

Oman Birding Tour

1 -10 November 2025

Trip Report

By tour leader Simeon Gigov



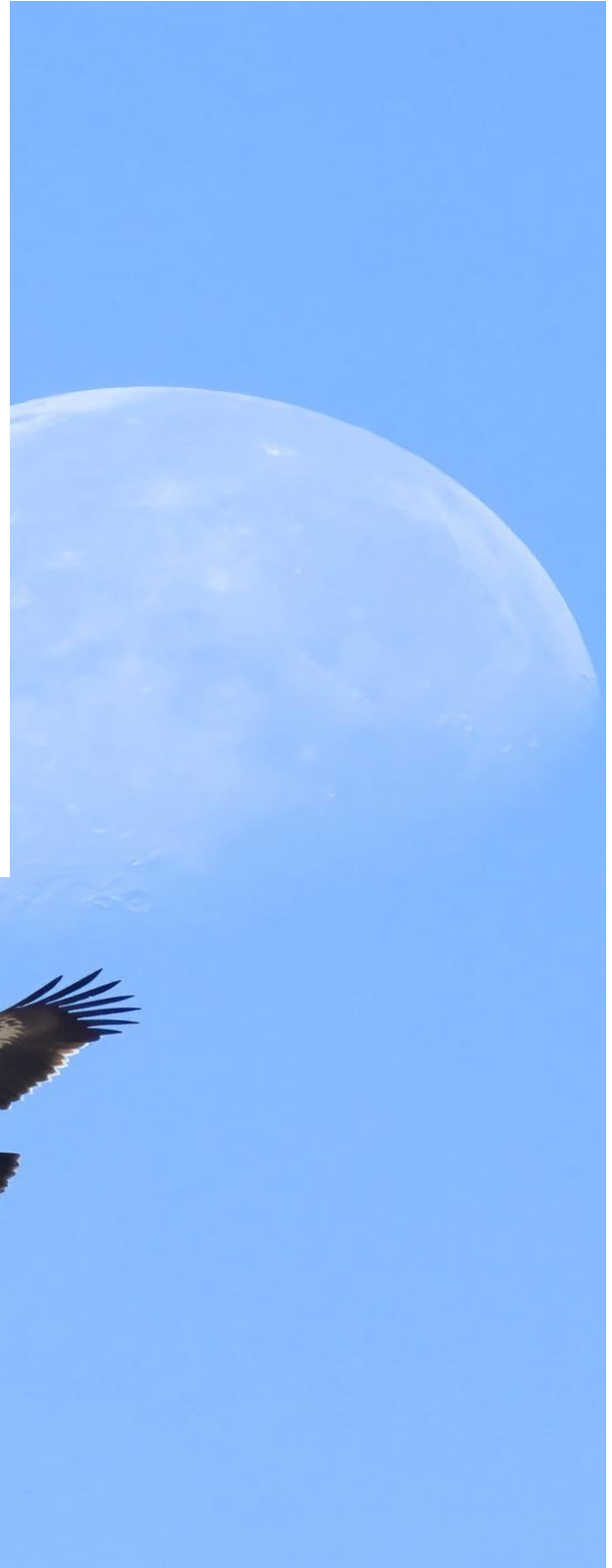
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Introduction

This report documents a Neophron Tours birding tour to southern Oman, undertaken from 1–10 November 2025, during the peak of the autumn migration season. Based primarily in the Dhofar region around Salalah, the tour explored a remarkable variety of habitats — coastal lagoons, desert steppes, wadis, mountain escarpments and the rich waters of the Arabian Sea — offering outstanding opportunities to observe both Palearctic migrants and Arabian endemics.

Autumn is a particularly rewarding time to visit Oman. As migrants move south and east, Dhofar becomes a natural crossroads for birds from three continents, while resident species remain highly active following the monsoon. Over the course of ten days, the group recorded an impressive 201 bird species, including numerous regional specialities, scarce migrants and several major highlights such as Arabian Eagle Owl, Desert Owl, Verreaux's Eagle, Yemeni Serin, Arabian Grosbeak, Sociable Lapwing, Malachite Kingfisher and a wide selection of seabirds on two highly productive pelagic trips from Mirbat.

The tour was led by Simeon Gigov and Vladimir Petrov, whose in-depth knowledge of Omani birds, precise site selection and flexible daily planning ensured consistently high-quality birding. In addition to birds, the group also enjoyed encounters with reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies and mammals, further enriching the overall natural history experience.

This report follows the itinerary day by day and provides a detailed account of the sites visited, key species observed and memorable moments from the field. It is intended both as a record for participants and as a reference for future Neophron Tours travelers considering Oman as a world-class birding destination.



