk) on 9th, Longhoughton (Northumberland) on 10th, St Combs (Aberdeenshire) on 12th, and Titchwell RSPB Reserve (Norfolk) on 15th-16th.

Red-rumped Swallow Up to a dozen were reported in the south coast counties between Kent and Devon, with singles at several sites, but three together on Portland (Dorset) on 3rd. One at Maenporth, near Falmouth (Cornwall) on 24th-28th was the longest-stayer. Further north, one was

at Baltasound, Unst (Shetland) on 6th, singles were reported from Cleveland and Cumbria, one flew south over Spurn (E. Yorks) on 18th, and one was at Rattray Farm (Aberdeenshire) on 23rd. In Ireland, singles were on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 6th-8th and at the Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 15th.

Richard's Pipit One was reported at Bolt Head (Devon) on 3rd.

Tawny Pipit Singles were reported at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 5th, Flamborough Head (E. Yorks) on 6th, and on Bryher (Scilly) on 31st.

Red-throated Pipit Singles were reported flying over St Margaret's at Cliffe (Kent) on 4th, Rainham Marshes (London) on 10th and Leasowe (Wirral) on 13th. Also, singles were on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 11th-16th, on Foula (Shetland) on 26th, and on the Calf of Man (Isle of Man) on 13th.

Grey-headed Wagtail At least nine were seen along the east coast between Suffolk and East Yorkshire, and single males were also reported at Black Rock Sands (N. Wales) on 6th and on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 9th.

Ashy-headed Wagtail In Dorset, a male was reported on Portland on 3rd.

Scops Owl Otus scops, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2006 (*Rebecca Nason*). This and the opposite represented the twelfth and thirteenth records for Shetland where, apart from singles in August 1905 and July 2003, all have been in spring. This bird (which followed the first on Fair Isle in 2003) was trapped just six days after the Mainland sighting.





Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Skaw, Unst, Shetland, May 2006 (*Stefan Mcelwee*). The tenth for Scotland, but only one there has been seen away from Shetland: a singing male in the Tay reedbeds (Perth & Kinross) in May 2005. Note the curved wing-edge, undertail pattern and rusty upperparts.

Female Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Holland Haven CP, Essex, May 2006 (*Craig Holden*). This bird was present for two days, but was sometimes elusive and always rather distant. However, the sulphur-yellow, grey and black plumage is just visible in this photograph, as are the bold wing bars and the requisite head pattern.



Male Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava thunbergi*, West Runton, Norfolk, May 2006 (*Steve Gantlett*). The was one of about a dozen Grey-headed Wagtails recorded in Britain during May. Note the typical dark blue-grey and black hood, yellow throat (with just a small amount of white restricted to the chin) and olive breast 'halters'.





Male Red-spotted Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica svecica*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2006 (*Rebecca Nason*).
One of a dozen seen around Shetland. A couple were reported from Orkney, but only three were seen in England.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*, Boat of Garten, Highland, May 2006 (*Martin Butters*).
This bird or another was also photographed at Glenmore two days previously.





Adult male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Brow Marsh, Shetland, May 2006 (Hugh Harrop). The first for Britain was shot in Shetland (on Whalsay in May 1947). There have been 27 records around Britain, but this represents the eleventh Collared Flycatcher for Shetland. All but one have been in spring (the other, a first-winter trapped on Fair Isle in October 1986, being the only autumn record for Britain).

Male Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Postbridge, Devon, May 2006 (Dave Stone). The general appearance recalls Willow Warbler as much as Chiffchaff. Note also the pale feet and the extensively yellow lower mandible. This and the Scottish individual were both singing and holding territories.

Male Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Pressmennan Lake, Lothian, May 2006 (Kris Gibb). This singing male was the first Iberian Chiffchaff to be identified in Scotland. Note the strong, pale-based bill and the yellow-washed supercilium. A detailed identification article appears in *Birding World* 12:193-200.





First-summer male Caucasian Stonechat *Saxicola (maurus) variegatus*, Pool of Virkie, Shetland, May 2006 (Steve Minton). Caucasian Stonechat has only been recorded in Europe half-a-dozen times (see *Birding World* 17: 154-156) and has only been photographed once before in Britain (a male at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, in October 1985). It is an extremely 'black-and-white' form, with the orange colouration being very restricted on the breast. In *variegatus*, the white rump is always unmarked, and in these photographs the rump and uppertail-coverts can be seen to be wholly white. The diagnostic Wheatear-like tail pattern is also shown here to perfection; white obviously extends well down the outer four feathers, and only the central rectrices are wholly black. This stunning bird was present for only one afternoon; it had moved on by the same evening and could not be relocated the next day, thus foiling attempts to twitch it from afar.

Male Turkestan Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*, Whitburn, Co. Durham, May 2006 (Mark Newsome).

This handsome adult male was present for just two hours on 14th May, lingering just long enough for its portrait to be taken before moving off north. The distinguishing suite of characters include the warm, ginger-rufous crown, the strong pale supercilium, the earthy-brown upperparts and the apricot flank flush contrasting with the otherwise clean white underparts. This is only the fifth isabelline shrike to arrive in Britain during the spring migration in May/June, and the first of these (on Fair Isle 1960) was also seen in mid May; it too was a male Turkestan Shrike. Most recently, a male Turkestan Shrike was at Porlock Marsh, Somerset, on 3rd June 2003. See *Birding World* 16: 244-247 for a detailed discussion of the identification and status of this species.





Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, May 2006, Whitburn Coastal Park, Co. Durham (*Tom Tams*), above, and Hambledon, Hampshire (*Kit Day*). A dozen of these handsome shrikes were recorded during May.





White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Sumburgh, Shetland, May 2006 (*Hugh Harrop*). The twelfth for Shetland, and the tenth to occur on the islands in spring. Six of these have been in May, the other four being June sightings. Shetland accounts for more than half of Britain's spring records of this North American sparrow. The only autumn sightings in the islands involve singles found in November 1971 and September 1996.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, May 2006, Trent Meadows, Long Eaton, Derbyshire (*Darren Chapman*, left) and Torver, Cumbria (*Craig Shaw*). This first-summer was in Derbyshire on 1st-3rd May and then relocated near Coniston Water, Cumbria (125 miles to the NW) on 6th-12th May.





Male Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, May 2006 (Stefan Mcelwee).

Male Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2006 (Deryk Shaw).

This particularly blue-headed male was the first of two Ortolans Bunting on Fair Isle – the only ones recorded in Britain during the whole spring.



Citrine Wagtail A female was at Holland Haven CP (Essex) on 7th-8th.

Waxwing Following the last flock of 34 at Yeadon (W. Yorks) on 1st, two were in Aberdeen (Aberdeenshire) on 5th-6th, and three were seen in Shetland on 8th (singles at Sumburgh and on Fair Isle and Unst).

Red-spotted Bluethroat One was singing on the Farne Islands (Northumberland) on 10th, and singles were at Saltfleetby (Lincs) on 11th-13th and South Gare (Cleveland) on 24th. In Orkney, two were on North Ronaldsay on 9th, with one male there on 10th. About 15 more were seen around Shetland between 8th and 27th, including six on Fair Isle on 8th and 11th.

Caucasian Stonechat A male of this distinctive form, *variegatus*, was seen and photographed at Virkie Willows (Shetland) during the afternoon of 7th, before quickly moving on.

American Robin One was photographed at two sites in Highland: at Glenmore Forest Park, between Aviemore and Loch Morlich, on 4th and then in Auchgourish Gardens, Boat of Garten, on 6th.

Savi's Warbler In Shetland, one was at Skaw, Unst, on 29th-31st.

Marsh Warbler One was trapped and ringed at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 31st.

Great Reed Warbler Single singing males were at Forfar Loch (Angus) on

13th-15th, Gunton Hall Lake (Suffolk) on 16th, and Spurn (E. Yorks) on 27th.

Icterine Warbler Singles were at Ramsdale Quarry, Stennes (Orkney) on 16th, on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 19th, at Dungeness (Kent) on 25th and Bockhill Farm, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe (Kent) on 29th.

Melodious Warbler Singles were reported singing at Beachy Head (E. Sussex) on 16th and Royal Porthcawl GC (S. Wales) on 29th.

Subalpine Warbler The first-summer male remained on Hilbre Island (Wirral) on until 8th. Singles were on the Garrison, St Mary's (Scilly) on 6th, Sumburgh (Shetland) on 7th, Grutness (Shetland) and Vidlin (Shetland) on 8th, on the Isle of May (Fife) on 8th-9th, North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 11th, at Church Norton (W. Sussex) on 25th, and on Ramsey Island (Pemb.) on 23rd-27th.

Yellow-browed Warbler In Kent, singles (both heard singing) were reported at Dungeness on 4th and Abbot's Cliff on 9th.

Iberian Chiffchaff Single singing males held territory at Pressmennan Lake, near Dunbar (Lothian) on 5th-11th and at Challacombe Farm, Dartmoor (Devon) on 7th-28th.

Red-breasted Flycatcher One was on Out Skerries (Shetland) on 12th.

Collared Flycatcher In Shetland, a male was on fences at Brow Marsh, near the Loch of Spiggie on 9th-10th.

Northern Long-tailed Tit In Essex, a male was reportedly still mated with a female *rosaceus* and feeding young in a nest in a garden in Southend-on-Sea. With the possibility of it being an aberrant bird of the *europaeus* group, good photographs will be needed to confirm its identity.

Golden Oriole Of 50 migrants reported, 27 were in the south coast counties between Kent and Scilly (where the maximum count was four on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, on 12th) and eight were at east coast sites. Of the rest, five were in inland counties, one was at Clawthorpe (Cumbria) on 3rd and four were in Wales (including three on Skomer, Pembrokeshire, on 15th-18th). Also, two reached Scotland, the furthest north of which was at Cunningsburgh (Shetland) on 26th, while another nine were reported from Ireland. In addition, up to four were at the breeding site at Lakenheath Fen RSPB Reserve (Suffolk).

Turkestan Shrike An adult male visited Whitburn CP (Co. Durham) briefly on 14th.

