



## Fifth report of the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee - 2018

by the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee:

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The Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee (EORC) was launched in January 2010 to become the adjudicator of rare bird records for Egypt and to maintain the list of the bird species of Egypt. In 2018, the EORC was composed of 8 active voting members: Sherif Baha El Din, Andrea Corso, Pierre-André Crochet, Richard Hoath, Frédéric Jiguet, Lukasz Lawicki, Manuel Schweizer and Ahmed Waheed.

Any observer recording a rare bird in Egypt (e.g. species on the EORC list or not listed in the updated national checklist) is invited to send details to the secretary ([eorc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:eorc.secretary@gmail.com)) to help maintain the official national avifaunal list.

As stated in its first report (Jiguet et al. 2011), the EORC decided to use the checklist of the Birds of Egypt, as published in 1989 by Steve Goodman and Peter Meininger (excluding the hypothetical species) as a starting point to its work. Any addition to, or deletion from, this list will be evaluated by the EORC, as well as any record of species with less than 10 Egyptian records (see [http://www.chn-france.org/eorc/eorc.php?id\\_content=4](http://www.chn-france.org/eorc/eorc.php?id_content=4) for the full list of species to be documented) and any change in category (e.g. B to A or D/E to C or A). The EORC followed the taxonomic recommendations released by the AERC TAC (Taxonomic Advisory Committee of the Association of European Rarities and Record Committees) for the present report.

A dedicated website has been launched thanks to the support from the French Rarities Committee, at [www.chn-france.com/eorc/](http://www.chn-france.com/eorc/). It is hosted by the French RC website, and gives free access to the committee's role and composition. The site will also host EORC reports and updates to the checklist of the Birds of Egypt. A list of species which are considered by the EORC, as well as a rarity form proposed for record submission, can also be found on the committee's website (at <http://chn-france.org/eorc/eorc.php>).

In 2018, we examined 39 records. We considered 26 of these as proven, 13 as not proven. The proportion of accepted records was therefore 67%. This report includes the first records for Egypt of Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*, Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* and Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, which are five additions to the category A of the Egyptian list. It also includes the second record of Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* (first record outside the Halaib Triangle) Pied Crow *Corvus albus* (second to fourth records) and Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis*, and the third record of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* and Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*.

The updated checklist of the Birds of Egypt now includes 463 species: 448 in category A (including 6 species observed only in the Halaib Triangle), 9 in category B and 6 in category C. Note that Ostrich *Struthio camelus* was previously wrongly included in category B though Goodman & Meininger (1989) report numerous records in Egypt after 1950, so we moved the species to category A. We report below details of the accepted and not proven records. In this section, figures into brackets that follow the species' name represent: number of previous records and associated number of individuals, followed by the number of records/individuals accepted by the EORC since the last report.

### List of accepted records (category A)

#### **STREAKED SHEARWATER *Calonectris leucomelas* (0/0, 1/1)**

- 23km south of Safaga, 1 ind., 29 April 2015, videoed (Pierre-André Crochet, Julien Renoult)

The description includes clinching criteria such as the large dark trailing edge to the underwing, the white face (also visible on the video footage) and pale bill, and the wholly dark upperparts. This constitutes the first record for the country, the species is added to the category A of the list of the birds of Egypt. There are 3 previous records of the species in the Western Palearctic (in the Red Sea in Israel and Jordan).



Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*, 23km south of Safaga, 29 April 2015 (Pierre-André Crochet)

**BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Puffinus mauretanicus* (1/3, 0/0)**

- *Zaraniq, (30°03'N, 31°15'E), East end of Bardawil Lagoon, North Sinai, 3 ind., 17 August 1981, (Uffe Gjøl Sørensen, Ib Krag Petersen)*

This observation mentioned in the previous report (Jiguet et al. 2018) concerned 3 individuals, not a single individual as reported previously.