The happy tour participants and tour leaders after having enjoyed some excellent views of a pair of Verreaux's Eeales

Participants: Roger Crofts, Pamela Crofts, Cliff Morrison, Gary King, Angela Connor and Marina Georgieva

Tour Guides: Simeon Gigov and Vladimir Petrov

Itinerary:

Day 1: Salalah; Raysut Lagoon; Ayn Razat; Mudday; Thumrait

Day 2: Thumrait; Ubar-Shisr Sunfarms; Wadi Rabkut; Thumrait

Day 3: Thumrait; Wadi Rabkut; Wadi Naheez; West Lagoon; Raysut Lagoon; Salalah

Day 4: Salalah; Mirbat Pelagic; Taqah; Al Mughsayl

Day 5: Salalah; Hilton Lagoon; Tawi Atayr; Jabal Samhan; Rawri Lagoon

Day 6: Salalah; Al Mughsayl; Raysut Settling Pools; Sawli Lagoon; Ayn Tabrok

Day 7: Salalah; Ayn Hamran; Wadi Kheesh; Mamurah Steppes; Ayn Razat; East Lagoon

Day 8: Salalah; Mirbat Pelagic; Alila – Hinu Bay; Ras Janjari; Sawli Lagoon; Wadi Ashawq

Day 9: Salalah; Wadi Darbat; Mirbat Public Park; Taqah Lagoon; Dahriz Lagoon

Day 10: Salalah; Wadi Darbat; Ayn Hamran; West Lagoon; Raysut Lagoon

Day 1: Salalah - Raysut Lagoon - Ain Razat – Mudday – Thumrait

We started the day early with a visit to Raysut Lagoon before breakfast. Our focus was mainly on the area north of the road, which is a mosaic of shrubs, reeds and small pools. This area offered a good variety of species, including the first rarity of the trip. We were immediately greeted by a singing Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, a flock of African Silverbills feeding nearby, and a couple of European Rollers still resting in the surrounding bushes. Once we reached the first pond, we saw our first Indian Pond Heron, as well as a Squacco Heron nearby for comparison. A few waders were then flushed, and as they returned, we identified Temminck's Stint, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Greenshank and Common Snipe. A Spotted Eagle was roosting on the nearby cliffs and the first Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters started flying around. A Marsh Harrier flew over, flushing a flock of Glossy Ibises, a Purple Heron and a few Little Egrets. Scanning the reeds, we found our first Isabelline Shrike, Graceful Prinia, Ruppell's Weaver, Clamorous Reed Warbler and Abyssinian White-eye. We then reached a slightly larger pond, where we saw Forbes-Watson's Swifts and Pale Crag Martins coming to drink. Suddenly, we saw a flash of blue and orange fly by and perch on a reed on the opposite side of the pond: a Malachite Kingfisher! The bird stayed on its perch for five minutes, giving us a great view through the scope and an opportunity to take photos. Delighted to have seen our first rarity, we headed back to the hotel for breakfast, and even managed to spot our first Osprey on the way out of the wetland. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282254140>

After breakfast, we checked out of the hotel and set off for the desert. En route, we stopped at Ain Razat, a beautiful wadi northeast of Salalah with a lovely botanical garden in the middle of it. This is a well-known spot for spotting the Arabian Eagle Owl. The area is a popular picnic site, and even though it wasn't the right time for that, there were already some people hanging around, but not too many to scare the birds. There were plenty of birds feeding on the ground near the car park, looking for leftovers from the previous evening's picnic: Laughing Doves, Ruppell's Weavers, House Sparrows (ssp. indicus), African Silverbills, Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, and so on. Soon, our attention shifted to several raptors flying in the sky: two Bonelli's Eagles, three Imperial Eagles and a Kestrel, as well as large numbers of Alpine Swifts, Forbes-Watson's Swifts and Pale Crag Martins. White-spectacled Bulbuls were singing loudly

and chasing each other, and a small flock of Abyssinian White-eyes were feeding in a fig tree. Then our attention was drawn to the butterflies and dragonflies, which were exceptionally numerous here. After a brief photo pursuit, we began searching for the eagle owl. Although this attempt was unsuccessful, we spotted our first Grey-headed Kingfisher, as well as several Arabian Sunbirds feeding on the blooming trees in the garden. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282355063>



Cinnamon-breasted Bunting by Simeon Gigov



Malachite Kingfisher by Cliff Morrison

Shortly after midday, we reached Thumrait, checked into the hotel, and, after a well-deserved break, left for Mudday. En route, we stopped to observe a pair of Brown-necked Ravens, and while we were watching them, we also spotted a pair of Crowned Sandgrouse. Our evening birdwatching at Mudday produced Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Great Grey Shrike (ssp. aucheri), Blackstart, Blackcap, Isabelline Wheatear and Graceful Prinia. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282356078>

Day 2: Thumrait - Ubar-Shisr Sunfarms - Wadi Rabkut - Thumrait

We started the day early with breakfast and coffee at our favourite café, Fifty Five Coffee. We used it quite often on this trip and enjoyed it a lot. At sunrise, we reached the first of the sun farms on the road to Ubar. First, our attention was drawn to a Steppe Grey Shrike perched on the roadside wires. Soon, we also found Cream-

coloured Coursers, Greater Hoopoe Lark, Black-crowned Sparrow Lark, Turkestan Short-toed Lark, Crested Lark, Isabelline Wheater and Desert Wheater.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S282438079>

