

## **Trip to United Arab Emirates 14.11. - 20.11.1992**

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### **14.11.**

We arrived at 6 a.m. in Dubai. We rented a car from Europcar: Mitshubishi Lancer 1.6, 7 days including insurance were 980 dirhams (1400 FIM). The car was new, less than 3000 kilometres in the meter. First birding around Saffa Park, the park was closed (we heard it would not be open until December) and we were not allowed to go in by a policeman. After that a visit to Emirates golf course, a permit to bird from perimeter road was easily obtained. We arranged a permit also for 16.11. In the afternoon it was high tide at Khor Dubai, thousands of shorebirds. We paid a visit to Colin's, and drove with him to Fish Farm for the last daylight.

### **15.11.**

Early morning to Ramtha tip, then north towards Digdaga. It was low tide so we decided to skip Khor al Beidah. A stop at al Jazeerah Khor we saw lots of shorebirds not too far for telescopes. Digdaga fields were quiet. We drove back to Khor al Beidah for high tide and had some difficulties finding a proper track to shore, but managed to see Crab Plovers before dark.

### **16.11.**

We started before sunrise at Emirates golf course. After sunrise we had good views of a Pintail Snipe, which was feeding with a Common Snipe. After we had flushed the birds, a thick fog came down suddenly, and birding was almost impossible. So we decided to head to Al Ain. At Al Ain we went straight to the zoo lion fence, where we spent several hours watching Egyptian Vultures. From Al Ain we went to Qarn Nazwa to twitch Eastern Pied Wheather. After successful twitch we drove to al Habab fields for the last daylight hours.

### **17.11.**

We started at dawn at a wadi near Masafi bottling factory. We found a strange looking redstart (Markku shouted it as a flycatcher after first glimpse of its wing). We thought it might be some eastern race of common redstart, and we didn't realise we had seen Evermann's Redstart until we left the place. When it became too hot for us to walk in the wadis, we drove to Khor Kalba. White-collared Kingfisher was tough for us, and it took over 2 hours to locate one. Chesnut-bellied Sandgrouse was easier: we saw 2 after less than 30 seconds of searching. After that we drove north to Diba with few stops. After some seawatching at Diba breakwater, we started driving towards Masafi. It was raining in the mountains, and at the only stop before Masafi we saw 1 bird and got wet. The rain ceased just as we arrived to the morning site. We didn't find anything new before it got dark.

### **18.11.**

We drove in the morning to the tip of Umm al Quwain and walked to the breakwater. We drove via Umm al Quwain's east side towards Khor al Beidah with some stops. At Khor al Beidah it was low tide, but lots of shorebirds were feeding quite close to the shore. We began

to scan the shorebirds systematically with telescopes, and after a short while I realised I was watching at a Great Knot feeding on the mudflat. There were 6 birds less than 200 metres away and 15 a little further away. After a while the flock of 6 moved northwards with other shorebirds and 11 of the 15 came to the same place where the 6 had been. We were able to approach these birds to closer than 30 metres. After Khor al Beidah we went to look for shorebirds at al Jazeerah Khor, and for the last daylight back to Khor al Beidah for high tide and Crab Plovers. We phoned to Emirates golf course guest relations office (04-480 222) and arranged a permit for the next day.

### **19.11.**

We started again early at the Emirates golf course. The Pintail Snipe was again beside the pool with a bridge, this time with 5 Common Snipes. After being flushed it flew to the woods behind the pool. After that we drove to Saffa park. We walked in ignoring gardeners' resistance, and had good views of Richard's and Tawny Pipits. The policeman was not at the gate when we went in, but when we came back he was not too happy. After that a short visit to Mushrif national park and then to Khor Dubai. It was low tide and most the birds far away. Then we drove to Ramtha tip, where we birdwatched with Colin. A short visit to Fish farm and Colin's before dark.

### **20.11.**

We started in the morning in the same wadi as 17.11. We had now much better views of the Evermann's Redstart, which was almost at the same place. This time we chose the right wadi for Plain Leaf Warbler, and saw 2 or 3. We also had a look at a wadi a few kilometres north, and had another Plain Leaf Warbler. We drove to Diba, seawatching at the breakwater. After that we drove to Diba Oman, as far as the coastal road continued. A large insect, which looked like a wasp, painfully bit Markku and we decided to head back to Dubai. At Fish farm we managed to locate 2 Pied Mynahs before we were chased off by the police. After that we tried to twitch Menetries's Warbler at Colin's, but had no luck.