Red-backed Shrike Following an early



First-summer female Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, Holme, Norfolk, May 2006 (Adrian Riley). The first for Norfolk.

male at Land's End (Cornwall) on 4th, further single males were on St Martin's (Scilly) on 6th and at Easington (E. Yorks) on 7th. Half a dozen were seen in Shetland and Orkney between 8th and 30th, including three on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 8th-9th. Single females were at Dungeness (Kent) on 13th and Felixstowe Ferry (Suffolk) on 27th, and single males were on Portland (Dorset) on 29th and at Catcott Lows (Somerset) on 31st.

Great Grey Shrike One was reported at Leasowe (Wirral) on 1st.

Woodchat Shrike In the south coast counties, singles were at Hambledon (Hants) on 7th-9th, near St Levan (Cornwall) on 7th-11th, on Bryher (Scilly) on 14th-29th, on Portland (Dorset) on 14th-29th, with two on 27th, and at Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 31st. A first-summer was at Long Eaton (Derbyshire) on 2nd-3rd before moving to Torver Low Common, near Coniston Water (Cumbria) on 6th-12th. Elsewhere, singles were at Great Ormes Head (N. Wales) on 5th, on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 6th, at Boyton Marshes (Suffolk) on 14th-15th, and at Whitburn CP (Co. Durham) on 21st-23rd.

Rose-coloured Starling A first-summer was found in the jaws of a cat on Iona (Argyll) on 14th, and one was reported at Forsinard RSPB Reserve (Highland) on 21st.

Serin Of 15 reported, the most interesting included a female at Landguard NR (Suffolk) on 3rd-5th and a male at Spurn (E. Yorks) on 27th-28th.

Common Rosefinch Following a first-summer male on Blakeney Point (Norfolk) on 7th-8th, singles were reported at Christchurch Harbour (Dorset) on 8th, Flamborough Head (E. Yorks) on 28th, and St Martin's (Scilly) on 31st, while five were seen around Shetland between 10th and 30th.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak The first for Norfolk, a first-summer female, was at Holme on at least 5th-7th; during its stay, it collided with a window, was kept in a cage, was ringed and released and was suppressed throughout.

White-throated Sparrow In Shetland, an adult was at Sumburgh Farm on 13th and then at Quendale next day.

Ortolan Bunting Single males were on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 8th-15th and 24th-26th.

Escapes A pelican sp. was reported on a canal near Nottingham (Notts) on 15th, the ringed **Ross's Goose** remained at Cley (Norfolk) until 3rd, the **Red-breasted Goose** remained at Martin Mere WWT Reserve (Lancs) all month and **Bar-headed Geese** were reported on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 23rd and at Montrose (Angus) on 27th. The female **Ring-necked Duck** remained on the River Thames at Port Meadow (Oxfordshire) all month, a **Lesser Whistling Duck** was at Draycote Water (Warks) on 13th, and a **Speckled Teal** was reported on Hickling Broad (Norfolk) on 13th. The **Great Bustard** (from the Salisbury Plain reintroduction) was still at Catcott Lows (Somerset) mid month.

Western Palearctic News

Highlights reported this month include the first **Slender-billed Gulls** for Belgium, the first **Slender-billed Gulls** and the first **Solitary Sandpiper** for the Netherlands, the first **Rufous Turtle Dove** for the Faeroe Islands, the first **Lesser Kestrel** for Estonia, and the second **Trinidad Petrel** for the Azores. As with British and Irish bird news published in *Birding World*, all rarity records are subject to ratification by each country's respective records committee.

FRANCE A **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** was reported at Alénya, Pyrénées-Orientales, on 29th April. May records included a male **Ring-necked Duck** at Noirmoutier, Vendée, on 20th-23rd, an exceptional dispersal of **Griffon Vultures**, with dozens of birds seen outside the breeding range, up to Alsace, Bourgogne, Franche-Comté and Charente, single **Lesser Spotted Eagles** at Bellet, Alpes-Maritimes, on 1st and in Petite Camargue, Haut-Rhin, on 11th, a sub-adult **Imperial Eagle** in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 4th, with an immature at Tholon-les-Mémizes, Haute-Savoie, on 14th, 22 **Red-footed Falcons**, seven **Eleonora's Falcons**, an adult dark morph **Gyr Falcon** on Ouessant, Finistère, on 3rd-6th, the adult **Black-winged Pratincole** still in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, at least 40 **Dotterels**, single **Pectoral Sandpipers** at étang de Berre, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 15th-16th and at Talizat, Cantal, on

21st, two **Broad-billed Sandpipers**, a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Moëze, Charente-Maritime, until 14th (from 30th April), three **Marsh Sandpipers**, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** on Ouessant, Finistère, on 2nd-4th, a **Terek Sandpiper** in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 9th, a first-summer **Laughing Gull** at Legé, Loire-Atlantique, on 26th, a **Franklin's Gull** at Chateauneuf sur Loire, Loiret, on 13th, a first-summer **Bonaparte's Gull** at lac de Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, on 2nd, a first-summer **Sabine's Gull** at Port-la-Nouvelle, Aude, on 2nd, 10 **Slender-billed Gulls** at lac Amance, Aube, on 8th, with one at Plobsheim, Bas-Rhin, on 15th, and the adult still at Noirmoutier, a first-summer **Glaucous Gull** at Mardyck, Nord, on 2nd, 18 **White-winged Black Terns**, 31 **Red-throated Pipits**, a male **Black-headed Wagtail** at Parc-sur-Sarthe, Sarthe, on 14th, the wintering **Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler** on Ouessant until 4th, the **Spotless**

Starling still on Noirmoutier, and a singing male **Common Rosefinch** at Pontarlier, Doubs, on 26th; also, two **Laughing Doves** were seen at Bastia, Corsica, on 28th.

BELGIUM A pair of adult **Slender-billed Gulls** at Het Zwin, Knokke, on 9th May represented the first record of the species for Belgium; one bird remained until 11th May. A singing male **Thrush Nightingale** on the Belgian border at Thorn, Limburg, the Netherlands, on 12th-21st May hopped back and forth between the two countries and represented only the second-ever field observation of the species in Belgium. Other May records included a **Squacco Heron** at Zoutleeuw from 21st, with another at Zonhoven on 24th, a **Griffon Vulture** over Latour on 22nd, a **Short-toed Eagle** over Gent on 3rd, a pale morph **Booted Eagle** over Wintam and Willebroek on 28th, a hybrid **Black Tern** × **Whiskered Tern**

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Delfstrahuizen, Friesland, the Netherlands, May 2006 (Marten van Dijk).



at Amay on 2nd, eight **Bee-eaters** returned to Wachtebeke for their fifth year, a singing male **Iberian Chiffchaff** still at Genk (from 22nd April), and a **Woodchat Shrike** at Lillo on 4th.

NETHERLANDS The highlights of May were an almost incredible seven **Slender-billed Gulls**, the first for the Netherlands: three adults at the Kreupel (a small island in the IJsselmeer) on 5th, and single adult pairs at the Blikken and the Dollard on 6th, with the last staying until 9th, the Blikken birds later moving to Het Zwin in Belgium, and the Kreupel birds moving to Medemblik on 6th. In addition, a first-summer was watched for an hour by a single observer at Den Oever on 17th. Also, the first **Solitary Sandpiper** for the Netherlands, a first-summer of the eastern race, *solitarius* (because of the lores) was at the Bokkegat on 14th-17th May, and a first-summer male **Baikal Teal** (perhaps the first good record for the Netherlands) was at Langeraar on 15th, at Oudekerk on 18th and near Amsterdam on 21st May. Other May highlights included the **Green Heron** still at Amsterdam, an immature **Lammergeier** at Appelscha on 17th and at Norg on 18th, a female **Rock Thrush** in Flevoland for just two hours on 8th, and a male **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** briefly on Texel on 23rd. Other May records included a **White-billed Diver** past Camperduin on 14th, a sub-adult **White Pelican** (the eighth for the Netherlands) at Hummelo on 6th and then at various localities (including the Wadden Islands) before settling down at the Tjeukermeer at the month's end, at least five **Pallid Harriers**, a pale morph **Booted Eagle** at the Strabrechtse Heide on 3rd, a **Stone Curlew** at Neeltje Jans on 12th, three brief sightings of **American Golden Plover** (perhaps the same bird at various sites), four **Broad-billed Sandpipers**, two **Terek Sandpipers**, an elusive apparent first-summer **Heuglin's Gull** at Amsterdam from 21st (which would be the first for the Netherlands if it were accepted), a first-summer **Baltic Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*fuscus*) complete with Finnish (Pori) ring at Amsterdam on 25th-26th, single **Roseate Terns** at Flauwers Inlagen on 18th and at Camperduin on 23rd-24th, an **Alpine Swift** at Sophia Polder on 24th, eight **Red-rumped Swallows**, a female **Citrine Wagtail** at Den Helder on 5th and on Texel the next day, a **Short-toed Lark** also on Texel on 7th, a singing male **Thrush Nightingale** at Thorn, Limburg, from 12th, single singing male **Western Bonelli's Warbler** at the Maasvlakte and Donkere Duinen both on 11th, a singing male



Adult dark morph Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*, Ouessant, Finistère, France, May 2006 (Aurélien Audevard). Dick Forsman has commented that this appears to be a NE North American (so-called *labradorus*) type Gyr Falcon. Since it is an adult (or subadult), the potential for it being an escape, as opposed to a genuine vagrant, needs to be considered.

Adult summer Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Ouessant, Finistère, France, May 2006 (Aurélien Audevard).





Male Masked Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) personata*, Glabo, Öland, Sweden, April 2006 (*Daniel Steen*). The second for Europe, following the male in Norway from 15th November 2003 until 9th April 2004 (and potentially the same individual, of course). Europe's only Amur Wagtail occurred in England on 5th-6th April 2005. Pied wagtails are obviously worth paying attention to.

Iberian Chiffchaff at Alkmaar from 25th, three **Subalpine Warblers**, and a **Woodchat Shrike** on Schiermonnikoog on 7th. The story of the **Demoiselle Crane** migrating and lingering every spring at the Blauwe Kamer seems to be solved: it is apparently an escape from a nearby zoo, unringed but micro-chipped; it seems to have paired up with a wild Common Crane, which it now follows on its migrations, but visits the zoo environs every spring, and it probably accounts for the other sightings with Common Cranes in western Europe in recent years.