At the next location we saw our first Crowned Sandgrouse for the day, as well as Imperial Eagle and Brown-necked Raven. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282440454>

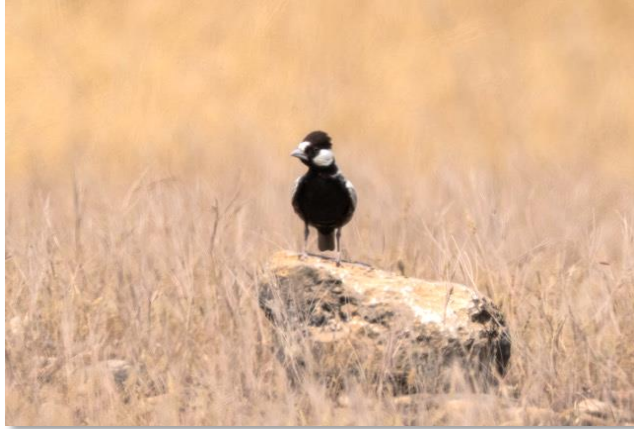
Then we hurried to a sun farm where I had seen Sociable Lapwings a couple of days earlier. After a brief search, we found a group of eleven birds, as well as a Common Cuckoo, White Storks, Short-toed Eagle, Pallid Harrier, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Isabelline Shrike, Arabian Great Grey Shrike, Spotted and Red-breasted Flycatchers. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282445764>

The last sun farm we checked today turned out to be a real birding feast. We saw Namaqua Dove, Red-wattled Lapwing, Sociable Lapwing, Common Snipe, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Cream-coloured Courser and Tawny Pipit, among others.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S282451518>



Sociable Lapwing by Simeon Gigov



Sparrow Lark by Cliff Morrison



Cream-coloured Courser by Cliff Morrison

Then we headed back to the hotel for a well-deserved afternoon break. In the evening, we went birdwatching in Wadi Rabkut, where we enjoyed a beautiful sunset over the desert. The birds we saw here included Laughing Dove, Isabelline Shrike, Arabian Grey Shrike, Brown-necked Raven, Upcher's Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, White-spectacled Bulbul and Blackstart.



White-spectacled Bulbul by Simeon Gigov



Desert Hare by Vladimir Petrov

Day 3: Thumrait - Wadi Rabkut - Wadi Naheez - West Lagoon - Raysut Lagoon - Salalah

In the morning, we decided to return to Wadi Rabkut, which definitely proved to be a good decision. First, we explored the trees and bushes in the wadi itself, which produced Montagu's Harrier, Arabian Great Grey Shrike, White-spectacled Bulbul, Lesser Whitethroat, Asian Desert Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear, Desert Wheatear, Pied

Wheatear, Blackstart, Arabian Sunbird and Nile Valley Sunbird, as well as an Arabian Hare. Then, venturing a little further into the desert, we found Desert Larks and a few flocks of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flying overhead. The real surprise, however, was coming upon some mammal tracks, which happened to be from a group of gazelles followed by an Arabian Leopard. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282679260>

After checking out of the hotel, we headed back to Salalah, stopping at Wadi Naheez on the way. The star attraction here was not a bird, but a chameleon, which Gary saw crossing the road. We safely removed it from the road and photographed it for quite some time. In terms of birds, we saw Imperial Eagle, Fan-tailed Raven, Common Redstart, Blackstart, Tree Pipit and Striolated Bunting. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282679562>

Later in the afternoon we decided to visit places close to the hotel with Vladimir, as Simeon was dizzy and stayed for a rest.

First, we visited the lagoon next to the hotel, where we saw a Gull-billed Tern, Greater Crested Terns, a Grey Plover and as a first for the trip a Spotted Thick-Knee. Then we moved East from the Hotel and visited Raystu Lagoon, there we observed a variety of waders, Greater Flamingos and quite a few Sooty and Slender-billed gulls.



