

A Birding Trip To Kuwait 24th – 31st January 2007

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Kuwait is a very interesting birding country, especially for birdwatchers who are interested in Western Palearctic (WP) species. Many rare WP-species were found in Kuwait in December 2006 and in January 2007.

These wintering records inspired five Finnish WP-birders to arrange a common birding trip to Kuwait. Keijo and Ilkka visited Kuwait already in April 2006 and their report can be found at http://www.hawar-islands.com/kuwait_birding/Finns_trip_report.htm. For the other members this was their first visit to Kuwait. We managed to have the same flight, but different hotels. We decided to rent two cars to make more efforts for finding the target species of birds.

Our trip succeeded perfectly, both technically and regarding to the amount of rare birds seen. The total number of observed species was 113 and the first-visitors got to 13 new WP-species. The resident birders gave again excellent support, and the general hospitality can nowhere be better than in Kuwait.



Kuwait is a good place for WP-birders. A Common Babbler in Abdaly Farms. Photo: KW.



Kuwait is the country of great hospitality. Misters Khalid Al-N., Brian F., Pekka F. and members of the Finnish group. Photo: IS.

There is a lot of traffic and some people drive fast and dangerously in Kuwait. However, the motor ways are common and all roads in good condition. There were no maps covering the whole country at the airport, but luckily we had the Kuwait map by GEO-projects. The petrol is very cheap (about 20 cents per litre) and car rental is clearly cheaper than in many other countries.

This trip report includes daily itinerary and a review of most important records. All daily records are in an [appendix](#). The descriptions of birding areas are already in the earlier trip report.

DAILY ITINERARY

24.1.2007 Wednesday

Our KLM flight from Helsinki via Amsterdam arrived in Kuwait around 23.30 hours p.m. Before getting our luggage we fixed our visas easily, without applying beforehand. In the airport, we rented a Mitsubishi Nativa, reserved by the local Al-Mulla rental company (like last year). Late at night we got our hotel Quality Suites in Sabriya reserved by internet some days earlier. We had three rooms with kitchen, price 77 €/ night. The other group (Jukka and Markku) took a taxi to their hotel, Hussa House in Kuwait City. This group rented a Mitsubishi Nativa later.

25.1.2007 Thursday, 285 km

After breakfast in the hotel (about 4,50 €) we met in Sulaibikhat Nature Reserve (SNR) the other Finnish group and the resident birders, Finnish Pekka Fågel, British Brian Foster and also British Gary Brown. Pekka and Brian had kindly volunteered to show us some of our target species during their days off (Thursday and Friday). Quickly after finding the first target bird some people left for Kabd Desert and some for Jahra Farms. At noon time we all met again at Jahra East Outfall. In the afternoon we met Khalid Al-Nasrallah and three other local birders in great Sabah Al-Ahmed Nature Reserve (SAANR). Khalid kindly served us a tasteful lunch and after that guided us in NR to a wadi to see successfully rare wheatears he had found in the morning. Just before sunset we reached Doha Spit where we watched at 15000 waders, gulls, herons and so on during a high tide. The weather of the day and some coming days was good and very clear; the temperature rose at the afternoon over 20 degrees Celsius, but in the morning it was less than ten degrees.



Birders in Tulha (SAANR): Hannu, Khalid, Jukka, Pekka, Markku, Keijo and Ilkka. Photo: BF.



The wadi of Red-tailed Wheatear in SAANR. Photo: IS.



Looking at waders in Doha Spit during high tide. Photo: MS.



Over 10000 waders in the ear in Doha Spit before sunset. Photo: IS.

26.1.2007 Friday, 95 km

After breakfast the Finnish groups, Pekka, Brian and South-African Mike Pope met at Green Island to find local bulbuls. After that we stopped at Kuwait Towers Park, in Sulaibikhat Bay and in Doha East. Today, the main purpose was to twitch on Failaka Island Eversmann's Redstart found by George Gregory on Thursday. We got catamaran tickets only in the afternoon but missed the bird. We drove around on the island and saw other species and spots of the Iraq war. We returned back to Kuwait City on slow ferry (1.5 hours) late in darkness.



The birders are going to Green Island to meet bulbuls. Photo: MS.