GERMANY May reports included two **Griffon Vultures** in Niedersachsen on 28th, an adult **Demoiselle Crane** with nine **Common Cranes** at Drömling, Sachsen-Anhalt, on 14th (but see Netherlands news), a **Sociable Plover** at Ottersberg, Niedersachsen, on 15th-17th, a **Terek Sandpiper** at Eidewatt, Katinger Watt, on 11th-16th, four adult **Slender-billed Gulls** at Altrhein Wyhlen, Baden-Württemberg, on 9th, with one still present next day and three at Waghäusel, Baden-Württemberg, on 13th, and, on Heligoland, a **Blyth's Pipit** on 1st-2nd, an **Alpine**

Accentor on 3rd, a **Paddyfield Warbler** on 17th-18th, and a **Rock Bunting** (the first there for over 100 years!) on 11th.

DENMARK May reports included a drake **Black Scoter** at Blåvandshuk on 26th, a male **Lesser Kestrel** at Grenen, Skagen, on 6th (the tenth for Denmark), a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Ulvshale Nordstrand, Møn, on 29th, and a **Crag Martin** at Male, Møn, on 26th (the sixth for Denmark).

FAEROE ISLANDS The first **Rufous Turtle Dove** for the islands (a bird of the form *meena*) remained until at least 19th April (from December 2005). Other April records included a male **Black Duck** at Klaksvik on 10th and (perhaps the same) at Kollafjørður on 27th, with a female at Torshavn on 19th, a male and two female **Harlequin Ducks** (regularly returning birds) at Kirkjubø on at least 15th, a male **Mandarin Duck** at Torshavn on 15th, a sub-adult **Ring-billed Gull** at Sørvágur on 25th, and a second-winter **Kumlien's Gull** at Argir until at least 15th (from 5th March).

ICELAND May records include a **Night Heron** at Neskaupstaður on 15th-22nd (9th record), a **Little Egret** at Djúpivogur on 27th, a returning adult **White-fronted Goose** (*albifrons*) at Öræfasveit on 22nd (where it bred in

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Wissenkerke, Zeeland, the Netherlands, May 2006 (*Phil Koken*). The first for the Netherlands. A first-summer of the eastern form, *solitarius* (note the dark lores and bold upperpart spotting).



2005), two **Snow Geese** at Kelduhverfi on 16th, a **Black Brant** at Grun-nifjörður on 17th, five **Canada Geese**, three **American Wigeons**, four **Green-winged Teals**, seven **Garganey** from 1st, a drake **Pochard** at Kópasker on 6th-17th, a pair of **Ring-necked Ducks** at Hofgarðar, Staðarsveit, until 1st (from 30th April), with further single drakes at Lake Mývatn on 7th, Melrakkaslétta early in the month and Baulutjörn, Mýrar, on 25th, five **King Eiders**, a female **Steller's Eider** still at Melrakkaslétta (seen in the same area in 2005), a male **White-winged Scoter** at Skutulsfjörður on 20th, a female **Marsh Harrier** at Hveragerði on 13th (8th record), two **Coots**, a **Common Crane** at Ólfus on 12th-13th, at least 266 **Pomarine Skuas** reported from several areas (including 200 at Stokkseyri on 4th), a second-summer **Ring-billed Gull** at Grafarvogur until 3rd, three **Little Gulls**, a **Common Tern** at Hvalfjörður on 16th (c.5th record), a **Turtle Dove** at Hof, Óræfi, on 17th-23rd, a **Long-eared Owl** at Höfn on 5th, three **Sand Martins**, a record at least 136 **Swallows**, 16 **House Martins**, three **Waxwings**, five **Blackcaps**, 10 **Chiffchaffs**, five **Willow Warblers**, six **Chaffinches**, 11 **Bramblings**, a male **Greenfinch** at Hof, Óræfi, on 22nd (5th record), a male **Bullfinch** at Akureyri on 7th, three **Hawfinches**, a male **Lapland Bunting** at Eyraðakki on 6th-7th, and a female **Yellowhammer** at Hof, Óræfi, on 22nd.

NORWAY May records included a **Pied-billed Grebe** reported at Rygge, Østfold, on 21st, three **Little Egrets**, four **Great White Egrets**, two **White Storks**, four drake **Green-winged Teals**, a **Short-toed Eagle** at Faerder, Vestfold, on 21st, nine **Red Kites**, four **Black Kites**, seven **Montagu's Harriers**, a **Pallid Harrier** at Borrevannet, Vestfold, on 6th, eight **Red-footed Falcons**, single **Pectoral Sandpipers** in Klepp on 4th-5th and at Tromsø, Troms, on 4th, a **Terek Sandpiper** at Hamar, Hedmark, on 21st, a **Slender-billed Gull** reported passing Skogsøy, Hordaland, on 8th (the first for Norway if accepted), a **Ring-billed Gull** in Bergen, Hordaland, on 16th, a **Yellow-legged Gull** at Lista all month, a **Gull-billed Tern** in Vestfold on 22nd, a **White-winged Black Tern** at Hvaler on 8th, four **Short-toed Larks**, single **Red-rumped Swallows** at Lista on 3rd and Rygge on 22nd, single **Tawny Pipits** at Karmøy on 6th-8th and Jomfruland, Telemark, on 7th, single **Citrine Wagtails** at Lista on 1st and Klepp on 2nd, a **River Warbler** at Sauherad, Telemark, on 28th, four **Subalpine Warblers**, two **Firecrests**, a nest-building **Penduline Tit** at Hå, Rogaland, from 11th, single **Serins** in Oslo on



Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*, Het Zwin, Knokke, Belgium, May 2006 (*Yves Baptiste*). The first for Belgium; two were present on 9th May and one remained until 11th May.

23rd-26th and at Kristiansand, Vest Agder, from 26th, and three **Corn Buntings**.

SWEDEN The first **Masked Wagtail** (*personata*) for Sweden was at Glabo, Öland, on 29th April. May records included a male **Lesser Kestrel** at Dröstorpsmossen, Öland, on 24th (12th record), an **Eleonora's Falcon** at Falsterbo, Scania, on 3rd (12th record), a **Long-billed Dowitcher** at lake Hammarsjön, Scania, on 6th-8th (15th record), a **Ross's Gull** on Hönö, Bohuslän, on 9th (18th record), a male **Black-**

eared Wheatear at Näsbo krok, Halland, on 12th-13th (11th record, following another male at Svedberga, Scania, on 29th April), and also a **Cory's Shearwater** past Halland on 20th, five **Little Egrets**, 14 **Great White Egrets**, two **Spoonbills**, 10 **Red-breasted Geese**, a male **Baikal Teal** at Getterön, Halland, on 5th-15th (this species is regarded as an escape in Sweden), five male **Green-winged Teals**, a male **Blue-winged Teal** at Stockviken, Gotland, until 4th (from 30th April), two male **Red-crested Pochards**, a **Ferruginous Duck** past

Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei*, Zeeland, the Netherlands, May 2006 (*Phil Koken*). An influx produced the first records for the Netherlands.





Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Thorn, Limburg, the Netherlands, May 2006 (*Ran Schols*). This bird, about the sixtieth Thrush Nightingale for the Netherlands, was right on the Belgian border and hopped back and forth between the two countries; in Belgium, it represented only the second ever field observation of the species.

Female Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Lelystad, Flevoland, the Netherlands, May 2006 (*Martijn Renders*). Present for just two hours.



White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*, Monfrague, Extremadura, Spain, May 2006 (*John Jackson*).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Heligoland, Germany, May 2006 (*Eric Koops*).



Getterön, Halland, on 1st, three single male **Black Scoters** reported at Land-sort, Södermanland, on 1st, Harge, Närke, on 2nd, and Käseberga, Scania, on 4th (following another reported flying past Halland on 27th April), five **Surf Scoters**, a male **Ruddy Duck** at Tofta kile, Bohuslän, on 6th-12th, 20 **Pallid Harriers**, a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** at Träfors, Värmland, on 26th-28th, a **Spotted Eagle** at Fyledalen, Scania, on 27th, 25 **Red-footed Falcons**, a **Stone Curlew** at Mörlunda, Småland, on 24th, a **Collared Pratincole** at Kabusa, Scania, on 12th-13th, seven **Kentish Plovers**, 18 **Marsh Sandpipers**, seven **Terek Sandpipers**, 11 **Mediterranean Gulls**, a **Gull-billed Tern** at Sundstorp, Värmland on 23rd-24th, a **Whiskered Tern** at lake Ryningen, Småland, on 19th-22nd and at lake Draven, Småland, on 23rd-28th, nine **White-winged Black Terns**, a **Brünnich's Guillemot** past Ekerum, Öland, on 7th, 10 **European Bee-eaters**, 37 **Hoopoes** (a high number), seven **Short-toed Larks**, about 13 **Red-rumped Swallows**, 15 **Citrine Wagtails**, a male **Subalpine Warbler** (probably *albistriata*) at Halmstad on 7th-8th, just five **Greenish Warblers**, a **Dusky Warbler** at Vallda Sandö, Halland, on 15th, and four **Little Buntings**.