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater by Simeon Gigov



Arabian Chameleon by Marina Georgieva



Spotted Thick-knee by Vladimir Petrov

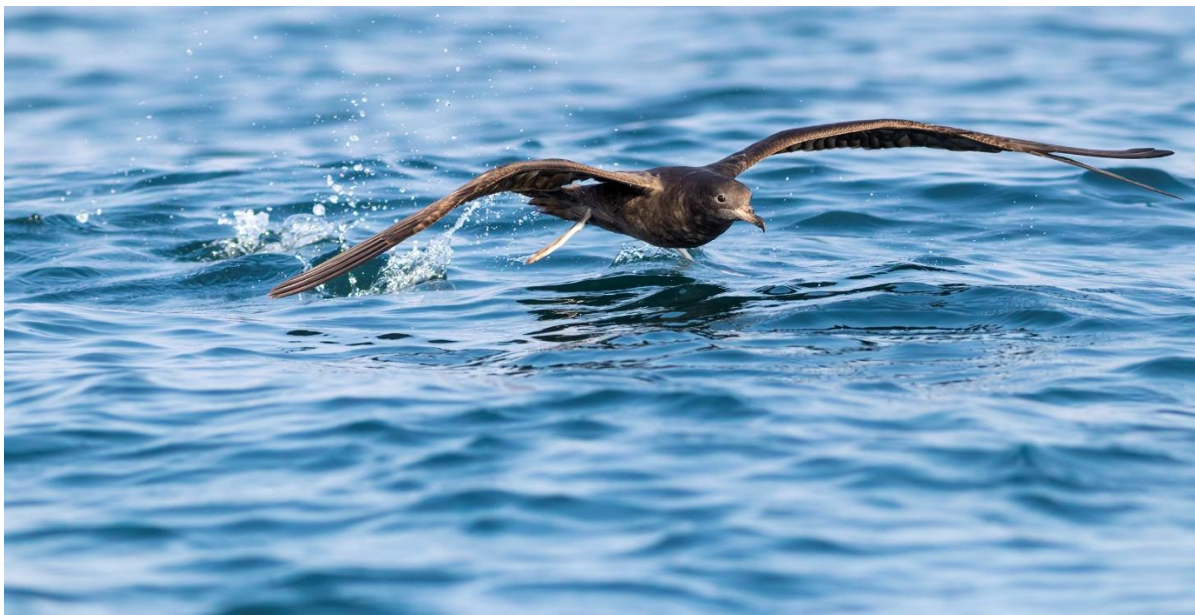
Day 4: Salalah - Mirbat Pelagic – Taqah - Al Mughsayl

This morning was dedicated to our first pelagic trip from Mirbat. Our boatman, Hatem, was waiting for us at Mirbat harbour, and we set off on a four-hour boat trip early in the morning. These trips are always among the highlights of birding in Oman and often produce rarities. The first thing that strikes you when leaving the harbour is the huge number of Sooty Gulls here, and a large group of them followed our boat throughout the trip. While still in the harbour, we saw Striated Heron, Night Heron and Western Reef Egret, as well as a Hobby flying offshore. Then the seabird bonanza began, with sightings of Persian Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Jouanin's Petrel, Parasitic Skua, Brown Noddy, Bridled Tern, Common Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Masked Booby and Red-necked Phalarope. Back at the harbour, we spent some time checking the gulls on the beach. Besides the Sooty Gulls, we also found Caspian, Heuglin's, Steppe and Slender-billed Gulls, as well as several Abdim's Storks resting on the rocks. Several species of sea turtle were also seen on this trip. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282810426>

In the afternoon, we headed towards Al Mughsayl. First, we stopped to observe the birds resting on the beach, including hundreds of Slender-billed, Sooty and Heuglin's Gulls, as well as Common, Sandwich, Lesser Crested and Greater Crested Terns. We also witnessed a feeding frenzy in the gulf, which produced Jouanin's Petrel, Persian Shearwater and Brown Noddy. We then checked the lagoon, where we saw Terek Sandpiper, Jack Snipe (which we only caught a brief glimpse of), Little Stint, Whiskered Tern, Greater Flamingo, Eurasian Spoonbill, Medium Egret, Osprey, etc. As it was getting dark, we headed deep into the wadi to look for our main target – the Desert Owl. Shortly after arriving at the spot, we heard the male calling. After some effort, we saw the bird flying over the wadi to a nearby cliff. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283329991>



Masked Booby and Jouanin's Petrel by Simeon Gigov



Flesh-footed Shearwater by Marina Georgieva

Day 5: Salalah - Hilton Lagoon - Tawi Atayr - Jabal Samhan - Rawri Lagoon

After an early breakfast, we decided to check the lagoon near the Hilton Hotel for the Black Heron that had been reported by other birders over the last couple of days. Although we missed it, we still had a really good birding experience, seeing plenty of species at this spot, including Garganey, Sociable Lapwing, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Western Reef Egret, Indian Pond Heron, Medium Egret, Osprey, Greater Spotted Eagle, Red-tailed Shrike, Isabelline Shrike, Graceful Prinia, Citrine Wagtail and Red-throated Pipit. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283098815>

Following our unsuccessful twitch, we went to search for one of the Arabian endemic species, the Yemeni Serin, at the Tawi Atair Sinkhole. A few kilometres before reaching the site, we spotted a Black-winged Kite perched on a telegraph pole. As soon as we arrived at the sinkhole car park, we saw a group of songbirds feeding under a fig tree. Among them, we spotted two Yemeni Serins. After a while, one of the birds perched on a metal post next to the souvenir shop and started singing, giving us an excellent view. Other birds seen here included Imperial Eagle, Fan-tailed Raven, Blackstart, Tree Pipit and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. After visiting and taking pictures of the sinkhole, we enjoyed some coconut drinks and checked a water spring for puddling butterflies. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282945301>

From there, we headed towards Jabal Samhan. However, we soon stopped to tick off our first Arabian Wheatear of the trip. While we were enjoying watching and photographing it, we noticed a large raptor flying over us. It turned out to be a Lappet-faced Vulture. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S282947467>