### **21.11.**

We returned the car at 4am to the airport. We had driven 2043 kilometres with no problems.

#### Species list

- *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
Max. 8 at Fish Farm, max. 9 at Ramtha tip.
- *Podiceps nigricollis*  
1 at Fish Farm, max. 5 at Ramtha tip.
- *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
Max. 50 at Khor Dubai, less than 10 elsewhere.
- *Ph. nigrogularis*  
1200 at Umm al Quwain breakwater 18.11., mainly flying NE.

- *Phalacrocorax* sp.  
200 at Umm al Quwain 18.11., flying far away.
- *Nycticorax nycticorax*  
Max. 15 at Fish farm, max. 6 at Emirates golf course.
- *Butorides striatus*  
1 adult at Ramtha tip 15.11., 1 adult at Diba breakwater 17.11.
- *Ardeola ralloides*  
1 at Ramtha tip 15.11.
- *Ardeola ralloides/grayii*  
3 at Khor Kalba 17.11. feeding on mudflats at low tide.
- *Bubulcus ibis*  
1 at Fish farm.
- *Egretta gularis*  
The most common egret, highest numbers on west coast: ca. 20 at al Jazeerah Khor and 25 at one place between al Jazeerah Khor and Khor al Beidah. Most birds dark morph, but also lots of intermediate and light morph individuals.
- *E. garzetta*  
A few birds here and there, most at Ramtha tip, ca. 10.
- *E. alba*  
Slightly more birds observed compared to little egret. Max. 20 at Khor Dubai 14.11.
- *Ardea cinerea*  
Max. 110 at Khor Dubai 19.11., common but not so abundant elsewhere.
- *Ardea purpurea*  
1 at Fish farm 14.11., 1 + 1 at Ramtha tip 15.11.
- (*Leptoptilos crumeniferus*)  
1 free flying escapee at Al Ain zoo 16.11.
- *Plegadis falcinellus*  
1 at Ramtha tip 15.11.
- *Platalea leucorodia*  
Max. 30 at Khor Dubai 14.11., 1 at Khor al Beidah 18.11.
- *Phoenicopterus ruber*  
Max. 521 at Khor Dubai 19.11., small numbers at other sites.
- *Tadorna ferruginea*  
1 at Ramtha tip 19.11.

- *Anas penelope*  
7 at Khor Dubai 19.11.
- *A. crecca*  
Small numbers at several sites, altogether ca. 30 birds.
- *A. platyrhynchos*  
Max. ca. 340 at Khor Dubai 19.11., small numbers elsewhere.
- *A. acuta*  
Max. ca. 30 at Khor Dubai 19.11., 2 at Fish farm 14.11.
- *A. clypeata*  
Max. 6 at Khor Dubai 19.11.
- *Aythya fuligula*  
1 at Fish farm 14.11.
- *Milvus migrans*  
1 at Al Ain zoo lion fence 16.11., flying with egyptian vultures.
- *Neophron percnopterus*  
At least 71, probably more, individuals at Al Ain zoo lion fence 16.11. It is difficult to get an accurate count while the birds are sitting in the fence. During the morning tens of birds left the fence, and only a few were seen to return. 71 was counted at one time in the afternoon, when most of the birds took flight
- *Torgos tracheliotus*  
1 photographed near Al Ain Zoo lion fence 16.11.
- *Circaetus gallicus*  
1 beside main road near Khor al Beidah. Caught easily a snake on the dunes.
- *Circus aeruginosus*  
Ca. 5 at Khor Dubai and ca. 10 at Khor al Beidah. Singles elsewhere.
- *Accipiter nisus*  
1 female at Digdaga 15.11.
- *Aquila clanga*  
Khor Dubai: 14.11. 1 1st-calendar-year, 19.11. 2 individuals, of which 1 1st-calendar-year, the other immature, not aged. Fish farm: 1 immature 14.11. Digdaga: 1 ca. 2nd-calendar-year 15.11. Ramtha tip: 1 immature 19.11.
- *Aquila sp.*  
1 + 1 at Khor Dubai 14.11., probably spotted eagles.
- *Hieraetus pennatus*  
1 dark/intermediate morph at Al Ain zoo lion fence 16.11., flying with egyptian vultures.

