



Sixth report of the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee - 2019

by the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee:

Łukasz Ławicki and Frédéric Jiguet (secretaries), Sherif Baha El Din (chairman), Arnoud B. van den Berg, Andrea Corso, Pierre-André Crochet (vice chairman), Mohamed I. Habib, Richard Hoath, Manuel Schweizer & Ahmed Waheed

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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 2019, the EORC was composed of 10 active voting members: Sherif Baha El Din, Arnoud B. van den Berg, Andrea Corso, Pierre-André Crochet, Mohamed I. Habib, Richard Hoath, Frédéric Jiguet, Łukasz Ławicki, 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) 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 (cf. Jiguet et al. 2012, 2014, 2018, 2019). 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 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/. It is hosted by the French RC website, and gives free access to the committee's role and composition. The site 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 of the committee's website (at <http://chn-france.org/eorc/eorc.php>).

In 2019, 19 reports have been considered, and all have been accepted. Further records are still pending.

This report includes the first records for Egypt of Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*, Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* and Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*, which are all additions to category A of the Egyptian list.

The updated checklist of the Birds of Egypt now includes 466 species: 451 in category A (including 7 species observed only in the Halaib Triangle), 9 in category B and 6 in category C. We report below details of the 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)

CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (2/2, 4/4)

- Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar (28°09'33.2"N, 33°06'55.4"E), adult female, 14 May 2016, photographed (Paulo Alves, Sérgio Correia)
- Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar (28°09'33.2"N, 33°06'55.4"E), female dark morph, 15 May 2016, photographed (Paulo Alves, Wed Abdou)
- Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar (28°09'33.2"N, 33°06'55.4"E), adult male, 7 May 2019, photographed (Paulo Alves)
- Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar (28°09'33.2"N, 33°06'55.4"E), adult female, 8 May 2019, photographed (Paulo Alves)

All Egyptian records come from a short period between 7 and 15 May (cf. Baha el Din & Baha el Din 1997, Jiguet 2011, 2019). These four, recorded at the same site at Gabel El Zayt in the Gulf of Suez (which is a bottle-neck for migratory birds), indicate that this species is probably under-detected in Egypt and might occur more regularly, like in Israel. All these records were well documented with photographs, which are reproduced below.



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, adult female, Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, 14 May 2016 (Sérgio Correia)



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, female dark morph, Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, 15 May 2016 (Paulo Alves)



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, adult male, Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, 7 May 2019 (Paulo Alves)



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, adult female, Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, 8 May 2019 (Paulo Alves)

BATELEUR *Terathopius ecaudatus* (3/3, 1/1)

- *Sharm El-Sheikh, Sinai, juvenile, 2 December 2018, photographed (Volker Mauerhofer, Khaled Noby Mohamed)*

The first documented record in Egypt since more than 30 years. A comparison of plumage features showed that this same individual was also photographed at Eilat, Israel, on 10 April 2019 (Dick Forsman in litt; cf. plate 232 in Lawicki & van den Berg 2019). Goodman & Meininger (1989) give the following details of the previous records in Egypt. In June 1984, the species was observed in a nest in a tributary of Wadi Aideib in Gebel Elba. In winter and spring 1985, up to two birds were observed there, but the nest had been destroyed. The only other record concerned a first-year male at the Abu Simbel airport on 23 December 1985.



Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, juvenile, Sharm El-Sheikh, Sinai, 2 December 2018
(Volker Mauerhofer)

TAWNY EAGLE *Aquila rapax* (2/2, 1/1)

- *Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, juvenile, 6 May 2011, photographed (Marwan Owaygen)*

Chronologically, this individual concerned the first confirmed record for Egypt, preceding a juvenile photographed between Marsa Alam and Edfu on 8 May 2015 (Jiguët et al. 2018). The very bleached juvenile plumage posed some identification problems, though the combination of unbarred light feathers and the structure clinched it. There is an old record of a specimen taken at Giza on 20 January

1924, reported by R. Meinertzhagen (an observer now renowned for numerous frauds in reporting rarities; see Jiguet et al. 2019), that will be investigated by the EORC soon.