Jabal Samhan is one of those places that takes your breath away. The dramatic landscape reveals itself before your eyes, making you forget everything else and allowing your mind to admire nature's beautiful creations. It usually takes a newcomer to this place 5–10 minutes to return to watching birds, usually prompted by someone shouting, 'Verreaux's Eagle!'. It took us a little longer to spot one perched on the seemingly endless cliff face. After a short walk to the mast, we found ourselves in a good position to observe the majestic bird. Meanwhile, quite a few other birds of prey flew overhead, including Lappet-faced and Griffon Vultures, as well as Steppe and Imperial Eagles. There were also lots of butterflies, hill-topping on the mountain ridge. The Verreaux's Eagle was a bit far away, and even though we saw it fly, we still needed

a better view, so we changed location and went to the nearby Hojari Hotel. En route, we enjoyed viewing a few Arabian, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears, as well as a pair of Tristram's Starlings in the car park. A dozen Fan-tailed Ravens were flying around, enjoying the thermals when, suddenly, a pair of raptors flew past, causing chaos amongst the corvids. We didn't even need to raise our bins to recognise the Verreaux's Eagles this time. The pair put on quite a show and, after taking several hundred pictures, we finally decided to head back to the hotel for a well-deserved lunch.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S284088573>



Verreaux's Eagle and the view from Jabal Samhan by Cliff Morrison



Cream-banded Charaxes by Simeon Gigov

On the way back we stopped near Tawi Atair to check for Singing Bush Larks and even though we couldn't find any, we managed to see other good species – Long-legged Buzzard, Greater Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Arabian Great Grey Shrike, etc.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S282971828>

Our final stop of the day was Rawri Lagoon, another picturesque site where we had the chance to take more landscape photos while watching birds. A couple of Ospreys were fishing in the lagoon while plenty of waders, including Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Kentish Plover, Whimbrel, Curlew, Common Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Greenshank, Redshank, Temminck's Stint and Little Stint, were preparing to roost there. As the last light of the day was quickly fading away, we managed to see two Terek Sandpipers at very close quarters — a huge delight for Roger, who had dreamed of seeing this bird for over 50 years.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283095018>



Terek Sandpiper and Greater Spotted Eagle by Cliff Morrison

Day 6: Salalah - Al Mughsayl - Raysut Settling Pools - Sawli Lagoon - Ain Tabrok

We had another early start today, which took us back to Al Mughsayl. We didn't have enough time last time to enjoy the place and see all the birding sites, so we came back and it was worth it. First, we went to the lagoon, which is unfortunately badly affected

by the construction of the highway, which goes right through the middle of it and splits it into two smaller lagoons. Despite the noise and dirt from the construction work, the lagoon still attracts a lot of birds, and we immediately spotted a large group of waders, including Black-winged Stilt, Greater Sand Plover, Kentish Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Ruff and Temminck's Stint. The regular osprey perched on a wire above the lagoon was overseeing all the morning bustle, while a group of ducks and herons were feeding actively on the other side – Garganey, Pintail, Shoveler, Teal, Great, Medium, Little and Western Reef Egret, Night Heron, Grey Heron, Spoonbill and Glossy Ibis. Then, suddenly, Pam announced, 'I see the Black Heron! It's striking its umbrella pose!' Sure enough, a small black heron was fishing in its enigmatic 'daytime, nighttime' pattern that we have all seen so many times on YouTube. In high spirits, we went to check out the small ponds inside the wadi. While watching more waders and herons, we suddenly flushed a few grouse, which landed on the hillside. After searching with the scope for a little while, we found a much larger family group of Arabian Partridges with chicks only a few weeks old.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/428724?view=checklists>

Then we went to check out the sea at Marneef Cave and Blow Holes. However, there wasn't much bird activity here, so after enjoying the panorama, taking some pictures and getting some coffee to go, we went to Al Mughsayl beach. Upon arrival, we immediately spotted a large group of cormorants fishing in the sea nearby, and a quick check with the scope confirmed our hopes: around 500 Socotra Cormorants were fishing a couple of hundred metres from the shore in the company of a few performing Spinner Dolphins. After securing another target species for our list, we spent some time observing the huge flocks of gulls and terns resting on the beach, including Slender-billed, Sooty, Steppe and Heuglin's Gulls, as well as Caspian, Common, White-cheeked, Sandwich, Lesser Crested and Great Crested Terns. We also saw a few waders, including Sanderling, Greenshank, Redshank and Common Sandpiper. We also saw a few Jouanin's petrels offshore. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283090280>



The view from Marneef Cave and Socotra Cormorants with Spinner Dolphins by Marina Georgieva

Before retreating to the hotel for lunch and a break, we had time to visit the Raysut Settling Pools. Although it is the least attractive birding site in Dhofar, it is still rich in birdlife – Red-wattled Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Temminck’s Stint, White-winged Tern, Abdim’s Stork, Cattle Egret, Steppe Eagle, etc. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283089789>