An Eversmann's Redstart left bushes of Failaka, but the group found a Black-throated Thrush. Photo: MS.

27.1.2007 Saturday, 386 km

We left our hotel at six a.m. and drove to the north close to the Iraq border. We met other Finnish birders in Ar Rawdatain and had our breakfast in a local café. The guide of the day was a well-known British birder George Gregory who has lived in Kuwait for many years. He showed us birding places in Ar Rawdatain and some very good farms in large Abdaly Farms area. Before noon we started to Subiah road in the east and reached the interesting Sabriya Farms southeast to Subiah road. Again after a successful round, we continued to next sites, the southern part of SAANR and Jahra Farms. Then one group visited Qaisat for the last moments of daylight and the other group rented their own car.



George Gregory was our guide in Abdaly Farms. Photo: IS.



Just seeking for common babbler in their living area in Abdaly Farms. Photo: MS.

28.1.2007 Sunday, 375 km

Both groups left their hotel after seven a.m. and met at Jahra Farms. Before noon, we visited for a couple of hours the southern part of SAANR again (a guard let us in after calling Khalid). The other group headed to South to round with George and Brian Sabah al Salem,

Fahaheel, Pipeline Beach and so on. We drove via Mutla'a Ranch and Ar Rawdatain back to Abdaly Farms. There we checked some farms, especially last year breeding sites of Red-wattled Lapwings until sunset, while the other group checked some parks in Kuwait City for Grey Hypocolius roosting.



Jahra Farms consist of farms, palm trees...



...and a well, the breeding site of bank mynahs. Photos: IS.

29.1.2007 Monday, 341 km

This was a windy day and the weather was a little sandy. We drove via Sabah al Salem to Fahaheel to meet Jukka and Markku. After checking the harbour and park, we looked many farms in Wafrah, an area in the middle of deserts. Then we returned to coast areas and looked trough surroundings of Khiran and Al-Jazeera Resorts. In addition, some of us watched sea birds near Al-Jazeera and Pipeline Beach as well and the others areas around Power Plant Reeds. Near Pipeline Beach, a group of four policemen stopped us and asked whether we took photos in the oil industry area. After this short episode we started to move back to Kuwait City just at the beginning of the darkness.



Camels are common in all desert areas. Photo: IS.



A moment of sea watching near Al-Jazeera. Photo: MS.

30.1.2007 Tuesday, 185 km

The weather was cloudy, not so windy. The visibility was only 200m because of sand in the air. It was raining for one to two hours. In the morning both groups left their hotels and visited last time Green Island and Kuwait Towers. From the City Parks we moved to Sulaibikhat Bay. Near Women's Hospital we saw a little mangrove area, too. After our last visit to Jahra Farms we drove to Mutla'a Ranch where we checked the palm forest, again. There we gathered together and finished our bird trip with a good record (the only Grey Hypocolius) just before sunset. In the evening we had a nice dinner in Jahra shopping centre and after that we drove to the airport to wait for return flight after midnight.



The bad visibility on Sulaibikhat Bay. Birds look like flamingos! Photo: MS.



Mutla'a Ranch. Photo: IS.

31.1.2007 Wednesday

Our flight was in Amsterdam after six a.m. We left Netherlands at 10 hours a.m. and landed in Helsinki at 13.20 p.m. We all were so pleased with our successful trip.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RECORDS

We found some new rarities and wintering bird species compared to the trip last April. The new rarities were shikra, White-tailed Lapwing, Oriental Skylark, Red-tailed Wheatear, Black-throated Thrush, Long-tailed Shrike and Common Babbler. The new wintering species were Common Shelduck, Long-legged Buzzard, Saker, Pied Avocet, Pallas's Gull, Eurasian Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Water Pipit, Richard's Pipit, European Robin, Black Redstart, Finsch's Wheatear, Mourning Wheatear and Common Blackbird. A very special winter record was European Bee-eaters in two places (not found in Kuwait in January and February). The new local species were Little Owl, White-throated Kingfisher and White-vented Mynah (not yet a species-status in Kuwait).