- *H. fasciatus*  
1 1st/2nd-calendar-year at Khor Dubai 14.11., 1 1st/2nd-calendar-year at al Habab fields 16.11. and 1 1st-calendar-year at Fish farm 20.11.
- *Pandion haliaetus*  
Singles at Khor Dubai, Umm al Quwain, Khor al Beidah and Diba.
- *Falco tinnunculus* + sp.  
Altogether 5 birds and 1 falconer's bird. Most peculiar observation was one hunting at night (succesfully !) in the light of road lamps near Sharjah.
- *Falco peregrinus*  
1 1st-calendar-year at Khor Dubai 14.11.
- *Ammoperdix heyi*  
5 males 2 females near Masafi.
- *Francolinus pondicerianus*  
Altogether ca. 50 birds seen. Highest number, 20 at Mushrif national park.
- *Fulica atra*  
Ca. 5 at Fish farm.
- *Haematopus ostralegus*  
Common at coastal lagoons, highest count 62 at Khor Dubai 19.11.
- *Himantopus himantopus*  
Highest numbers ca. 20 at Ramtha tip and ca. 20 at Emirates golf course.
- *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
1 at Ramtha tip 15.11.
- *Dromas ardeola*  
Max. ca. 300 at Khor al Beidah 15.11.
- *Charadrius hiaticula*  
Altogether ca. 50 individuals.
- *Ch. alexandrinus*  
A few hundred at Khor Dubai and Khor al Beidah, smaller numbers at other sites.
- *Ch. mongolus*  
Altogether ca. 240 identified, most at Khor Dubai and Khor al Beidah.
- *Ch. leschenaultii*  
Altogether ca. 75 identified, most birds at Khor Dubai and Khor al Beidah.
- *Ch. mongolus/leschenaultii*  
Altogether a few hundred individuals.

- *Pluvalis fulva*  
Ca. 40 at Khor Dubai 14.11., 1 at Emirates golf course 19.11.
- *Pluvialis squatarola*  
One of the most common large shorebirds, altogether a few hundred birds.
- *Hoplopterus indicus*  
Max. 15 at Ramtha tip 15.11., 2 at Digdaga 15.11.
- *Calidris tenuirostris*  
21 in three flocks (6,11,4) at the southern end of Khor al Beidah 18.11. The birds were feeding at low tide (ca. 11.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.) on exposed mudflats 200 meters from the shore, and we were able to approach to less than 30 meters. Short description: Smaller than bar-tailed godwit, distinctly larger than greater sand plover. Bill longer than knot's, slightly downcurved. Rump white, only few blackish spots. Underparts white except very prominent brownish breast band: sides of breast spotted brown, in the middle of the breast the pattern more like streaking. Breast band contrasts clearly with the rest of the underparts. Some blackish spots on flanks. General pattern of upperparts superficially like bar-tailed godwit's: wing coverts, scapulars and back feathers greyish, edged whitish. Voice harsh 'kerrik'.
- *C. minuta*  
Less than 200 identified.
- *C. ferruginea*  
7 at Khor Dubai 14.11., 1 at Khor al Beidah 18.11.
- *C. alpina*  
Several hundred at Khor Dubai and Khor al Beidah, small numbers elsewhere.
- *Limicola falcinellus*  
8 at Khor Dubai 14.11., 1 at Khor al Beidah 18.11.
- *Philomachus pugnax*  
Altogether less than 30 birds.
- *Gallinago gallinago*  
5 - 6 birds at Emirates golf course, 1 at Ramtha tip.
- *G. stenura*  
At least 1 at Emirates golf course 16.11. and 19.11.
- *Limosa limosa*  
Altogether less than 20 birds.
- *L. lapponica*  
The most common large shorebird, ca. 150 at Khor Dubai and ca. 150 at Khor al Beidah.

- *Numenius phaeopus*  
2 at Khor Kalba, 1 at Khor al Beidah.
- *N. arquata*  
Ca. 50 birds at Khor Dubai 14.11., smaller numbers elsewhere.
- *Tringa erythropus*  
1 at Ramtha tip 19.11.
- *T. totanus*  
The most common *Tringa*, altogether ca. 200 birds.
- *T. stagnatilis*  
1 at Khor al Beidah 18.11., 2 at al Jazeera Khor 18.11.
- *T. nebularia*  
Altogether ca. 120 birds.
- *T. ochropus*  
2 at Ramtha tip 15.11. and 19.11.
- *T. glareola*  
1 at Emirates golf course 19.11.
- *Xenus cinereus*  
Altogether 42 individuals. Highest count 18 at al Jazeera Khor 18.11.
- *Actitis hypoleucos*  
Altogether less than 20 birds.
- *Arenaria interpres*  
Altogether less than 40 birds.
- *Stercorarius pomarinus*  
1 pale morph subadult/adult 18.11. at Umm al Quwain breakwater flying NE.
- *Larus ridibundus*  
Altogether less than 60 birds seen. Most at Ramtha tip and Dubai.
- *L. genei*  
More common than black-headed gull at most places. Highest count ca. 300 at al Jazeera Khor 15.11.
- *L. fuscus*  
Two birds of nominate race *L. f. fuscus*.
- *L. argentatus*  
Common, a few hundred seen. Most racially identified *L. (a.) cachinnans*, also some birds of *L. (a.) heuglini/taimyrensis* -type.