In the afternoon we went birding at Sawli Lagoon. First, we explored the steppes to the north of the lagoon, where we saw Tawny Pipit, Isabelline Shrike, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears. The lagoon itself produced only birds we had already seen quite a few times – Black-winged Stilt, Caspian Tern, White-winged Tern, Squacco Heron, Indian Pond Heron, etc. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283180434>

As not much was going on here, we decided to check a small pond next to the roundabout and it payed off well – Laughing and Namaqua Doves were coming to drink water at the pool, while several small flocks of Curlews flew over towards the lagoon. Carefully checking the pond, we managed spot two Little Crakes coming out in full view, running over the water vegetation between the different patches of reed. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283155442>

It soon became too dark to see anything here, so we moved on to our final location of the day: Ain Tabrok. As soon as we arrived, we heard our target bird, the Arabian Scops Owl, calling. Several males were calling from different directions, and we soon located a group of trees where one was actively calling. It didn't take us long to find the bird, and before long, we were all watching and photographing it. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283160523>



Namaqua Dove and Arabian Scops Owl by Cliff Morrison

Day 7: Salalah - Ain Hamran - Wadi Kheesh - Ma'murah Steppes - Ain Razat - East Lagoon

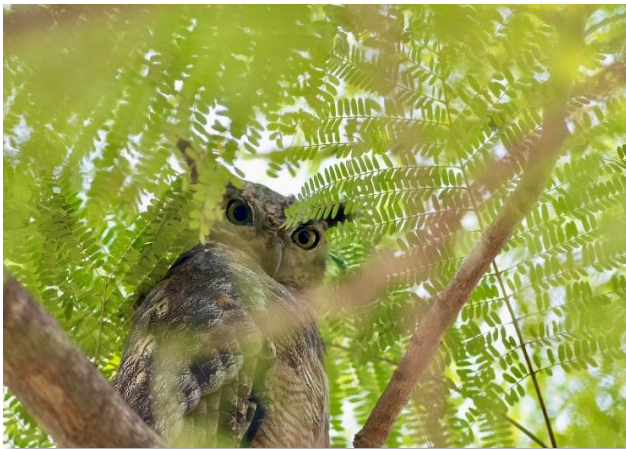
We started the day at Ain Hamran, a natural spring surrounded by a garden and an artificial lake. Situated in the foothills of a mountain, it attracts a variety of birds all year round. Our morning walk here yielded many resident and migratory species, including Namaqua Dove, Forbes-Watson's Swift, Wood Sandpiper, Grey-headed Kingfisher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Red-tailed Shrike, Isabelline Shrike, Graceful Prinia, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Pale Crag Martin, White-spectacled Bulbul, Abyssinian White-eye, Tristram's Starling, Common Redstart, Blackstart, Palestine Sunbird, Arabian Sunbird, Ruppell's Weaver, African Silverbill, Grey Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting and so on. The area also produced quite a few species of butterfly and dragonfly. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283245911>

Next we went to check out Wadi Kheesh, which is another water spring modified into a water sink for camels and cows. Besides the species we saw at Ain Hamran, here we observed Arabian Green Bee-eater, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Long-billed and Tawny Pipit. Soon the temperatures rose up and the raptors started flying around – Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Short-toed, Great Spotted, Imperial, Steppe and Bonelli's Eagles. Lots of butterflies were puddling in the mud. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283247079>

From there, we drove off-road through the Ma'murah steppes. Although bird activity was slowing down, we still managed to see Arabian Great Grey Shirke, Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, Northern Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear and Desert Wheatear. As we were getting close to the main road back to the hotel, we spotted a group of Cream-coloured Coursers. While trying to get a better look at them, we also flushed a pair of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. Then, we spotted a Bimaculated Lark trying to blend into a small bush. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283247659>

During lunch, we received valuable information about where to look for the Arabian Eagle Owl in Ain Razat, as the bird had been seen there that morning. Our first location in the afternoon was therefore the gardens of Ain Razat. As they only open on Fridays and Saturdays, and are a popular picnic spot for locals, we decided to visit them first after our break, to avoid the crowds. Even though we arrived early, there were still lots of people. However, as the bird had chosen the tree farthest from the entrance to the gardens, we were able to watch it without much disturbance. After that, we went down the valley a little way to a breeding site for Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. They were perched on the wires near the road, along with a European Bee-eater.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283296484>



Arabian Eagle Owl by Marina Georgieva



Arabian Sunbird by Vladimir Petrov



Crowned Sandgrouse by Cliff Morrison



Bimaculated lark by Simeon Gigov

Then we went back to the steppes we had visited that morning in the hope of getting a better view of the sandgrouse. Soon, we saw our first ones flying over. We approached them and managed to get a good view of several Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. Just before we reached the road, we spotted a pair of Crowned Sandgrouse with their chicks. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283297515>

We finished the day at the East Lagoon, a popular spot for locals to enjoy the evening, as the beach was packed with people, dogs, horses, bikes and cars. This didn't stop the birds coming to roost in the lagoon, however, with impressive numbers of Glossy Ibises and Cattle Egrets present. As dusk approached, we spotted a small falcon perched in a nearby tree that warranted a closer look. We arrived just in time, as the light was disappearing quickly, and identified it as a female Amur Falcon – the perfect way to end this very successful birding day. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283299252>