We found a total of 113 bird species and the most important records for (Finnish) WP-birders were as follows:

SHIKRA, *Accipiter badius*

27.1.2007 at Sabriya Farm 1, perhaps 2 birds and at Jahra Farms 1 bird

IMPERIAL EAGLE, *Aquila heliaca*

25.1.2007 in Doha East Outfall 1 spontaneously found bird juv

SAKER, *Falco cherrug*

26.1.2007 on Failaka Island 1 spontaneously found bird juv.

CRAB PLOVER, *Dromas ardeola*

25.1.2007 just before sunset at high tide in Doha Spit 180 birds

26.1.2007 in Sulaibikhat Bay dozens of birds (50+)

LESSER SAND PLOVER, *Charadrius mongolus* in winter plumage
 25.1.2007 just before sunset at high tide in Doha Spit hundreds of birds (500+)
 26.1.2007 on Failaka Island a group of 24 birds
 29.1.2007 in Sabah al Salem a group of 40 birds

RED-WATTLED PLOVER, *Hoplecturus indicus*
 28.1.2007 at Abdaly Farms 4 birds (a breeding site in April 2006)
 30.1.2007 at Kuwait Towers Park 1 spontaneously found bird



Wintering Lesser Sand Plovers. Photo: IS.



Red-wattled Plover on breeding site. Photo: KW.

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING, *Vanellus leucurus*
 30.1.2007 at Green Island 1 spontaneously found bird

PALLAS'S GULL, *Larus ichthyæetus*
 25.1.2007 at high tide in Doha Spit 4 birds
 26.1.2007 at Green Island on the sea 1 bird
 29.1.2007 in south near Al-Jazeera Resort 60 birds on the strand and on Pipeline Beach 10 birds

GREATER CRESTED TERN, *Sterna bergii*
 29.1.2007 in south near Al-Jazeera Resort 5 birds on the beach

BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK, *Eremopterix nigriceps*
 25.1.2007 in Kabd Desert even 50 birds in a fenced area (no access without resident birders)

DUNN'S LARK, *Eremalauda dunni*
 25.1.2007 in Kabd Desert 4 birds in a fenced area (no access without resident birders)

ORIENTAL SKYLARK, *Alauda gulgula*
 28.1.2007 in Sabah Al-Ahmed NR 2 birds in a group of european skylarks (found earlier)

WHITE-EARED BULBUL, *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
 Every day 5 – 50 birds

RED-VENTED BULBUL, *Pycnonotus cafer*
 26.1.2007 at Green Island 5 birds
 30.1.2007 at Green Island 2 birds



White-eared Bulbul is an usual bird. Photo: KW.



Some Red-vented Bulbuls can be found in Green Island. Photo: IS.

GREY HYPOCOLIUS, *Hypocolius ampelinus*
30.1.2007 at Mutla'a Ranch 1 spontaneously found but shy bird

RED-TAILED (PERSIAN) WHEATEAR, *Oenanthe chrysopygia*
25.1.2007 in Sabah Al-Salem 2 birds (found in the same morning by Khalid Al-Nasrallah)



Dunn's Lark is a desert species.



Red-tailed Wheatear is a rare winter visitor.
Photos: JI.

BLACK-THROATED THRUSH, *Turdus ruficollis*, the first bird for several years in Kuwait
26.1.2007 on Failaka Island 1 spontaneously found bird

ASIAN DESERT WARBLER, *Sylvia nana*
Almost every day 1 to 8 birds

MENETRIES'S WARBLER, *Sylvia mystacea*
27.1.2007 in Sulaibikhat Bay 1 bird

ISABELLINE SHRIKE, *Lanius isabellinus*
Every day 2 to 8 birds

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE, *Lanius schach*, the second record for Kuwait
25. and 27.1.2007 in Sulaibikhat Bay NR 1 long-staying bird

COMMON BABBLER, *Turdoides caudatus*
27.1.2007 at Abdaly Farms a group of 8 birds (found a month earlier by George Gregory)

COMMON MYNAH, *Acridotheres tristis*
Almost every day 4 – 30 birds

BANK MYNAH, *Acridotheres ginginianus*
28.1.2007 at Jahra Farms (an old well across the street) a group of 11 birds (not found in

other days)

30.1.2007 at Kuwait Towers Park a spontaneously found group of 6 birds



There are in Kuwait Common Mynahs...



...and Bank Mynahs resident birds. Photos: KW.