FINLAND The second **Lesser Yellowlegs** for Finland was at Köyliö for just two hours on 17th May. Other May records included a **Great White Egret** at Pori on 21st-22nd, five **Red-breasted Geese**, a **Snow Goose** migrating at Porvoo on 22nd, with another at Virolahti on 27th, a putative hybrid **Ross's Goose** x **Snow Goose** at Tohmajärvi on 24th-29th, a few **Lesser White-fronted Geese** at Siikajoki during the first two weeks of the month, a **Ruddy Shelduck** at Pyhtää Ristisaari on 20th-21st (and then seen migrating at Virolahti on 21st), six **Mandarin Ducks**, a male **Green-winged Teal** at Uusikaupunki on 3rd-4th and Lumijoki on 4th, single male **American Wigeons** at Kristiinankaupunki on 19th and Suomusjärvi on 25th, a male **Surf Scoter** at Pyhäjoki on 9th and then twitchable at Siikajoki next day, the first twitchable **Red Kite** for Finland at Hammarland, Åland, on 20th-21st (the same first-summer bird was seen at Korppoo, Jurmo, two days earlier), a **Short-toed Eagle** at Virolahti on 7th, 16 **Lesser Spotted Eagles**, nine **Spotted Eagles**, a **Steppe Eagle** at Oulu on 27th-28th, an **Imperial Eagle** reported at Hamina on 21st, at least 30 **Pallid Harriers**, 50 **Montagu's Harriers**, just eight **Red-footed Falcons**, just one **Little Crane**, at Hollola on 28th (in 2005 this species was not recorded in Finland for the

first time for 25 years), 25 **Avocets**, 20 **Marsh Sandpipers**, a female **Grey Phalarope** at Kristiinankaupunki on 25th-28th, with another there on 28th-29th, a first-summer **Ross's Gull** past Kirkkonummi Porkkala on 2nd, six **White-winged Black Terns**, a displaying male **Rufous Turtle Dove** (*meena*) at Ilomantsi on 16th-17th (the tenth for Finland), two **European Bee-eaters** at Hamina on 12th, with another at Siikajoki on 27th-28th, 16 **Hoopoes**, a **Short-toed Lark** at Korppoo Utö on 28th-29th, a **Crested Lark** at Jämsä on 25th, single **Tawny Pipits** at Dragsfjärd on 18th-22nd and Kirkkonummi on 25th, single **Richard's Pipits** at Helsinki on 4th-5th and Hanko on 22nd, 21 **Citrine Wagtails**, 11 **Savi's Warblers**, 14 **Collared Flycatchers**, a **Penduline Tit** at Hamina, a **Long-tailed Rosefinch** of unknown origin at Lemland Lågsjär on 8th, a **Steppe Grey Shrike** on Dragsfjärd Björkboda on 19th-23rd, a **Lesser Grey Shrike** at Korppoo Jurmo on 25th-26th and Jyväskylä on 27th, single **Serins** at Hanko on 8th and Porvoo on 13th, and a **Corn Bunting** at Lemland Lågsjär on 25th-26th.

ESTONIA The first **Lesser Kestrel** for Estonia, a male, was at Paslepa on 29th April. May records included five **Great White Egrets** at Aardla on 25th, a **Short-toed Eagle** at Saatse on 20th, two **Red-footed Falcons**, two **Little Crakes** at Pikla on 23rd, a **Dotterel** at

Austurgrunne on 20th, a **Marsh Sandpiper** at Pogar on 20th, a **Terek Sandpiper** at Haapsalu on 21st, a **Grey Phalarope** at Roosta on 21st, seven **White-winged Black Terns** and a **European Bee-eater** at Aardla on 18th, a **Lesser Grey Shrike** at Sorve on 22nd, and a **Corn Bunting** at Laeva on 25th.

LATVIA May records included a **White-billed Diver** past Cape Kolka on 1st, at least seven **Red-footed Falcons**, and a pair of **Great Grey Owls** found in Ludza in mid month.

POLAND May records included a **Pygmy Cormorant** at Zator fish-ponds on 16th and at Jeziorsko Reservoir on 20th, an adult **Cattle Egret** (7th record) at Modlin until 3rd (from 30th April), a **Spoonbill** at Wizna on 23rd, a **Red-breasted Goose** at Jeziorsko Reservoir on 16th, five **Pallid Harriers**, six **Long-legged Buzzards**, single **Steppe Eagles** at Biebrza Marshes on 3rd, near Wroclaw on 6th and at Jeziorsko Reservoir on 16th, a sub-adult **Imperial Eagle** at Pieniny on 23rd, a pair of **Black-winged Stilts** at Wroclaw on 22nd-24th, a **Terek Sandpiper** at Spytkowice fish-ponds on 11th-12th, a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Przegalina on 1st (5th record), a **Subalpine Warbler** at Dabkowice on 2nd (4th record), and a **Dusky Warbler** at Biebrza marshes on 2nd.

HUNGARY May records included a

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Ghadira NR, Malta, May 2006 (*Ray Galea*). The sixth for Malta and the first there in spring.





Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, Linosa, Italy, May 2006 (Michele Vignano).

Ruddy Shelduck at Fertoujlak until 10th, a pair of **Whooper Swans** with three small chicks at the Ipoly River on 12th (the second breeding record for Hungary), a summer-plumaged male **Grey Phalarope** at Abadszalok on 22nd-25th, a **Gull-billed Tern** at Begecs Reservoir on 4th-9th, the **Black-eared Wheatear** at Szársomylo until 7th, a peak of 27 **Rose-coloured Starlings** on the Hortobagy on 19th, and a male **Cirl Bunting** at Szarsomylo until at least 16th.

ROMANIA The first 12 **Rose-coloured Starlings** of the season were reported in the southeast on 17th and, by 24th, single flocks of 25 and 40 were seen in western Dobrogea.

AUSTRIA Late April records included a **Black-winged Stilt** at Gralla on 2nd, two **Short-toed Larks** at Zwerndorf on 22nd, a male **Black-headed Wagtail** at Seibersdorf on 29th, an **Aquatic Warbler** in the Rhinedelta on 22nd, a **Cirl Bunting** at Bischofshofen on 7th and a singing male **Ortolan Bunting** at Leopoldschlag on 30th. May records included single **Squacco Herons** at Sablatnigmoor on 2nd-3rd, in Seewinkel on 6th and in Vienna on 18th, a **Short-toed Eagle** at Marchegg on 7th, a **Pallid Harrier** at Nickelsdorf on 14th, two **Long-legged Buzzards** at Edelstal on 7th, an adult **Lesser Spotted Eagle** in Hansag on 13th, a dark morph **Booted Eagle** at Villach-Landskron on 1st-8th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** in Seewinkel on 19th, a **Marsh Sandpiper** in Seewinkel on 1st and in the Rhinedelta on 2nd, a flock of 250 **Little Gulls** at Schwarzlitzteich on 2nd, an immature

Slender-billed Gull at Marchegg on 8th, with an adult reported in the Rhinedelta on 14th (the 11th & 12th for Austria), a **Gull-billed Tern** in the Rhinedelta on 7th, a **Short-toed Lark** at Rabensburg on 13th, a **Richard's Pipit** at Heiligenkreuz on 1st, a returning pair of **Black-headed Wagtails** in the Rhinedelta on 25th, single singing male **Thrush Nightingales** at Illmitz on 3rd and Moosbrunn on 13th-17th, and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** at Graz on 17th.

SWITZERLAND May records included a **Booted Eagle** at Neuchatel on 2nd, 13 **Griffon Vultures** at six sites (mostly in the west), an **Egyptian Vulture** at Chardonne, Vaud, on 4th, a **Great Snipe** at Kallnach, Bern, on 20th, six **Slender-billed Gulls** at Préverenges, Vaud, with singles at Klingnau, Aargau, on 10th and CdC, Vaud, on 17th, an adult **Pomarine Skua** at Hagnek, Bern, on 8th, a male **Citrine Wagtail** at Gampel, Valais, on 6th, a **River Warbler** at Gudo, Ticino, on 14th, and a male **Black-headed Bunting** at Ramosch, Graubünden, on 29th.

SPAIN May records included the three **Lesser Flamingos** seen again at the Ebre Delta, Tarragona, early in the month, with another adult at Laguna del camino de Villafranca, Ciudad Real, on 5th-18th, a **Sacred Ibis** at the Guadalhorce rivermouth, Malaga, until 20th (from 29th April), a first-winter **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Ebre Delta on 28th-29th, the **Wilson's Phalarope** (from 15th April) seen again in the Ebre Delta on 5th-13th, the first-summer **Bonaparte's Gull** still at Ria

do Burgo, A Coruña, on 18th, an adult **Lesser Crested Tern** on the beach of Doñana NP, Huelva, on 4th, with a pair at the Ebre Delta on 9th, a **Royal Tern** reported at Zolina pond, Pamplona, on 8th, single male **Black-headed Wagtails** at Aiguamolls de l'Emporda, Girona, until 1st (from 27th April) and at the Llobregat Delta, Barcelona, on 16th-22nd, and an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** at the Ebre Delta on 2nd.

GIBRALTAR A remarkable five **Icterine Warblers** (four of them trapped & ringed) on 14th May comprised only the second record for Gibraltar.

MALLORCA An adult male **Pallid Harrier** was reported at S'Albufera on 5th May.

SARDINIA May records included the **Black Vulture** still with the **Griffon Vultures** in the northwest of the island, a pair of **White Storks** nesting at Ozieri, with another pair probably nesting at Alghero, two **Ruddy Shelducks** and c.40 breeding pairs of **Collared Pratincoles** at the Gulf of Oristano, and a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** in the south of the island early in the month (following two seen at the Gulf of Oristano on 21th April).

MALTA The sixth **Broad-billed Sandpiper** for Malta, and the first in spring, was at Ghadira Nature Reserve on 10th May. Other May records included three **Great White Egrets** at Ramla Valley, Gozo, on 6th, a female **Semi-collared Flycatcher** trapped and ringed at Simar NR on 9th, and a male **Red-backed Shrike** on Gozo on 24th.

GREECE Three **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** were at Gennadi, Rhodes, on 12th April. The third **Isabelline Shrike** for Greece was reported at Antikythera, Eptanisa, on 16th May, and other May records included two **Steppe Eagles** at Antikythera, Eptanisa, on 2nd, three **Terek Sandpipers** with c.440 **Curlew Sandpipers** and c.1,800 **Little Stints** at Kalohori Lagoon, Thessalonika, on 13th, and a male **Citrine Wagtail** at Alikes salt-pans, Zakynthos, on 14th.

LESVOS Two **Black Vultures** over Sigri on 20th April represented the first record for the island, while a **White-tailed Plover** at Alikoudi Pool on 13th April and at Skala Polichnitos salt-pans a few days later was the fourth for Lesvos, and an **Arctic Skua** off Agios Fokas on 23rd April was the third record. Other records included a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** (the fourth record for the island) amongst a party of **European Bee-eaters** between Petra and Molivos on 2nd May, two pairs of **White-throated Robins** in the Sigri area by 3rd May, and at least four **Great Snipe** and at least three **Citrine Wagtails** at Kalloni in early May.

AZORES The second **Trinidad Petrel** for the Azores and the Western Palearctic was photographed off Faial on 17th May (see pages 210-211).

CANARY ISLANDS Daily pelagic birding trips off Puerto Rico, Gran Canaria, during 2nd-6th May produced two **Little Shearwaters**, one **Great Shearwater**, 14 **Bulwer's Petrels**, 10 **White-faced Petrels**, nine **Madeiran Petrels**, two **Wilson's Petrels**, one **Leach's Petrel**, three **Sabine's Gulls**, two **Grey Phalaropes** and two **Pomarine Skuas**, as well as commoner seabirds, including over 1,000 **Cory's Shearwaters** each day. The drake **Blue-winged Teal** at Salinas de Janubio, Lanzarote, remained until 7th May.