Day 8: Salalah - Mirbat Pelagic - Alila – Hinu Bay - Ras Janjari - Sawli Lagoon - Wadi Ashawq

Today was the day of our second pelagic trip from Mirbat, and it certainly didn't disappoint. The group saw and photographed even more seabirds, including Pomarine Skua, Brown Noddy, Bridled Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Swinhoe's Storm Petrel, Jouanin's Petrel, Persian Shearwater, Masked Booby, Striated Heron and many more.. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283411991>



Persian Shearwater by Cliff Morrison



Brown Noddy by Marina Georgieva



Green Sea Turtle and traditional fishing boats by Vladimir Petrov

After another delicious lunch in the local fish restaurant, we headed east to Ras Janjari, where we saw our first Pacific Golden Plover, as well as Oystercatcher, Tibetan Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Whimbrel, Marsh Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Brown Noddy, Persian Shearwater, Masked Booby and Western Marsh Harrier.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283414340>

On the way back we stopped to check the lagoon next to Alilia Hinu Bay Resort – Garganey, Pintail, Shoveler, Greater Flamingo, Spoonbill, Indian Pond Heron, etc.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283417381>

Before reaching the hotel, we stopped again at the pond near the roundabout for Sawli Lagoon, which didn't disappoint us yet again and we saw Spotted Crake, Pin-

tailed Snipe, Green Sandpiper, Citrine Wagtail and Pale Rockfinch.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283434070>

After a short rest back at the hotel, we left again for Al Mughsayl in the hope of getting better views of the Desert Owl. En route, we spotted Black Stork, Medium Egret and other waterbirds at the small ponds in the wadi, as well as Bonelli's and Steppe Eagles at the owl site. This time, we had to wait until 8 pm for the owls to start calling. Just as we were eating our packed dinner, we heard the owl calling. After a while, we managed to locate it on a cliff just next to the road. This was the best view of the owl I had had so far; it was probably only about 50 metres away, and it stayed long enough to give everyone a good view. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283759054>

Day 9: Salalah - Wadi Darbat - Mirbat Public Park - Taqah Lagoon - Dahriz Lagoon

We spent the whole morning at Wadi Darbat, probably one of the most famous tourist areas in Dhofar during the monsoon season. Unfortunately, the waterfalls had dried out by now, but the area was still very impressive, with an unusually long river for Omani standards, which attracted plenty of wildlife. On arrival, we were greeted by Rollers, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, and Indian Pond Herons. Soon, Vladimir spotted a Bruce's Green Pigeon feeding in a fig tree. We saw quite a few African Paradise Flycatchers here and at other locations, but none of the males were in their impressive long-tailed breeding plumage. Whiskered and White-winged Terns patrolled the river, and a Purple Heron was flushed from the riverbank. The raptors were starting to catch the thermals, and soon we saw another of our target species for Oman: the Oriental Honey Buzzard. The other raptors here were Short-toed, Steppe, Greater Spotted, Imperial and Bonelli's Eagles, as well as Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Marsh Harrier, Steppe and Common Buzzards, Hobby and Kestrel. We also saw a few White Storks and Fan-tailed Ravens, and as we approached the edge of the river, we spotted a couple of Bluethroats and a very obliging Siberian Stonechat. At the very end of our walk this morning, we added a Gadwall to our trip list. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283664530>



Grey-headed Kingfisher by Cliff Morrison and the group members in Wadi Darbat

While enjoying some refreshing cold drinks at the café at the end of the road, we received a message for Bay-backed Shrike at Mirbat Public Park. Not thinking much of it, we immediately left to go and see it. This time, the twitch was successful – Cliff spotted the bird right away, and we managed to get some good views of it. While looking for this vagrant, I also saw a Forest Wagtail, but unfortunately the bird flew off soon afterwards and there was no time for anyone else to see it. It was observed again by other birders who came to see the Bay-backed Shrike in the next few days. Other interesting birds seen here included the Common Cuckoo, Abdim's Stork, Glossy Ibis, Indian Pond Heron, Squacco Heron, Hoopoe, Roller, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Isabelline Shrike, Lesser Whitethroat and Red-throated Pipit.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283760378>

Next, we visited Taqah Lagoon, where we searched for the Yellow Bittern and the Pheasant-tailed Jacana, but without success. However, we did manage to see Tufted Duck, Red-knobbed Coot, Pacific Golden Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling and our only Great Cormorants for the entire trip.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283814057>

Today, we had time for one more twitching experience, which took place at Dahriz Lagoon. A Fulvous Whistling Duck had been seen there yesterday. En route, we passed a few smaller lagoons teeming with thousands of roosting Ruff, which was an impressive sight. At first, Dahriz Lagoon seemed empty, with only a few Godwits, Black-winged Stilts and Moorhens around. Then, a Great Spotted Eagle flew over the lagoon and flushed dozens of ducks from the far side of the lagoon, amongst them our target species. They all landed back in the same place, but we already knew where to

look. We found a good vantage point from which to spot the Fulvous Whistling Duck again and observe it through the scopes. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283815240>