All daily records are in the [appendix](#). We failed to find two target species: Eversmann's Redstart (*Phoenicurus erythronotus*) and Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*). The former had left Sabriya Farm and Failaka Island before we visited. We and the resident birdwatchers tried to find the latter every day. Afterwards at home, we read that two birds were found after our visit.

PHOTOS

BF – Brian Foster

JI – Jukka Ihanus

IS – Ilkka Sahi

MS – Markku Santamaa

KW – Keijo Wahlroos

THANKS

Khalid, George and Brian served us many accesses to the closed and fenced areas, for example to the Nature Reserves. We thank you for this and the excellent guidance. As well, we thank all you and Pekka for the pleasant birding company. Thanks Pekka for good information beforehand. Thanks all residents for the great hospitality, especially Khalid for our first lunch after the long flight.



After evening flight of birds we thank...



...the good atmosphere in Kuwait. Photos: IS.

Species list |

APPENDIX: Species List

English name	Genus	Species	25.1.	26.1.	27.1.	28.1.	29.1.	30.1.	in total
Common Shelduck	Tadorna	tadorna				300		150	400
Duck sp.	Anas	sp				4	3		7
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax	carbo	150	10000+			150		10000
Squacco Heron	Ardeola	ralloides			1	1			2
Cattle Egret	Bubulcus	ibis	2		35	45	7	6	95
Western Reef Egret	Egretta	gularis		10			2	2	14
Little Egret	Egretta	garzetta			2		1		3
Grey Heron	Ardea	cinerea	30	50+	5	1	25	80	190
Greater Flamingo	Phoenicopterus	roseus	150	150			2		302
Western Marsh Harrier	Circus	aeruginosus	4						4
Pallid Harrier	Circus	macrourus			1				1
Montagu's Harrier	Circus	pygargus	2						2
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter	nisus			3	2	2	1	8
Shikra	Accipiter	badius			2	sp1			2
Long-legged Buzzard	Buteo	rufinus	2	2	2	2			8
Greater Spotted Eagle	Aquila	clanga	4						4
Imperial Eagle	Aquila	heliaca	1						1
Common Kestrel	Falco	tinnunculus	10	5	3	2	3	1	24
Saker	Falco	cherrug		1					1
Water Rail	Rallus	aquaticus	1			1			2
Common Moorhen	Gallinula	chloropus	5						5
Eurasian Oystercatcher	Haematopus	ostralegus	20		25				45
Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra	avosetta					2		2
Crab Plover	Dromas	ardeola	180	50+				40	270
Common Ringed Plover	Charadrius	hiaticula	100+	10	2		20	10	140
Kentish Plover	Charadrius	alexandrinus	100+				50	50	200
Lesser Sand Plover	Charadrius	mongolus	500+	24			40		500
Grey Plover	Pluvialis	squatarola	50				1	10	61
Red-wattled Lapwing	Hoplepturus	indicus				4		1	5
White-tailed Lapwing	Vanellus	leucurus						1	1
Sanderling	Calidris	alba	10					2	12
Little Stint	Calidris	minuta	2000+				10	20	2000
Temminck's Stint	Calidris	temminckii				10		20	30
Curlew Sandpiper	Calidris	ferruginea	5					10	15
Dunlin	Calidris	alpina	10000				20	500	10000
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Limicola	falcinellus	100+						100
Ruff	Philomachus	pugnax	50+						50
Jack Snipe	Lymnocyptes	minimus	2						2
Common Snipe	Gallinago	gallinago	5						5
Bar-tailed Godwit	Limosa	lapponica	100+						100
Whimbrel	Numenius	phaeopus				1			1
Eurasian Curlew	Numenius	arquata	100+	20	3	1	10	5	140
Common Redshank	Tringa	totanus	50+	1			50	80	180
Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa	stagnatilis					1		1
Common Greenshank	Tringa	nebularia		2			1		3
Green Sandpiper	Tringa	ochropus					2	1	3