MOROCCO The second **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** for Morocco was at Ouzazate on 24th April.

CYPRUS April records included an **Imperial Eagle** by the Paramali tunnel on 12th, a **Spotted Cuckoo** at Evretou Dam from 30th (until 2nd May), single **Baillon's Crakes** at Evretou Dam on 8th-9th and 19th, three **Bar-tailed Godwits** at Meneou Pools on 25th (17th record), a **White-throated Robin** at Cape Kormakiti on 5th (10th record), and an **Olive-tree Warbler** reported at Karavas on 20th. May records included single **Great Black-headed Gulls** at Chelones on 7th and at Apostolos Andreas on 8th, single **Pied Kingfishers** at Akhna Dam on 3rd and Zakaki Marsh on 19th (following two others in late April), a **White-throated Robin** at Cape Andreas on 8th (11th record), a **Rose-coloured Starling** at the Nata ford on 22nd, and a **Trumpeter Finch** at Cape Greco on 3rd.

EGYPT Records from Abu Simbel included 25 **Yellow-billed Storks**, an **African Collared Dove** and an **African Pied Wagtail** on 30th April and 16 **Pink-backed Pelicans** on 1st May, while other April records included 400 **Levant Sparrowhawks** and 1,000 **White-eyed Gulls** at Hurghada on 25th, three **Sooty Falcons** at Gifton Saghir on 25th, five **Painted Snipes** at Lake Qarun on 21st, a **Namaqua Dove** at Aswan on 29th, two **Senegal Coucals** at Abassa-Abou Hammad on 22nd, and a **Pale Rock Sparrow** at Zafaraana on 23rd. May records included a **Goliath Heron** at Wadi



Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, Cape Greco, Cyprus, May 2006 (Stavros Christodoulides).

Lahami on 21st, with another at Shalatein next day, with 28 **Lappet-faced Vultures** and three **Namaqua Doves** also at Shalatein on 22nd, and four **African Collared Doves** near Hotel Calimera, north of Marsa Alam, on 20th.

ISRAEL May records included a **Brown Booby** off Eilat until 14th, two or three adult **Red-billed Tropicbirds** also off there until 8th, the **Lesser Flamingo** at Eilat Km20 salt-pans until at least 20th, a **White-tailed Plover** also there on 5th, at least seven **Crested Honey Buzzards** seen migrating over the Eilat mountains and Arava Valley during the first half of the month, three **Black-crowned Finch Larks** at Km77, Central Arava, on 3rd, a **Black Bush Robin** at Ne'ot Smadar, South Negev, on 8th, a **River Warbler** at Wadi Ayun, Galilee, on 13th, a **Daurian Shrike** at Yotvata on 16th-17th, 20 **Rose-coloured Starlings** at Hula on 13th, an influx of

thousands of pairs of **Pale Rock Sparrows** into the Negev desert, with c.1,000 pairs between Sde Boker and Be'er Sheva (the second ever breeding event away from Mt. Hermon; the first, which involved far fewer birds, was in summer 2001), and a **Common Rosefinch** at Wadi Ayun, Galilee, on 13th.

LEBANON The first **Namaqua Dove** for Lebanon was reported at Kfar Zabad on 16th May, while other May records included 72 **White Pelicans** at Aammiq on 9th, four **Glossy Ibises** also there on 5th, four **Great Snipe** also there during 16th-23rd, an **Eleonora's Falcon** and seven **Rose-coloured Starlings** at Tel el Akhdar on 17th, a male **White-throated Robin** returned to one of the only two known breeding sites in the country at Tannourine Cedars by 1st, and an influx of **Pale Rock Sparrows** to the West Bekaa from 7th (absent from this area in 2005).

News this month was supplied by Philippe Dubois (France), Gerald Driessens (Belgium), Max Berlijn (the Netherlands), Jochen Dierschke (Germany), Silas Olofson (Faeroe Islands), Yann Kolbeinsson (Iceland), Vegard Bunes (Norway), Douglas Gustafsson & Eric Öhman (Sweden), Annika Forsten and Mika Ohtonen/Lintutiedotus (Finland), Uku Paal (Estonia & Latvia), Tadeusz Stawarczyk (Poland), Tamas Zalai and Tibor Hadarics (Hungary), Andreas Ranner and Georg Juen (Austria), Adrian Jordi (Switzerland), Ricard Gutiérrez (Spain), Ernest Garcia/GONHS (Gibraltar), Marcello Grussu/GOS (Sardinia), Ray Galea (Malta), Nikos Probonas, Dave Bishop and Andy Jayne (Greece), Richard Brooks and Ed Opperman (Lesvos), Dave Gray (Canary Islands), Julien Piette (Morocco), Colin Richardson (Cyprus), Olle Holst/Avifauna and Kris de Rouck (Egypt), Yoav Perlman/IRDC (Israel) and Richard Prior (Lebanon).

The Calandra Lark on the Isle of May

Mark Newell

Early on the morning of Friday 12th May 2006, there was a noticeable chill in the air on the Isle of May, Fife. It had been clear and sunny for several days, but this morning was cloudy. The best bird of the spring on the island so far had been a Subalpine Warbler for four days – a very pleasant addition to my island list – but, with its departure, there were now very few migrants to see. I checked on the breeding progress of a plot of Guillemots and then, on my way back to the observatory for breakfast, decided to do a quick round of the traps, just in case there was something lurking, despite the wintry-feeling weather. There were several Willow Warblers by the top heligoland trap, and I heard the sound of a lark somewhere overhead. To my sleepy ears, it sounded like a Skylark, and I thought nothing more of it, returned for my breakfast and then headed off for a morning of seabird monitoring duties.

At about midday, I walked across to the main lighthouse and bumped into Jim Washford and Les Arkless, who were staying at the bird observatory. They mentioned seeing a bird that they had never seen before and could not identify. However, their description just left me confused: it was apparently “like a thrush with a loping flight, a pale belly and a black line across its throat”. All I could think of was a pratincole, even though nothing but the throat-line really fitted. But when they mentioned that they could

not remember where on the island they had seen it, I said I would keep an eye out, and then I just wandered off, baffled.

But all became clear as I approached the top trap: a lark took off from a small piece of rough ground nearby. As I looked at it through my binoculars, I saw its black underwing, white trailing wing-edge and large size, and I knew immediately that I was looking at a Calandra Lark. It gave a Skylark-like call and, as it flew in a wide circle with bowed wings and bounding flight, the black patches on the sides of its neck were clear. It dropped down in the as-yet unoccupied tern colony, so I headed across there in the hope of obtaining some views of it on the ground. As I approached the spot, it immediately took flight and returned to its original position, but it was in view and, albeit at long range, I was able to see it on the ground and note its large bill and narrow breast band.

I then ran off to summon the other interested island residents. After more flight views, we could see that it had a regular route between three points around the lighthouse.

I knew full well that this was a stunningly rare bird that many people would love to see and I was keen to release the news, but there was the small matter of the 250,000 seabirds on the island to consider. Large parts of the island are undermined with Puffin burrows and Eiders nest just where any lark-focussed birder might put their feet. I spoke with folk from the bird observatory committee and the Scottish Natural Heritage wardens, and it was agreed that word could go out, as the bird was away from the most sensitive areas, the terns were not yet nesting and the tourist boat could bring out 100 people at a known time. All seemed simple for an arrival of birders the next day, if the lark was still present.

Then, in the late afternoon, disaster struck! As the tourist boat pulled out from the island, it caught its propeller on a mooring rope. This caused its gearbox to break and the boat to become powerless. It was blown against the rocks and, despite the attentions of the other two vessels present, it was necessary to call the lifeboat to tow it to safety. We knew that there would be trouble for birders getting to the island, certainly in any regulated manner. So we had no idea what to expect the next day if the lark remained.

Plate 1. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, Isle of May, Fife, May 2006 (Lee Gregory). The twelfth British record.





Plate 2. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, Evros Delta, Greece, February 2004 (Bill Baston). As well as being a large, heavily-built lark, Calandra is chunky-billed and short-tailed, with a rather 'open-faced' expression. The black 'necklace' bulges to form bold black breast-patches either side of the upper breast. The white outer tail feathers (lacking in Bimaculated Lark) are visible here too. Differences from Bimaculated Lark in flight include the black (as opposed to grey) underwing, the presence of a bold white-trailing edge to the wing and the lack of a white tail-tip.

Plate 3. Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, Eilat, Israel, April 2006 (Jan Kåre Ness). Although nearly as large as Calandra Lark, Bimaculated Lark is longer-billed and has a more strongly-defined head-pattern (note especially the bold black loreal line). It often shows a narrower black 'necklace' too. The white tail-tip (lacking in Calandra Lark) is also visible in this photograph and the other main in-flight differences are the pale grey (as opposed to black) underwing, the lack of a white-trailing edge to the wing, and the lack of white sides to the tail. The calls are shorter and 'drier' than the rather Skylark-like calls of Calandra Lark.





Plate 4. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, Isle of May, Fife, May 2006 (Alan Clewes).

Early the next morning, it did not take me long to find that the bird was still in the same area, if still only really showing in flight. I telephoned out the news and, by 7.00am, the first small boat was seen approaching the isle from Fife. It was to be the first of at least eight small groups to come out to the isle from either Fife or Lothian. In all, about 70 birders came. All obtained good flight views, and some obtained extended views of the bird on the ground too.

A similar number of birders also made the crossing the next day (Sunday), and again all saw the bird well, mainly in flight. But in the evening, I walked around the whole area and I could find no sign of the bird; it seemed to have departed ahead of an approaching weather front. One group of birders did come out to the island on the Monday, but found no sign of the bird, and so life on the May returned to normal.

Scottish Natural Heritage, the Isle of May Bird Observatory and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology would like to thank all visiting birders for being patient and following the on-site directions to view only from certain points; their behaviour was impeccable. A further thank you is due to those who made a donation to the bird observatory. We hope that everyone took away memories of a superb bird in the stunning setting that is the Isle of May.

