

Short report from a trip to Israel 22.3. - 4.4.1992

Annika Forsten, Tapani Numminen and Heikki Assinen

We went with Net-tours and paid about 4200 FIM (\$700) for 13 days. Unfortunately, Net went bankrupt after the first week and wanted to ship us home on the next flight. Luckily for us El Al decided to honour our old ticket so we could stay, but had to pay the hotel ourselves which cost \$80x6/3. We were refunded for the hotel costs from the NET insurance fund in November after almost having lost hope (the NET bankruptcy trial was in July).

The weather was warm and sunny all days except one, when it was cloudy. The wind was mostly from the north and was quite hard making the mornings cold. We rented a D-car from Avis and paid 3783 FIM (\$630) for it. Breakfast was included with the hotelpackage so we birded wadis, the desert, fields or salt pans about 1-2 hours in the early morning, had breakfast and then drove up to the mountains to watch raptors. We counted everything except Black Kites and Buzzards whose numbers we estimated. During the first week we mostly watched from Mount Yoash (High Mountain), during the second from km 4 and km 9 as the raptors seemed to fly lower then. The eagles mostly flew lower than the Buzzards though and in the end we felt km 4 was the best place in order to get the best coverage and identification percentage. Photography was not so good though. When the raptormigration either stopped or went too high we returned to the valley and continued birding the wadis etc. We went to Yotvata (45km N of Eilat) three times and once we drove to the Dead Sea.

There were lots of visiting birders from Sweden, Britain, Holland, Germany and Finland. There were also some guided groups in buses, don't know from where. The ringing/banding station was operational but they did not catch much, over 100 birds was a good day.

We had altogether 185 species, one of which was a lifer for me. We didn't see any really rare birds, nor did we see Verraux's Eagle which we had hoped for. A Pied Wheatear and an Oriental Skylark were both present several days and caused a lot of discussion on identification. The wheatear was caught and measured and the measurements made the id quite clear, since several of them did not fit Cyprus Wheatear. Our best day total was 102.

I used up quite a lot of film, but unfortunately the raptors seldom came close enough. Heikki had a camcorder/videocamera and took a few hours of film, but since the field of view is very small he found it rather difficult to film flying raptors.

Some of the more interesting species:

- Cory's Shearwater, *C. diomedea*
1 Eilat
- Little Bittern, *I. minutus*
1 Eilat
- Green Heron, *B. striatus*
1 Eilat

- Purple Heron, *A. purpurea*
3 Eilat
- Black Stork, *C. nigra*
329 migrating Eilat
- White Stork, *C. ciconia*
6 migrating Eilat, 2 Yotvata
- Honey Buzzard, *P. apivorus*
2 migrating Eilat
- Black Kite, *M. migrans*
923 estimated
- Egyptian Vulture, *N. percnopterus*
50 migrating Eilat, 3 Be'er Sheva
- Griffon Vulture, *G. fulvus*
15 Be'er Sheva region
- Lappet-faced Vulture, *T. tracheliotus*
2 Be'er Sheva region
- Short-toed Eagle, *C. gallicus*
24 migrating Eilat
- Marsh Harrier, *C. aeruginosus*
39 migrating Eilat
- Hen Harrier, *C. cyanus*
2 migrating Eilat
- Pallid Harrier, *C. macrourus* + *sp.*
14+9 Eilat
- Montagu's Harrier, *C. pygargus*
1 Eilat
- Sparrowhawk, *A. nisus*
76 migrating Eilat
- Common Buzzard, *B. buteo*
estimated 43300, which is not enough
- Long-legged Buzzard, *B. rufinus*
5 migrating Eilat, 2 elsewhere
- Lesser Spotted Eagle, *A. pomarina*
42 migrating Eilat

- Spotted Eagle, *A. clanga*
1 migrating Eilat
- Steppe Eagle, *A. nipalensis* + *sp.*
692 + 95 migrating Eilat
- Imperial Eagle, *A. heliaca*
6 migrating Eilat
- Booted Eagle, *H. pennatus*
37 migrating Eilat
- Osprey, *P. haliaetus*
30 migrating Eilat
- Lesser Kestrel, *F. naumanni*
1 migrating Eilat
- Common Kestrel, *F. tinnunculus* + *sp.*
55
- Barbary Falcon, *F. pelegrioides* + *sp.*
2+8 Eilat
- Sand Partridge, *A. heyi*
80, clearly more common than on previous trips.
- Baillon's Crane, *P. pusilla*
1 Eilat
- Collared Pratincole, *G. pratincola*
21 Eilat
- Greater Sand Plover, *C. leschenaultii*
10-16 Eilat
- Caspian Plover, *C. asiaticus*
2 Eilat
- Marsh Sandpiper, *T. stagnatilis*
10 Eilat
- Terek Sandpiper, *X. cinereus*
2 Eilat
- Great Black-headed Gull, *L. ichtyaetus*
10 Eilat
- Mediterranean Gull, *L. melanocephalus*
1 first-winter Eilat

- Little Tern, *S. albifrons*
1 Eilat
- Namaqua Dove, *O. capensis*
Male and Female Eilat
- Hume's Tawny Owl, *S. butleri*
1 En Gedi
- Alpine Swift, *A. melba*
1 Eilat
- White-breasted Kingfisher, *H. smyrnensis*
1 Eilat
- Pied Kingfisher, *C. rudis*
1 Eilat
- Bar-tailed Desert Lark, *A. cincturus*
8 at km 32
- Hoopoe Lark, *A. alaudipes*
11 at km 32
- Oriental Skylark, *A. gulgula*
1 Eilat
- Temmink's Horned Lark, *E. bilopha*
3 at km 32
- Citrine Wagtail, *M. citreola*
4 males, 1 female
- Rufous Bush Robin, *C. galactotes*
1 Yotvata, 1 at km 19
- Pied Wheatear, *O. pleschanka*
1 first-winter male Eilat, was trapped
- Cyprus Pied Wheater, *O. cypriaca*
1 male km 18 23.3
- Black-eared Wheatear, *O. hispanica*
20-30
- Desert Wheatear, *O. deserti*
2 at km 32
- Mourning Wheatear, *O. lugens*
6 Shizzafon

- Hooded Wheatear, *O. monacha*
3 males
- Rock Thrush, *M. saxatilis*
1 male at km 17
- Blue Rock Thrush, *M. solitarius*
3
- Scrub Warbler, *S. inquit*
7 Eilat
- Subalpine Warbler, *S. cantillans*
1 male Eilat
- Rueppell's Warbler, *S. rueppelli*
15-20
- Desert Warbler, *S. nana*
1 at km 32
- Arabian Warbler, *S. leucomelaena*
3 at Yotvata
- Orphean Warbler, *S. hortensis*
2 Eilat
- Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler, *P. humei*
1 Eilat (had overwintered)
- Bonelli's Warbler, *P. bonelli*
11
- Woodchat Shrike, *L. senator*
26
- Masked Shrike, *L. nubicus*
3
- Desert Finch, *R. obsoleta*
2 Eilat
- Trumpeter Finch, *B. githagineus*
4 Eilat
- House Bunting, *E. striolata*
1 Eilat