Terek Sandpiper	Xenus	cinereus	300						300
Common Sandpiper	Actitis	hypoleucos		1			1	3	5
Ruddy Turnstone	Arenaria	interpres	50						50
Pallas's Gull	Larus	ichthyaeus	4	1		15	70		90
Black-headed Gull	Larus	ridibundus		300+			20	200+	500
Slender-billed Gull	Larus	genei	50	100+			140	100+	400
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus	fuscus		2			1		3
Caspian Gull	Larus	cachinnans	10	10			40	10	70
Gull-billed Tern	Sterna	nilotica	1		1			40	40
Caspian Tern	Sterna	caspia	20+	10			2	1	30
Greater Crested Tern	Sterna	bergii					5		5
Sandwich Tern	Sterna	sandvicensis	1				200		200
Common Tern	Sterna	hirundo						1	1
Rock Dove	Columba	livia	100+	50+	50+	50+	50+	50+	400
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia	decaocto	10+	10+	10+	20+		50+	100
Laughing Dove	Streptopelia	senegalensis	30+	100+	100+	50+	20	30	400
Namaqua Dove	Oena	capensis	2				1	4	7
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula	krameri	10		30	30		20	90
Little Owl	Athene	noctua	2						2
Pallid Swift	Apus	pallidus	sp2	2	sp2	15			20
White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon	smyrnensis	1	2	2			2	7
European Bee-eater	Merops	apiaster					3		3
Eurasian Hoopoe	Upupa	epops			1	1			2
Black-crowned Sparrow-l	Eremopterix	nigriceps	50						50
Dunn's Lark	Eremalauda	dunni	4(-6)						4(-6)
Bar-tailed Lark	Ammomanes	cinctura	10						10
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Calandrella	rufescens			sp3	50			50
Crested Lark	Galerida	cristata	50+	30+	50	100+	10	3	250
Eurasian Skylark	Alauda	arvensis	200+	10	15	25			250
Oriental Skylark	Alauda	gulgula				2			2
Barn Swallow	Hirundo	rustica	4	3		5	25	50	87
Common House Martin	Delichon	urbicum						2	2
Tawny Pipit	Anthus	campestris	2	15	5	5			27
Meadow Pipit	Anthus	pratensis	5	2					7
Water Pipit	Anthus	spinoletta	2	20	1		60		90
Richard's Pipit	Anthus	richardi						1	1
White Wagtail	Motacilla	alba	50+	30	30	100+	50+	30	30
White-eared Bulbul	Pycnonotus	leucogenys	10	20	50	20	5	20	125
Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus	cafer		5				2	7
Grey Hypocolius	Hypocolius	ampelinus						1	1
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	Cercotrichas	galactotes		3					3
European Robin	Erithacus	rubecula	1		1	1			3
Bluethroat	Luscinia	svecica	2	2	3	1			8
Black Redstart	Phoenicurus	ochruros	2	2	2	1	1	1	9
Common Stonechat	Saxicola	torquatus		10	5		1	3	19
Isabelline Wheatear	Oenanthe	isabellina	1	5	3	20	1		30
Desert Wheatear	Oenanthe	deserti		10	5	5	2	1	23
Finsch's Wheatear	Oenanthe	finschii				2			2
Mourning Wheatear	Oenanthe	lugens	4						4
Red-tailed Wheatear	Oenanthe	chrysopygia	2						2

Common Blackbird	Turdus	merula	1	1					2
Song Thrush	Turdus	philomelos	10	2	15	5		20	52
Black-throated Thrush	Turdus	ruficollis		1					1
Graceful Prinia	Prinia	gracilis	20	10	3	3		2	38
Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia	curruca	1	1					2
Asian Desert Warbler	Sylvia	nana	5	5	7	8		1	26
MŽnŽtries's Warbler	Sylvia	mystacea			1				1
Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus	collybita	10+	5	5		1	3	25
Isabelline Shrike	Lanius	isabellinus	8	8	5	6	2	2	31
Southern Grey Shrike	Lanius	meridionalis	8		3	9			20
Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius	schach	1		1				1
Common Babbler	Turdoides	caudatus			8				8
Common Starling	Sturnus	vulgaris	2		1	10		4	17
Common Mynah	Acridotheres	tristis	4	30	10		20	30	94
Bank Mynah	Acridotheres	ginginianus				11		6	17
House Sparrow	Passer	domesticus	500+	100+	100+	100+	100+	100+	1000
Spanish Sparrow	Passer	hispaniolensis	500+	50+	50+	50+		50+	700
Total: 113 species									