- *Gelochelidon nilotica*  
Common at coastal lagoons. Highest counts ca. 25 at al Jazeera Khor, ca. 10 at Khor Dubai and ca. 10 at Khor al Beidah.
- *Sterna caspia*  
Max. 30 at Khor Dubai 14.11., only a few elsewhere.
- *S. bergii*  
3 at Khor Kalba breakwater, max. 18 at Diba breakwater.
- *S. benghalensis*  
18 at Khor Kalba, 5 at Diba OMAN and ca. 35 at Umm al Quwain.
- *S. sandvicensis*  
Altogether 40 at several coastal sites. In addition ca. 30 at Diba OMAN.
- *S. benghalensis/sandvicensis*  
Ca. 50 distant birds at Umm al Quwain.
- *S. saundersi*  
1 at Ramtha tip, 1 at Khor al Beidah, 1 at al Jazeera Khor, 1 at Diba OMAN.
- *S. saundersi/albifrons*  
5 at al Jazeera Khor.
- *Chlidonias hybrida*  
Max. 5 at Ramtha tip.
- *Ch. leucopterus*  
Max. 8 at Ramtha tip.
- *Pterocles lichtensteini*  
4 near Masafi 17.11. and 20.11. The birds were flushed at a hillside in the same area on both days.
- *P. exustus*  
2 at Khor Kalba sand dunes 17.11. Flew from west and landed.
- *Columba livia*  
Not counted.
- *Streptopelia decaocto*  
Less than 50 birds.
- *S. senegalensis*  
Common almost everywhere, not counted.
- *Psittacula krameri*  
Altogether ca. 25 birds.

- *P. eupatria*  
1 at Fish farm, 3 at Dubai trade center (Colin's).
- *Apus pallidus*  
Altogether 9 birds at Saffa park, Ramtha tip and Umm al Quwain.
- *Apus apus/pallidus*  
Altogether 11 birds.
- *Halcyon smyrnensis*  
1 at Ramtha tip 15.11. and 19.11.
- *Halcyon chloris*  
1 at the west side of the mangroves at Khor Kalba 17.11.
- *Alcedo atthis*  
1 at Fish farm, 1 at Ramtha tip, at least 3 at Khor Kalba, 1 at Diba.
- *Merops orientalis*  
Altogether ca. 90 birds. Highest numbers at al Habab, Digdaga and Al Ain.
- *M. apiaster*  
1 at Emirates golf course 14.11.
- *Coracias benghalensis*  
Ca. 75 at Digdaga fields, less than 15 elsewhere.
- *Upupa epops*  
Altogether 12 birds.
- *Eremopterix nigriceps*  
3 males and 3 females at Khor Kalba sand dunes.
- *Ammomanes deserti*  
6 near Masafi 17.11. and 12 near Masafi 20.11.
- *Alaemon alaudipes*  
2 at Khor al Beidah, 1 between al Habab and Dubai.
- *Galerida cristata*  
Common, small numbers everywhere.
- *Alauda arvensis*  
2 at Emirates golf course 14.11.
- *Hirundo obsoleta*  
Altogether ca. 15 birds. Observed at Masafi, Digdaga and Khor Kalba.
- *Anthus novaeseelandiae*  
5 at Saffa Park 19.11.