Description

A chunky lark, noticeably larger than Skylark, with a thick and heavy bill. A quite bouncing flight, with strong, bowed wingbeats, vaguely recalling Hoopoe. Generally very flighty, tending to take to the wing as soon as it caught sight of anyone, although all of the key features could be seen in flight as it regularly flew in wide circles. When on the ground, it tended to sit very low, and its overall sandy-brown colouration often blended into the dead, pale brown vegetation.

The crown was pale sandy-brown with darker brown streaks to the feathers centres, especially on the fore-crown. The nape was unstreaked and paler. The ear-coverts had a whitish surround, with whitish submoustachial stripes almost meeting the whitish supercilium, and were a pale brown with a darker edge, with a whitish spot below the eye, as well as whitish crescents under the eye. Obvious black neck patches varied in size depending on the posture of the bird, but could be seen in flight. Especially when extending its neck, the black patches joined to form a black band across the upper chest, and this was made more striking by the whitish neck-band. The throat was pale and unstreaked, while the breast was fairly heavily streaked mid brown (generally more streaked than depicted in some field guides), with quite a sharp cut-off to the white belly. The tail was proportionately shorter than on Skylark; at rest, it extended only a short way beyond the wing-tips. The tail feathers were dark like the remiges, while white outer tail feathers could sometimes be seen in flight. The upperparts were paler than in Skylark and more reminiscent of Short-toed Lark, with sandy-brown edges and darker centres to the feathers, while the rump appeared unstreaked. The tertials were quite dark brown centred, with paler edges, while the primaries were a shade darker. The wings were most striking in flight, with a blackish underwing and a white trailing edge of even width along the secondaries, but narrowing a little along the inner primaries. The remiges looked darker than the coverts. The bill was stout, with a slightly convex culmen. The bill was pinkish-grey at the base and darker at the grey tip and onto the upper mandible. The legs were not seen.

The flight call "kleerp" was quite similar to that of Skylark but rather more 'pebbly'.

Mark Newell, Isle of May, Fife.

Calandra Lark breeds from Iberia and Morocco eastwards through the Mediterranean region to central Asia. It is mainly resident in Europe, but partially migratory in the east of the range. Three races are recognised, but the differences, which involve size and colour, are slight and poorly defined. Eastern birds tend to be slightly larger than western birds, and southern European birds tend to be the darkest. Nominate *calandra* breeds across the range west to northwestern Iran; the slightly paler and more finely streaked *psammochroa* breeds from northern Iraq and Iran to eastern Kazakhstan; and the slightly more streaked *hebraica* occurs from southern Turkey to Israel. The British records may be presumed to be of the nominate form.

There have been just 11 previous British records, which have been well-scattered; all but one have been in spring; the species has yet to reach Ireland:

- 1961 Dorset Portland Bill, 2nd April
- 1978 Shetland Fair Isle, 28th April
- 1985 Scilly St Mary's, 26th-29th April
- 1994 Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 21st September
- 1996 Scilly St Agnes, 17th-18th April
- 1997 Isle of Man Leanness, 17th-18th May
- 1997 Norfolk Scolt Head, 19th May
- 1999 Northumberland Farne Islands, 28th April
- 1999 Shetland Fair Isle, 16th-17th May
- 2000 Shetland Fair Isle, 13th May
- 2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 10th-11th May.



Plates 5 & 6. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, Isle of May, Fife, May 2006 (Chris Batty).

Perhaps surprisingly, this represents the first-ever successful twitch to the Isle of May for a major rarity. Mark Golley tells the story from a twitcher's perspective: 'The Isle of May? One of those birding locations that I often wondered if I would ever visit.... This small rocky island was usually seen only through tired, bleary eyes while heading south from a stunning rarity somewhere else in Scotland or the Northern Isles. My scant knowledge extended to enjoying Keith Brockie's books on the island's wildlife and knowing that it was where Britain's first Isabelline Shrike had arrived (in September 1950), quickly followed by the first ever Siberian Thrush (in October 1954). Rather more contentiously, and controversially, I also knew of it as being the site of the sole British record of Daurian Redstart (in April 1988).

Calandra Lark? One of the most awkward species for me. A species where events and circumstances had conspired against me seeing it on British soil in over two decades of twitching. As a teenager in April 1985, I managed to blow all the money I had saved on a trip to the Isles of Scilly to see the glorious male Pine Bunting on St Mary's, only for a Calandra to appear on the same island a week later. No amount of grovelling would see my parents lend me the cash to twitch it. The next Scilly showing also passed me by, while ineptitude and general incompetence saw me not head to the Isle of Man for that one. Of course, that island is not recognised by the BOU, so God bless them for that! A grim, cold afternoon on Scolt Head Island yielded not a sniff of the only one ever reported in Norfolk, and then, given the species' skittish nature, later records on Shetland and Orkney were not sufficiently tempting. So it was a waiting game. Wait I did, and wait and wait, until 12th May 2006. Calandra Lark on the Isle of May! Calandra Lark *and* the Isle of May: a potential 'double whammy' not to be missed....

So, all that was needed was a couple of places on the small tourist ferry sailing from Anstruther the following day. But no sooner were things taking shape, than disaster! The boat was suddenly, of all the times for it to happen, out of commission! Alternative forms of

transport were desperately needed but, by close of play that day, my near neighbour Steve Beal had located a man in North Berwick with a very nippy Zodiac who was up for the task, weather permitting.

On Saturday 13th, it was all systems go: there was positive news on the bird still being there, and the boatman was still up for the challenge! On an increasingly sunny afternoon, with a slightly choppy sea, the Zodiac hurtled out of the harbour, with the Isle of May bouncing its way into view every time the boat became airborne before thumping back onto the water. Was this madness? Our boatload of birding commandos zoomed ever closer toward 'the May' while hanging on for dear life. But aching arms were forgotten as the exhilaration took hold and the awesome journey neared its end.

Quickly discarding our lifejackets, wobbly legs carried us to the middle of the island where, soon, *relief!* As the Calandra Lark flew up and away, a huge weight lifted from my shoulders: it was on my list. Over the course of the next 90 minutes or so, the small crowd enjoyed some terrific views of the giant, yet furtive, lark. When the bird was not on show, there was time to savour the jaw-dropping views from the island, across the Firth of Forth, to the mainland. The weather was glorious and, for good measure, there were Puffins and Eiders at our feet. And, as we greeted the last visiting group of the day, the Calandra gave us the most majestic flypast – absolutely the most perfect way to complete the special Isle of May experience.

It was a joy to be part of the first successful large-scale twitch the island has seen: indeed it is hard to imagine a more perfect twitch! Everything (eventually) ran like clockwork and the 'May Isle experience' was made all the more special knowing that the Calandra Lark represented my 500th species (following the BOU list) in Britain. What a terrific way to hit a true listing milestone.'

Eds.

Newell, M. 2006. The Calandra Lark on the Isle of May. *Birding World* 19 (5): 204-207.



Are dark morph Rough-legged Hawks overlooked in Europe?

Jens-Kjeld Jensen

The question has twice been posed in *Birding World* (in 15: 348 & 16: 458): Are dark morph American Rough-legged Hawks overlooked in Europe? (See also Mullarney & Murphy 2005, which details the status of this form in the Western Palearctic.) Well, the answer seems to be ... yes!

A dark morph Rough-legged Hawk came aboard a fishing boat in international waters west of the Grand Bank (at c.55°N 48°W, about 350 miles east of Newfoundland) on 13th September 2003. It was taken into captivity and handed in to care when the boat finally docked at Torshavn, Faeroe Islands, on 24th October 2003 (*Birding World* 16: 456 & 458).

The bird was then kept in captivity on the Faeroe Islands until May 2006. It had long been planned to release it, but it was considered that the bird would have a poor chance of survival on the Faeroe Islands and that it would have a much better chance if it was released near Shetland. The bird's caretaker eventually

took the ferry from the Faeroe Islands to Denmark in May 2006, so that he could release the bird himself. He released it from the ferry immediately east of the Isle of Noss, Shetland (five miles east of Lerwick, and the other side of Bressay) at 4.00am on 5th May.

The bird was kept in a small box on the ferry, and a few of its feathers were inevitably damaged before it was released. Before its release, its jesses were removed and it was fitted with a metal bird ring from the Zoological Museum of Denmark.

Whilst perusing the internet a couple of days later, Hans Eli Sivertsen noticed some photographs taken by John Coutts on Shetland on 6th May and labelled as Common Buzzard. However, Hans noticed the feather damage and quickly realised that it was, in fact, our Rough-legged Hawk!

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Mullarney, K. & Murphy, J. 2005. The Rough-legged Hawk in Ireland. *Birding World* 18: 503-504.

Jens-Kjeld Jensen, Faeroe Islands.

Plates 1 & 2. Dark morph Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus sanctijohannis*, in captivity, Torshavn, Faeroe Islands, October 2003 (*Jens-Kjeld Jensen*), left, and 4th May 2006 (*Åge Davidsen*). This bird was caught on a fishing boat east of the Grand Bank, Newfoundland, on 13th September 2003 and taken to Torshavn, Faeroe Islands, where it was cared for in captivity from October 2003 until May 2006, when it was released off Shetland.





Plates 3-8. Adult dark morph Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus sanctijohannis*, Shetland, May 2006, the Knab, Lerwick, 6th May (*John Coutts*, Plates 3-7) and Wester Quarff (five miles south of Lerwick), 14th May (*Billy Smith*). Clearly, this was the released bird from the Faeroe Islands (note the damaged head feathers and the metal ring). It was found at Lerwick the same day it was released off the Isle of Noss. It remained there next day, and was subsequently seen by crofter Billy Smith, feeding on a dead lamb on his croft at Wester Quarff, five miles south of Lerwick. No further sightings were reported. Common Buzzard is a very scarce passage migrant in Shetland and, in the last 35 years at least, it has been sighted only twice as often as Rough-legged Buzzard. Dark morph buzzards are not always what they seem though and, in these photographs, it is the feathered tarsi which give the game away. Note also the in-flight proportions of this Rough-legged Hawk, its plain brown underparts and the all-dark underwing-coverts. The tail shows a broad dark terminal bar and a pale base which is obscured by just three or four wide dark bars.