**WHITE-BACKED VULTURE *Gyps africanus* (0/0, 1/1)**

- *Shalaten, 1 ind., 25 March 2017, photographed (Heiko Krätzel)*

This vulture was observed by a single observer with no experience of the species, but well photographed, so that the identification suffers no doubt. The species has recently been recorded in Morocco and Iberia, as dispersers from Africa join Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* when they return to Europe, as do some Rüppell's Vulture *G. rueppelli*. A wild origin was therefore considered the best option. This constitutes the first record of White-backed Vulture for Egypt, and the species has been added to the category A of the Egyptian list.



White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Shalaten, 25 March 2017 (Heiko Krätzel)

**CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (1/1, 1/1)**

- *Wadi Shalal, Gebal Elba, (22°04.525 N, 36°28.795 E), adult male, 10 May 2016, photographed (Ali Dora)*

This is only the second official record for Egypt, following one observed at Quseir in May 1996 (Baha el Din & Baha el Din 1997, Jiguet et al. 2011). Here again it concerns a male observed during spring migration. The species is probably under-detected in Egypt, while the pitfall of hybrid European x Crested Honey Buzzards should be kept in mind when faced with an unusual *Pernis*.



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, adult male, Gebel Elba, 10 May 2016 (Ali Dora)

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos* (2/2, 1/1)**

- *Golf course at Makadi Bay, Hurghada, 1 ind., 27 March 2018, photographed (Olof Jönsson)*

The third record for Egypt, after the individuals observed in May 1990 and May 2012 (Schepers et al. 1991, Jiguet et al. 2012, 2014).

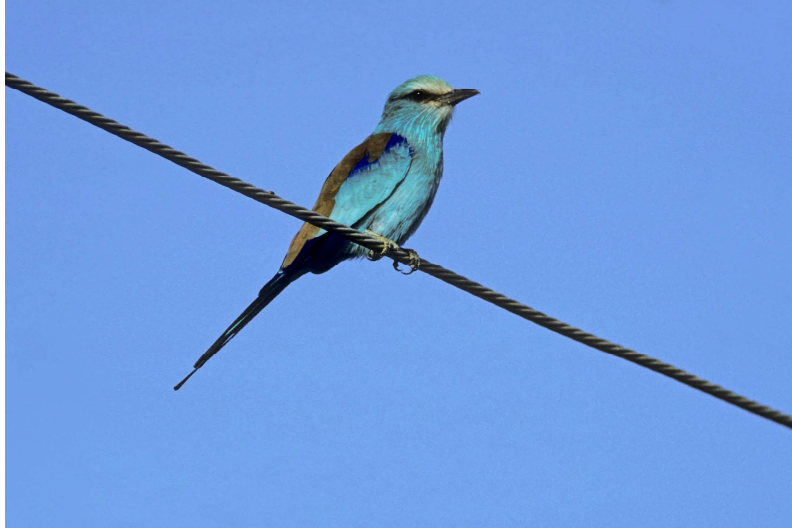


Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Makadi Bay, 27 March 2018 (Olof Jönsson)

**ABYSSINIAN ROLLER *Coracias abyssinicus* (2/2, 2/2)**

- *Abu Simbel, 1 ind., 29 September 1995, photographed (Stefan Pfützke, Axel Halley)*
- *Abu Simbel, adult, 4-5 May 1997, photographed (Seppo Haavisto)*

These are the second and third record of this sub-Saharan species for Egypt. On 22 November 1968, Misonne (1972) found a wing and a tail of this species at Karbur Ibrahim, Gebel Unweinat, near the border with Libya (Goodman & Meininger 1989). A skin of the species, deposited in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, has been collected in 1874 in 'Egypt' but with no precise location (Haas & Lawicki 2018).



Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Abu Simbel, 29 September 1995 (Axel Halley)



Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Abu Simbel, 4 May 1997 (Seppo Haavisto)



Skin of Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* collected at an unknown location in Egypt in 1874 (Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago)

**GREY HYPOCOLIUS *Hypocolius ampelinus* (3/3, 3/28)**

- Ebruq, Gebel Elba, male, 18 November 2017, photographed (Mahmoud Elshamy)
- Wadi El Gemal NP, 2 ind. (one female), 20 January 2018, photographed (Ibrahim Saad)
- Wadi Shallal, Gebel Elba, (22°04.525 N, 36°28.795 E), at least 25 ind., 21 February 2018, photographed (Ali Dora)

These are the fourth to sixth records for Egypt. The large group was observed during three hours, and photos of different individuals have been provided, confirming that a large number of individuals was present. This record represents an unprecedented number of individuals for Egypt, as otherwise only single birds have been observed. Winter 2017-2018 also produced an unprecedented number of records, doubling the record numbers in Egypt.



Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*,  
Wadi El Gemal, 20 January 2018 (Ibrahim  
Saad)



Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Gebel Elba, 21 February 2018 (Ali Dora). 7 individuals are visible here.

**BLACK SCRUB ROBIN *Cercotrichas podobe* (6/6, 3/3)**

- *Rihanna Resort, El Gouna (27°24'0.99"N, 33°40'33.08"E), 1 ind., 4 February-19 March 2008, photographed (Olof Jönsson, Janne Dahlén, Arne Holgersson, Stefan Magnusson, Kenneth Bach Christensen)*
- *Berenice TClub Resort, Berenice, 1 ind., 19 March 2012, photographed (Paul Nilsson, Anders Soegaard, Steffen Nielsen, Anders Hammergart)*
- *Wadi Shallal, Gebel Elba, (22°04'52.5"N 36°28'79.5"E), 1 ind., 8 March 2016, photographed (Ali Dora)*

There are the seventh to ninth confirmed records of this species in Egypt. There are two subspecies of Black Scrub Robin: nominate *podobe* breeding across the Sahel, from southern Mauretania to Sudan, and *melanoptera* (with stronger orange colour on inner primary webs) in the Arabian Peninsula. Both are sedentary with some winter/spring dispersal (Collar 2018). The records accepted in Egypt have not been attributed to any subspecies.

The EORC is still seeking details on the following observations, which have not yet been submitted:

- 1 ind., Hotel Akassia, El Quseir, 27 October to 8 November 2007
- 1 ind., Wadi El Gemal, Marsa Alam, 14 March 2015



Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, El Gouna, 14 March 2008 (Olof Jönsson)



Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, Gebel Elba, 8 March 2016 (Ali Dora)



Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, Berenice, 19 March 2012 (Paul Nilsson)

**RED-TAILED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe chrysopygia* (1/1, 1/1)**

- Al Sheikh Shazli, 1 ind., 8 November 2012, photographed (Ennio Benzone, Mauro Bailo, Arturo Gargioni, Giorgio Feroldi)

Red-tailed Wheatear breeds in mountainous areas of south-west and central Asia. Its breeding range extends from Armenia and Azerbaijan eastwards through Iran to Afghanistan, southern Tajikistan and western Pakistan. It winters in the Arabian Peninsula, Eritrea, Kuwait, southern parts of Iraq and Iran, Pakistan and north-west India (Clement & Rose 2015). With pale supercilium and dark lores, pale throat, darker ear coverts and pale grey neck sides, and rufous bases to the outer tail feathers with narrow tail band, the bird could be confidently separated from first-winter Kurdish Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrna*. This is the second record of this species for Egypt, and the first outside the Halaib Triangle; the first was in December 2010 (Jiguet et al. 2012).



Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*, Al Sheikh Shazli, 8 November 2012 (Ennio Benzone)



**PIED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3+/3+, 4/4)**

- Shams Alam, Marsa Alam, first-winter male, 27 January 2012 (Charly Farinelle)
- Shams Alam, Wadi Gemal, male, 8 March 2015, photographed (Artur Bujanowicz, Agnieszka Jonczyk, Jacek Nalepa)
- Abu Ghussum, Lahami, female, 12 March 2015, photographed (Artur Bujanowicz, Agnieszka Jonczyk, Jacek Nalepa)
- Golf course west of Makadi Bay, male, 27 March 2018, photographed (Olof Jönsson)

These are the first records of this species examined by the EORC. All four have been validated, as available elements provide evidence that these individuals are not Cyprus Wheatears, a species which is very similar and a common in winter and on migration along the Red Sea coast. The first-winter male from 2012 was validated a few years ago, but not published before. The female observed in 2015 was considered a dark-throated Pied or hybrid Pied x Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *O. melonaleuca*, though the dark grey-brown mantle and black on throat extending on upper breast and on necksides is normally typical of Pied. The species was listed as rare in Egypt by Goodman and Meininger (1989), who also list a few record obtained after the recognition of *Oenanthe cypriaca* as a distinct species. In this context, the EORC wanted to precise the status of pleschanka in Egypt. With only four records in the last 8 years, Pied Wheatears is indeed a rarity in Egypt, and EORC will continue to consider records of this species.



Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, first-winter male, Marsa Alam, 27 January 2012 (Charly Farinelle)



Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, male, Shams Alam, 8 March 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)



Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, female, Lahami, 12 March 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)



Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, male, Makadi Bay, 27 March 2018 (Olof Jönsson)

**BLACK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus atrogularis* (2/2, 1/1)**

- *Azure Resort, north of Wadi Lahami, 24.238432°N, 35.413247°E, 1 ind., 25 April 2017, photographed (Mattias Nilsson)*

The third record for Egypt, after a male collected in the autumn of 1833 in Sinai and a male observed at El Arish in Sinai on 3 January 1982 (Goodman & Meininger 1989). It concerned the first record in the African part of Egypt.



Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*, Wadi Lahami, 25 April 2017 (Mattias Nilsson)

**PIED CROW *Corvus albus* (1/1, 4/4)**

- *El Gouna, 1 ind., 11 April 2010, photographed (Matthias Weissensteiner)*
- *Wadi Lahami, Marsa Alam, 1 ind., 5-6 May 2016, photographed (Kris De Rouck, Gordon Beck, Ernie Davies)*
- *Hamata, 1 ind., present two weeks around 23 December 2016, photographed (Ibrahim Saad)*
- *Gebal Elba, Halaib, near 22°09 36.4 N, 36°40 22.5 E, 1 ind., 9-11 April 2018, photographed (Ali Dora)*

The only previous record of this species in Egypt was an individual in Gebel Elba in April 2015 (Jiguet et al. 2018). With no records there in between, there is no reason to consider that the 2018 individual is a returning individual. Whether the records at Hamata and Wadi Lahami could refer to the same individual is possible but unknown, and given that the two observations have been made more than 6 months apart, we considered them here as distinct. Note that the 2010 record becomes the first record for Egypt, while there are now 5 records of single individuals.



Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, El Gouna, 11 April 2010 (Matthias Weissensteiner)



Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, Hamata, 23 December 2016 (Ibrahim Saad)



Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, Gebel Elba, 9 April 2018 (Ali Dora)



Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, Wadi Lahami, Marsa Alam, 6 May 2016 (Kris De Rouck)

**DEAD-SEA SPARROW *Passer moabiticus* (0/0, 1/10)**

- *Nuweiba, Sinai, about 10 ind., 30 October to 3 November 1987 (Klass-douwe B. Dijkstra)*

This record was previously published in *The Courser* (Dijkstra 1992), and the EORC considers it refers to the nominate subspecies *moabiticus*, breeding in western Middle East. This is the first record of the species for the country, which is added to the category A of the list of the birds of Egypt.

**YELLOW-THROATED SPARROW *Gymnoris xanthocollis* (1/1, 1/1)**

- *Lahami Bay, 1 ind., 19-20 September 2018, photographed (Brian Rasmussen et al.)*

The second record for Egypt, after a male photographed at Wadi Gamal in June 2010 (Dettori & Moldovan 2011, Jiguet et al. 2011).



Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis*, Lahami Bay, 19 September 2018 (Brian Rasmussen)

**GREY-NECKED BUNTING *Emberiza buchanani* (0/0, 1/1)**

- *Ras Shukeir, Hurghada, 1 ind., 29 March 2013, photographed (Henrik Haaning Nielsen)*

This bunting is breeding in central Asia, west to Turkey, and is wintering on the Indian subcontinent. The species is migratory, and vagrants have already reached other countries in the Middle East and in Europe, while March is the right time for such a spring out-of-range migrant, so that a wild origin is considered here (Clement et al. 1993). This observation constitutes the first record for Egypt, and the species is added to the category A of the list of the birds of Egypt.



Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*, Hurghada, 29 March 2013 (Henrik Haaning Nielsen)

**RED-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza bruniceps* (0/0, 1/1)**

- *Shams Alam, Marsa Alam, male, 7 May 2016, photographed (Kris De Rouck, Gordon Beck, Ernie Davies)*

This bunting is breeding in central Asia, reaching eastern European Russia, and is wintering on the Indian subcontinent. It is migratory, and vagrants have already reached other countries in the Middle East and in Europe, while May is the right time for such a late spring out-of-range migrant, so that a wild origin is considered here (Clement et al. 1993). This observation constitutes the first record for Egypt, and the species is added to the category A of the list of the birds of Egypt.



Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, male, Marsa Alam, 7 May 2016 (Kris De Rouck)

## Correction

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles exustus***. In the previous report (Jiguet et al. 2018) the date of the record from 2013 is incorrect: it should be 25 June, and not 5 June (Dora 2019).

## Record considered as Not Proven

The following record has been considered as not proven by the committee.

### 1928 Meinertzhagen records:

**Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus***. February 1928, Cairo market, 6 ind. offered for sale.

**Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii***. February 1928, near Quseir, 1 ind.

**Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus***. 14 February 1928, Abu Simbel, 1 ind. collected.

**Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris***. 20 February 1928, Quseir, 1 ind. collected.

**Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus***. 21 February 1928, Quseir, male collected.

**Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus***. 28 March 1928, Gebel Elba, male collected.

**Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea semenowi***. 12 April 1928, Gebel Elba, 1 ind. collected.

**Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus***. 28 January 1928, Salum, flock.

In 2011 (Jiguet et al. 2011), the EORC rejected 3 records of rare species 'found' by Richard Meinertzhagen also in 1928 (Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* and Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*). Richard Meinertzhagen is largely recognized as having made large frauds in the labels of specimens in his collection, which was donated to the British Museum. These frauds concerned the origin of many specimens, including a Gray's Grasshopper Warbler from 'France' in 1933 (Kennerley & Prys-Jones 2006), redpolls from UK, a Kerguelen Kelp Gull from South Africa (Jiguet 2002). Meinertzhagen also reported the breeding of Indian Pond Heron in the mangroves of Kuwait, hence the early presence of this species on the Western Palaearctic list, while there is no mangrove in Kuwait. The British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) now considers all records by Richard Meinertzhagen as not proven (see Knox 1993). There is a possibility that some of the records reported for Egypt are real and true, but the doubt is huge, and it seems impossible that R. Meinertzhagen obtained so many records of vagrants in a single year (1928). The EORC decided to consider all records listed above as not proven.

### Others unproven records:

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus***. Port Said, 10 March 1988 (Everett 1992). The description is incomplete, with no description of the shape of the tail, while leg colour has been reported. There are a few dark-plumaged shearwaters which could not be excluded without details on shape and jizz, with the potential pitfall of oiled Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* with dark underwing. Overall, the description fails too short for a potential first for Egypt and the Western Palaearctic.

**Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus***. Aswan, 30 December 1996 (Robel 1997). In a paper published in 1997, Detlef Robel reports the observation of three tropical African bird species potentially new to Egypt, two of them also potentially new to the Western Palaearctic. The co-occurrence within just a few days of such new records can be considered dubious, at least for in a context of natural vagrancy. These observations have been made by a single observer, with no photographic evidence, and the descriptions are incomplete to remove any doubt. Furthermore, Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* and Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica* are not uncommon in the area, so that these three records have not been considered as proven.

**Crimson-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda rhodopyga***. Aswan, 30 December 1996 (Robel 1997). See text under Grey Hornbill.

**African Silverbill *Lonchura cantans***. Aswan, 27 December 1996 (Robel 1997). See text under Grey Hornbill.

**Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex***. Farafra oasis, male, 14 February 2003. Timing and location would be good for a record of that species in Egypt, but the description is too short and does not eliminate the possibility of a leucistic individual of a more common sparrow species.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to all observers who published their records in the literature or sent us descriptions of the rarities they found – especially for their patience.

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