Day 10: Salalah - Wadi Darbat - Ayn Hamran - West Lagoon - Raysut Lagoon

On the last day of our trip, we dedicated our time to the species that we had not seen on the previous days. First, we looked for the endemic Arabian Grosbeak. We went to a different location in Wadi Darbat, where lots of songbirds came to drink from the water dripping off the cliffs. There were already many other birders here, as this seemed to be the only reliable place for the species at this time of year. They quickly briefed us about the birds visiting the site, confirming that the grosbeak had already been seen twice that day. Sure enough, a couple of Arabian Grosbeaks soon flew into the cliff face and started drinking water from the stalactites formed by the dripping water. Although the birds weren't close, we managed to get some really good views through the scope and left the site feeling satisfied.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283835470>

Then we went again to Ain Hamran and soon after we stopped at the parking lot we saw our first target, the Arabian Warbler. In the same bush we also saw an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and shortly after that a Black-crowned Tchagra.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283835605>



Black-crowned Tchagra by Vladimir Petrov



Caspian Plover by Vladimir Petrov

The heat of the day we spent at our favorite Lebanese restaurant in Salalah and shopping for souvenirs in the town. Then, another rare bird alert took us back to the grounds of the hotel where we had stayed for most of our trip, in the hope of seeing a Caspian Plover. On the way to the nearby lagoon, we saw three Spotted Thick-knees in their favourite group of bushes. As soon as we arrived at the site, we saw a group of plovers flying away, having been scared by a man jogging nearby. Undeterred, we headed to where the birds had flown to look for the rare plover. On the way, we managed to see a Grey-headed Kingfisher and a Clamorous Reed Warbler. After spending some time looking for it, we finally located the Caspian Plover, which was sleeping near a dusty road among a large group of Kentish Plovers. This bird really stood out amongst the small Kentish plovers; it was much bigger and had a thick greyish band on its chest. After spending enough time enjoying our last 'lifer' for the trip, we decided to visit Raysut Lagoon again and finish the birding trip there.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283896830>

The location did not disappoint, producing one final new species for the trip: a Sand Martin. However, there were huge numbers of various waders feeding along the coast, including Tibetan and Greater Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and others. On the way, we saw and photographed a Greater Spotted Eagle and an Osprey roosting in the nearby bushes, which made for a nice end to this very successful trip.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S283898338>

The group finished the trip having seen 201 bird species. See the full bird list in the birding trip report below, (which includes my research day in the desert on 31 October): <https://ebird.org/tripreport/428724>

In addition to birds, the group enjoyed encounters with reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies and mammals, which further enriched their overall natural history experience. Please find below a few more pictures and the list of wildlife encountered during the tour.



Plain Tiger by Marina Georgieva



African Lime butterfly by Vladimir Petrov



Violet Dropwing by Simeon Gigov



Diadem Butterfly and Small Salmo Arab by Simeon Gigov



Guweira Semaphore Gecko by Vladimir Petrov



Carter's Rock Gecko and Oriental Garden Lizard by Vladimir Petrov

List of the wildlife seen during the trip:

Amphibians and Reptiles	Butterflies and Dragonflies	Mammals
Northern House Gecko (<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>)	African Lime Butterfly	Spinner Dolphin
Heyden's Gecko (<i>Hemidactylus robustus</i>)	African Caper White	
Carter's Rock Gecko (<i>Pristurus carteri</i>)	Small Salmon Arab	Cape Hare / Desert Hare
Dwarf Half-toed Gecko (<i>Hemidactylus minutus</i>)	African Emigrant	
Guweira Semaphore Gecko (<i>Pristurus guweirensis</i>)	Grass Yellow	Red Fox
Oriental Garden lizard (<i>Calotes versicolor</i>)	Plain Tiger	
Hadramawt Sand Lizard (<i>Mesalina adramitana</i>)	Diadem	
Arabian Chameleon (<i>Chameleon arabicus</i>)	White Pearl Emperor	
Hawksbill sea turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	Cream-banded Charaxes	
Green sea turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	Blue Pansy	
Olive Ridley sea turtle (<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>)	Yellow Pansy	
	Joker	
	Fig Blue	
	Tiny Grass Blue	
	African Cupid	
	Zebra Blue	
	Small Branded Swift	
	Ringed Cascader	
	Phantom Flutterer	
	Bladetail	

<p>Loggerhead sea turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>)</p> <p>Dhofar Toad (<i>Firouzophrynus dhufarensis</i>)</p>	<p>Eastern Blacktail</p> <p>Broad Scarlet</p> <p>Black Percher</p> <p>Slender Skimmer</p> <p>Epaulet Skimmer</p> <p>Violet Dropwing</p>	
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Special thanks go to tour participant Cliff Morrison, who contributed his photos to this report.