Several species of North American raptor have been proven to reach Europe, but European birders are rarely primed to identify them. Birds such as Taiga Merlin and Marsh Hawk, for example, may slip past the unwary. Because pale morph Rough-legged Hawk so closely resembles Rough-legged Buzzard, it is inevitable that some of the former will go unnoticed, while dark

morphs (frequent in *sanctijohannis* but unknown in *lagopus*) can – and do (as demonstrated here) – easily masquerade as Common Buzzards.
Eds.

Jensen, J.-K. Are dark morph Rough-legged Hawks overlooked in Europe? 2006. *Birding World* 19 (5): 208-209.



A pale morph Trinidad Petrel in the Azores

Manuel Pinguinhas

On 17th May 2006, I was watching whales and seabirds from a boat about three miles north of the island of Faial in the Azores. Whilst watching a Fin Whale, I noticed an unfamiliar seabird. I was unsure of its identity, but I was able to take some photographs of it quickly and, with the help of Ricardo Guerreiro, next day I was able to send them to various seabird experts, including Joël Bried, Niklas Holmström and others.

The bird was a *Pterodroma* petrel, but birds of this family can be notoriously difficult to identify at sea with certainty. Many *Pterodroma* species are quite poorly described in the literature, while the general lack of good at-sea photographs of them makes it even more difficult to search for identification pointers. Nevertheless, after due consideration, the consulted experts agreed that the photographs show a pale morph Trinidad Petrel – the first record of this morph in the Western Palearctic, and only the second record of the species in the region. The sole previous record was of a dark morph, also off the Azores, photographed at sea south of Pico on 18th July 1997 (Dubois & Seitre 1997, which see for a more detailed discussion of the species).

Trinidad Petrel breeds in the tropical and sub-tropical South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In the Atlantic, it breeds on Trinidad and the Martin Vas Islands (both off eastern Brazil, about 20° south of the equator). It was formerly 'lumped' with the closely related Herald Petrel *P. heraldica*, which breeds in the Pacific, but the two forms are now generally treated as separate species.

Trinidad Petrel is very variable in plumage and occurs in intermediate morphs as well as in pale and dark morphs, so its identification is not always the easiest (especially concerning its separation from Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*, and see Watola 2004). Further comments on its identification from experienced observers are welcomed.

In the North Atlantic, Trinidad Petrel has been seen regularly in small numbers off North Carolina, USA, since about 1991. Between 1994 and 2004, from as few as three to as many as 18 per year have been seen there between mid May and September (Brinkley & Patteson 2004). Both records from the Azores (which lie more or less due east of North Carolina) fit this occurrence pattern.

Plate 1. Pale morph Trinidad Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, off Faial, Azores, May 2006 (Manuel Pinguinhas). The first record of a pale morph in the Western Palearctic, and only the second record of the species in the region (the first was also in the Azores, a dark morph off Pico in July 1997 (see *Birding World* 10: 456-459).





Plates 2-5. Pale morph Trinidad Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, off Faial, Azores, May 2006 (Manuel Pinguinhas). Although *Pterodroma* petrels in general are difficult to identify, this species has been noted regularly in the western North Atlantic in recent years, with up to about 18 per year being seen on North Carolina pelagic seabirding trips. Note the rather long, slender tail (Kermadec Petrel has a shorter, broader tail), slim proportions (Kermadec tends to look heavier in both head and breast), lack of obvious white primary shafts (Kermadec shows white primary shafts above; the bases of the primaries are white in Trinidad Petrel, but unless birds are moulting, these are covered by greater upper primary coverts and not visible) and the typical underwing pattern for Trinidad (Kermadec normally shows much more white in the primaries below, although this pattern is variable in all morphs of both species).

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Manuel Pinguinhas, Azores.

Pinguinhas, M. 2006. A pale morph Trinidad Petrel in the Azores. *Birding World* 19 (5): 210-211.



Birding Egypt's southern Red Sea coast

Richard Bonser

Many people will be familiar with Egypt as a birding destination; Sinai, the area around Cairo and the Nile Valley from Luxor to Abu Simbel are all popular with tourists and birders alike. However, it has been only in the last few years that, with an improvement in the political stability of the area, one of the most exciting frontiers of the Western Palearctic has opened its doors to foreign visitors – Egypt's southern Red Sea coast.

From 1992 until 2000, this area was an extremely sensitive political region, due to the close proximity of the Hala'ib Triangle, an area directly to the south of Shalatein that has been the subject of a sovereignty dispute between Egypt and Sudan. The political tensions have now eased, however, at least for the Shalatein area itself, although there is still no access for foreign nationals to the area south of Shalatein (that includes the Gebel Elba National Park) without prior written permission. However, visitors can now travel freely along Egypt's southern Red Sea coast as far south as Shalatein, which is, in fact, the southern border of the Western Palearctic (as defined by *BWP*). This stretch of coast, which has excellent beaches and currently pristine coral reefs close inshore, has quickly

become a popular destination with European tourists, and there are now frequent charter flights from western Europe to Hurghada and Marsa Alam (270km south of Hurghada).

For birders, the area of coast from Safaga south to Shalatein presents opportunities to observe an exciting array of species. Depending upon the time of year, such sought-after Western Palearctic species as Goliath Heron, Lappet-faced Vulture, Sooty Falcon, Crab Plover, Sooty Gull, Crested Tern, White-cheeked Tern and African Collared Dove are all possible. In addition, Black Bush Robin, Shining Sunbird and Rosy-patched Shrike are all regularly present at Gebel Elba and, as suggested by the report of an Ethiopian Swallow in March 2004, there are presumably more discoveries awaiting the intrepid birder.

Together with three other British birders, I visited the area south to Shalatein in March 2006. From our successful trip, and from information provided by other birders who have visited the area, we can recommend the following sites to any birders visiting the area, but it should be remembered that the whole area is quite under-explored and any area that 'looks good' is well worth a look.

Plate 1. Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, May 2006 (*Kris de Rouck*). Now a regular visitor to this area, Goliath Heron is one of the chief Western Palearctic prizes of a visit to Egypt's southern Red Sea coast.



The various hotels and resorts in the area were all receptive to us birding their grounds, so long as we purchased a drink or a bite to eat whilst we were there. In particular, the Shams Alam Resort (50km south of Marsa Alam) would be an excellent accommodation base; it is a prime locality for staging tired migrants. Further to the south, we used the excellent Red Sea Diving Safari Ecolodge at Wadi Lahami (www.redsea-divingsafari.com) as a base. With the mangrove area a couple of hundred metres to the north proving to be a quite regular haunt for Goliath Heron and Hamata mangroves just minutes away, this place combines superb accommodation, away from the crowds, with birding on the doorstep.

Safaga mangroves

About 20km to the south of Safaga town (where House Crows reach their most southerly outpost on the western Red Sea coast), a small but obvious area of mangroves is visible from the main coast road. Access here is via a sandy track which leads to the northern end of the mangroves. This seemed to be the best spot for Crested Tern on the southern Red Sea coast this spring, with upwards of 30 favouring the offshore rocks. With records of Goliath Heron in May 1994 and September 1995, and a Basra Reed Warbler in May 1996, all the mangrove patches, which extend to 50km south of Safaga, are worth investigating.

Marsa Alam

The new resort town of Marsa Alam lies 220km south of Safaga. Along the way, Crested Tern can be seen along the coast and good numbers of Crowned Sandgrouse occur in the desert. Other typical desert species of the area include Bar-tailed Desert Lark, Hoopoe Lark, White-crowned Black Wheatear and Brown-necked Raven. Sand Partridge and Hume's Tawny Owl are scarcer, more sought-after species, and Black-crowned Finch Lark occurs spasmodically, while we located a pair of African Collared Doves displaying by a roadside hotel 23km north of the town. Although the town itself is only really worth stopping at to ensure that you have enough petrol to reach Shalatein (250km away and the next reliable petrol station), the Shams Alam resort, 50km to the south of Marsa Alam, has developed a reputation for attracting migrants. It is the only really green area on this stretch of coast. In season, typical Red Sea migrants can be expected in good numbers. Our highlight was a male Caucasian Stonechat, but other visitors have recorded an Ethiopian Swallow here (in March 2004), African Collared Doves,



Namaqua Doves and numbers of Sooty Falcons and White-cheeked Terns between late April and late September.

A natural green area a couple of kilometres south of Shams Alam, named Wadi Gimal, is distinguished by palm trees adjacent to the main road. A natural reed fringed pond here undoubtedly attracts migrants, and a couple of African Collared Doves were seen here in December 2004.

Hamata Mangroves

Probably the most well-known site on Egypt's southern Red Sea coast is Hamata Mangroves. Situated about 90km south of Marsa Alam, this is the most extensive area of mangroves in Egypt. It is the best site in the Western Palearctic

Plate 2. Male Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Safaga, Egypt, May 2003 (Tommy Frandsen).





Plate 3. Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Hamata Mangroves, Egypt, May 2006 (Kris de Rouck).
Another of the sought-after specialities of the region.

Plate 4. Western Reef Herons *Egretta gularis*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, May 2006 (Kris de Rouck).
Although dark morphs are common further south in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, they are far scarcer than white morphs on Egypt's Red Sea coast. Intermediate morphs are a regular sight within the Egyptian population. The longer tibia of this species make it appear considerably longer-legged than Little Egret.





Plate 5. Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, Shalatein, Egypt, June 2004 (*Juha Niemi*). This photograph shows the diagnostic whitish underwing covert bar and whitish sides to the breast. Also note the serrated edge to the secondaries.

Plate 6. Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus*, Shalatein, Egypt, May 2003 (*Christian Leth*). Camel carcasses around the town of Shalatein and its camel market attract the vultures and offer observers the best chance of seeing this globally threatened species within the Western Palearctic.



to observe the enigmatic Crab Plover. Although there is still much to learn with regard to this species in Egypt, small numbers are normally present from at least mid June onwards, with numbers seemingly increasing throughout the summer (although July data appears to be lacking at present) to regular three-figure counts in mid September. The birds favour the southern part of the mangroves and the largest numbers are present at low tide. The site is best approached via a sandy track at the southern end of the mangroves to the north of the village of Hamata.

September certainly sees this site at its best and good numbers of White-cheeked Terns, Bridled Terns and Sooty Gulls can be present offshore, whilst other waders will include Greater Sand Plover and, potentially, Terek Sandpiper. Hamata is also an excellent site in winter and early spring, with Western Reef Herons and Striated Herons present in numbers, while the site has been responsible for at least a handful of sightings of Goliath Heron spread throughout the year.