- *A. campestris*  
Altogether at least 25 individuals. Emirates golf course at least 6, Saffa Park 8, Digdaga 7, singles elsewhere.
- *A. cervinus*  
1 at Emirates golf course, 1 at Digdaga.
- *A. spinoletta*  
Altogether 3 birds.
- *Motacilla citreola*  
1 adult female at Ramtha tip 19.11.
- *M. citreola/(flava)*  
2 flying past at Ramtha tip 15.11.
- *M. alba*  
Altogether ca. 80 birds.
- *Pycnonotus leucogenys*  
2 at Qarn Nazwa gravel plain, ca. 10 at Emirates golf course, ca. 15 at Mushrif national park.
- *P. xanthopygos*  
Altogether ca. 15 birds identified at Al Ain, Masafi and Digdaga.
- *P. cafer*  
2 + 1 at Emirates golf course, 2 in Dubai.
- *Pycnonotus sp.*  
Voices heard at several locations.
- *Luscinia svecica*  
Altogether 4 birds.
- *Phoenicurus erythronotus*  
1 female in a wadi near Masafi bottling factory 17.11. and 20.11. Short description: Size like common redstart. General colour greyer than common redstart. General colour much darker above and below compared to drawing in 'Birds of the Middle East and North Africa'. Wing pattern very distinct: Tertiary fringes clearly edged whitish, whitish wing bars (ca. 2 - 3 mm wide) at greater and median coverts. Also secondaries narrowly edged whitish. Tips of at least 3 - 4 longest primaries narrowly edged whitish. Tail and uppertail coverts pale rufous. Didn't shiver tail, but jerked it up and down. Whitish moustachial stripe. Voice silent, harsh 'grrrt' and louder, clear 'iiht'.
- *Ph. ochruros*  
1 male at Emirates golf course 14.11., 2 males at Mushrif national park 19.11., 1 male at Dubai trade center (Colin's) 19.11., race phoenicuroides.

- *Saxicola torquata*  
1 male at Digdaga 15.11. One of the races in maura-group, perhaps *armenica*.
- *Oenanthe isabellina*  
Altogether 6 - 8 birds, of which 3 at Emirates golf course.
- *Oe. isabellina/oenanthe*  
2 individuals.
- *Oe. deserti*  
1 male at Emirates golf course, 3 males at Khor Kalba, 1 male at Khor al Beidah.
- *Oe. xanthopyrna*  
1 at Al Ain, 2 near Qarn Nazwa, at least 3 near Masafi, ca. 8 between Masafi and Diba.
- *Oe. picata*  
1 at Qarn Nazwa gravel plain, 1 near Masafi bottling factory.
- *Oe. alboniger*  
2 - 3 near Masafi, 7 between Masafi and Diba.
- *Turdus philomelos*  
3 at Emirates golf course 19.11.
- *Prinia gracialis*  
Common, altogether ca. 40 individuals.
- *Scotocerca inquieta*  
3 birds near Masafi.
- *Acrocephalus stentoreus*  
1 singing at Ramtha tip 15.11. and 19.11., 2 singing at Khor Kalba mangroves 17.11.
- *Sylvia nana*  
1 at Al Ain zoo lion fence, 2 at Qarn Nazwa gravel plain. At times both were in the same bush with eastern pied wheather.
- *S. minula*  
6 at Al Ain zoo, 1 at Qarn Nazwa, at least 7 near Masafi and 4 at Mushrif national park.
- *Phylloscopus neglectus*  
2 - 3 individuals in a wadi near Masafi bottling factory. 1 bird in a wadi a few kilometres further north.
- *Ph. collybita*  
Altogether 8 birds.

- *Turdoides squamiceps*  
3 near Masafi, 4 at Mushrif national park.
- *Nectarina asiatica*  
Altogether ca. 50 individuals.
- *Lanius isabellinus*  
2 at Emirates golf course, max. 3 at Ramtha tip, 1 at Khor Kalba, 1 at Dubai trade center (Colin's).
- *L. excubitor*  
Altogether ca. 30 individuals.
- *Corvus splendens*  
Altogether ca. 150 at Diba and other sites at east coast, a few in Dubai.
- *C. ruficollis*  
2 at Qarn Nazwa, 2 singles elsewhere.
- *Sturnus vulgaris*  
5 at Dubai Trade Centre roundabout 14.11.
- *S. contra*  
2 at Fish farm 20.11.
- *Acridotheres tristis*  
A little over 100 birds, most at Ramtha tip and Fish Farm.
- *Passer domesticus*  
Common.
- *Euodice malabarica*  
Ca. 18 in the surroundings of Saffa Park 14.11., 2 at Deira.
- *Bucanetes githagineus*  
Voice heard several times (for ca. 1 minute) from lion fence at Al Ain zoo.
- *Emberiza striolata*  
1 male 1 female at Masafi 17.11.