The nearby Zabargad Beach Resort is an excellent site for seawatching in the evenings (the light is normally poor during the mornings, as you are looking east), with almost any of the

region's seabirds possible; the islands offshore from this coast hold breeding Brown Booby, White-eyed Gull, Sooty Gull and Red-billed Tropicbird. Zabargad Beach Resort has also hosted African Collared Dove on more than one occasion.

Wadi Lahami

Only very recently coming to prominence due to a recent series of sightings of Goliath Heron, the small area of mangrove and adjacent shallow lagoons at Wadi Lahami is located just south of Hamata village and 25km north of Berenice. It may be accessed on foot (by land, or by wading through the turquoise-blue waters on the seaward side of the mangroves) to the north of the Red Sea Diving Ecolodge. The area holds similar species to Hamata, but the bay directly in front of the Ecolodge seems to be a good spot for roosting gulls and terns (including Crested Tern) in the early mornings. Goliath Heron is without doubt the main prize for any birder here and an adult has favoured this site during at least the winters of 2004/5 and 2005/6. Our sighting in March 2006, initially locating it flying in from the north, seems to confirm the belief that this species regularly commutes between the different mangrove areas on this stretch of the coast.

Plate 7. Crab Plovers *Dromas ardeola*, Hamata, Egypt, September 2003 (Kris De Rouck).

Three figure counts of the attractive Crab Plover have become a regular feature at Hamata mangroves in September. On occasions, juveniles have been seen begging for food from their parents.





Plate 8. White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus*, Hamata, Egypt, May 2003 (Christian Leth). This species breeds on arid offshore islands. It is the commonest gull in the region and can be seen easily, particularly around the town of Hurghada. At least 30% of the world's population breeds in Egypt.

Plate 9. Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichii*, Hamata, Egypt, May 2003 (Christian Leth). Larger and scarcer than White-eyed Gull, with a more southerly distribution in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, small numbers of this species are regularly recorded along Egypt's southern Red Sea coast.





Plate 10. African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*, Shalatein, Egypt, May 2003 (Tommy Frandsen). This is one of the main target species for birders visiting Egypt's southern Red Sea region. It is slightly smaller and shorter-tailed than the Eurasian Collared Dove, with a broader black half-collar and white undertail-coverts and vent.

Plate 11. Namaqua Doves *Oena capensis*, Shalatein, Egypt, May 2003 (Tommy Frandsen). This species is regular in the dry acacia scrub of the region, whilst migrant hotspots such as the Shams Alam Resort have also attracted it in the past.





Plate 12. Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*, El Gouna, north of Hurghada, Egypt, April 2006 (Alex Lees). This species is widespread on tidal mudflats and coral beaches, especially in close proximity to mangrove areas, along the southern Red Sea coast.

Shalatein

The frontier town of Shalatein, at the administrative border with Sudan, is especially attractive to birders as it is the only reliable spot in the Western Palearctic for Lappet-faced Vulture, following the eradication of the species from Israel. They are easily seen throughout the year, although numbers increase significantly during June to September, with a peak of 80 recorded on 22nd August 2004. The congregations occur at the town's camel market, where carcasses are regularly dumped.

Immediately after passing through the military check-point at the western edge of the town (possible without any special permits), the scattered acacia scrub to the south of the Co-op garage is a reliable site for African Collared Dove. Black Bush Robin must surely occur here sometimes too, given the close proximity to its northern breeding limit just to the south. Although heavily patrolled by military, the harbour area and shore at Shalatein can also be visited for birding, and have already produced records of both Crab and Caspian Plovers. There are no tourist hotels in Shalatein, so a day-trip from further north is recommended.

About 40km to the north of Shalatein, the mangroves at Marsa Hemira attracted a Goliath Heron in February 2006.

Visiting

Access as far south as Shalatein is currently unrestricted to foreign visitors, although passports do need to be shown at various roadside military check-points. It is advisable to be

discreet and hide optical equipment when passing through these check-points, and to be circumspect when birding in the town of Shalatein. International car hire companies have a presence in Hurghada and, to a lesser extent, in Marsa Alam. The rates are not dissimilar to those in western Europe, but it is advisable to take an International Driving License in order to hire a vehicle. The main roads are superb, with little traffic, and petrol costs less than a quarter of the price in western Europe.

Egypt's southern Red Sea area surely offers enough to keep any keen birder occupied during any month of the year. September should produce the greatest diversity of species and the largest numbers of individual birds, but spring could well be better for passerine migration and Goliath Heron sightings. One thing is sure, however: for anybody who is lucky enough to visit this area, there will be opportunities to expand our knowledge of the avifauna of this little visited corner of the Western Palearctic.

Acknowledgements

I thank Douglas Barr, Andy Clifton and Angus Murray who accompanied me in the field in Egypt. I also thank Kris De Rouck, Hugues Dufourny, Mans Grundsten, Dominic Mitchell and Ken Shaw who all supplied useful information.

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Richard Bonser, London.

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Pigeonhole

This feature highlights miscellaneous news items which we hope will be of interest. To 'pigeonhole' a news item, just send it to the editor (for use if space allows).

Migration of bustards to and from France

When the LPO released 22 captive-reared Little Bustards into the arable fields of the Niort area of north-western France in September 2005, three of them were fitted with satellite transmitters. The birds were released into an area with an existing population of Little Bustards, and it appears that at least one of them successfully joined up with the wild birds on their normal migration south to the Iberian peninsula. This bird was located in northern Spain (in Castile/Leon) on 11th November and then, on 9th December, was found further south in Portugal, in the Setubal area near Lisbon.

Perhaps less satisfactory was the discovery, in December 2005, of a young or female Great Bustard at Saint Viô, Baie d'Audierne, on the west coast of Brittany followed, in January 2006, by a female Great Bustard found dead under electricity cables in Champ sur Layon, Maine et Loire. Both of these birds came from those released on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, in 2004 as part of Britain's Great Bustard reintroduction attempt. A third Great Bustard, also originating from the Wiltshire project, was found in mid January 2006 at Ampouillac gravel pits, Haute Garonne, south-western France. These birds released in Wiltshire have been raised from eggs taken from the Russian population, so have presumably inherited the migratory patterns of birds from that region. It remains to be seen if they will be able to migrate back to Britain again when adult, assuming that they can find suitable wintering habitat in Europe in the meantime.

The French captive-reared Little Bustards mostly originate from eggs collected in France, rescued from nests that would otherwise have been destroyed by agricultural activities; they are therefore more likely to inherit the migratory strategies of the population they are reinforcing. (Contributed by Ken Hall/LPO-UK)

HANZAB now complete!

The *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds* is now complete. The final volume of this epic work has just been published. The editorial team (led by Peter Higgins) and the publishers (OUP) are to be thoroughly congratulated. This is a publication the like of which may never be seen again. It is an extremely detailed work (in many ways more detailed even than *BWP*, even though many of the species are much less well known). At £245, the new final Volume 7 may look outrageously priced but, as with Volume 1, it is actually two volumes, and, totalling 2,056 pages and with maps and 54 colour plates, each is bigger than most *BWP* volumes. Thus, although nominally completed in seven volumes, the series is actually nine volumes – the same as *BWP*, although it takes up slightly more shelf space. Earlier volumes were reviewed (and praised) in *Birding World* 4: 330-331, 7: 375 & 9: 411.

More frigatebirds in the North Atlantic

Following last autumn's record influx of Magnificent Frigatebirds into the north-western Atlantic (eg five in Nova Scotia, Canada, compared to a total of only eight previous records there), at least three appeared off north-eastern USA in May 2006: an adult female at Cape

Cod, Massachusetts, on 17th, a male at Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on 18th, and an immature at Cape May, New Jersey, on 18th. The 2005 sightings were believed to be at least partially due to the exceptional hurricane activity in the western Atlantic that year, but will there be another influx in 2006, and will more wander to Europe this year?

A west Siberian CD-ROM


A CD-ROM containing MP3 bird songs and habitat photographs from western Siberia has been produced as a voluntary project by Russian biologist Sergey Gashkov and Dutch birder John van der Woude. It is available for a cost-covering price of just 7.50 Euros, including postage. Amongst the 58 species featured are Swinhoe's Snipe, Oriental Cuckoo, Pacific Swift, Olive-backed Pipit, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue Robin, Pallas's Grasshopper, Lanceolated, Blyth's Reed, Booted, Pallas's, Radde's and Dusky Warblers, Two-barred Crossbill, Long-tailed Rosefinch and Black-faced Bunting. Whilst there are no photographs of the birds themselves, it actually makes an interesting change to view good quality habitat photographs of where these exciting birds breed, whilst listening to their unfamiliar songs. More details and ordering information can be obtained at: <http://johnbirding.wolweb.nl/tomsk.html>.

Diclofenac banned in India

In May 2006, the Indian government ordered all of the country's drug companies to halt production and sale of the anti-inflammatory livestock treatment diclofenac within three months. This may provide a life-line just in time to prevent the extinction of vultures in the subcontinent, where the widespread use of this drug has caused a catastrophic fall in their numbers in recent years: White-backed, Long-billed and Slender-billed Vultures have declined by more than 97%, from between 20 and 40 million birds, in less than 15 years. The vultures died from kidney failure after eating the flesh of cattle and water buffalo treated with diclofenac, but pharmaceutical firms have now been told instead to promote meloxicam, an alternative to diclofenac, which has been proved by scientists from the RSPB and elsewhere to be safe for vultures. Now we need to see that implementation is effective and that there is awareness of the problem at all levels. Dr Richard Cuthbert who leads the RSPB's Vulture Programme Research, said: "A diclofenac ban is fantastic news for vultures and has been made possible through the hard work of scientists from the RSPB, India and South Africa in finding that meloxicam is a safe alternative to diclofenac. Making sure that meloxicam is rapidly introduced is now the critical step to saving India's vultures."

Enid Stanford

It is with great sadness that we report that Enid Stanford (formerly Allsopp) of Sheringham, Norfolk, died on 5th May 2006. A part of the birding and twitching scene in Britain since the 1960s, and one of its great characters, for many years Enid was Britain's leading female lister.

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