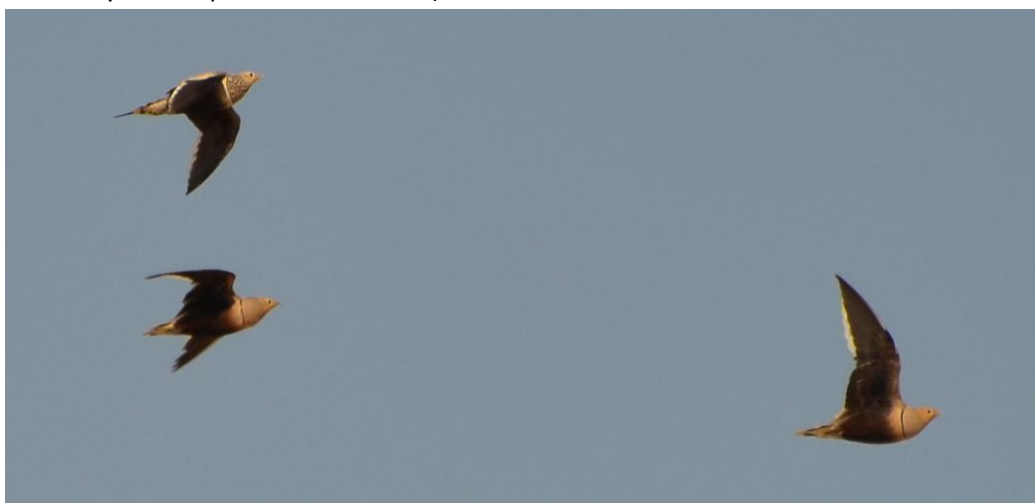


Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, juvenile, Gabel el Zayt, Al Bahr al Ahmar, 6 May 2011 (Marwan Owaygen)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles exustus*

- south-west of Bahnasa, Minya governorate (28°30'34.62"N, 30°37'29.31"E), 30 ind., 16 September 2018, photographed (Watter AlBahry, Abdulla Ali, Brian Rasmussen)

In March 2012, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse was rediscovered near Sandafa in Minya governorate (Khil et al. 2012), where it has been confirmed by many observers in the next years (e.g. Jiguet et al. 2014, Habib 2015). In June 2013, a population of this species was discovered at Gebel Elba in Hala'ib Triangle, and up to 50 individuals were present there also in 2014-2018, including juveniles in July 2018 (Dora 2019, Jiguet et al. 2019). Both sites are about 750 km apart, which suggests that Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse may also occur in other areas of Egypt (especially where it was historically known, e.g., between the Fayoum depression and Qena).



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, south-west of Bahnasa, Minya, 16 September 2018 (Watter AlBahry). Three birds from a flock of 30 individuals.

PALLID SCOPS OWL *Otus brucei* (2/2, 2/2)

- *Agilika Island, Aswan (23°58′-24°02′N, 32°51′-32°57′E), 1 ind., 6 December 2007, photographed (István Moldován)*
- *Wadi Um Ethl, between Shalateen and Baranis (between 23°36′34″N–23°37′35″N and 35°23′30″E–35°25′20″E), Red Sea governorate, adult, 16 December 2018, photographed (Tarek Nagah, Mahmoud Elshamy, Mahmoud Saber Tahtawey, Mohamed Badran)*

A photograph and a description of the bird from 2007 was published by Moldován (2009). In his paper, other potential records of the species from Egypt were mentioned, but none of them has so far been submitted to and evaluated by the EORC. The species' second record from 2018 was perfectly documented with photographs. Goodman & Meininger (1989) give information on two specimens of Pallid Scops Owl taken in Sinai in the 19th century. However, because these were collated by Richard Meinertzhagen, they should be treated with care, and will be investigated by the EORC in the near future. In spring 2015, a large breeding population of this species was discovered in the Rift valley in Israel (Ben Dov & Kiat 2016) so it seems feasible that there may be an undetected breeding population in Egypt as well.



Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, Wadi Um Ethl, between Shalateen and Baranis, Red Sea governorate, adult, 16 December 2018 (Mahmoud Elshamy)



Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, Wadi Um Ethl, between Shalateen and Baranis, Red Sea governorate, adult, 16 December 2018 (Mohamed Badran)

NUBIAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus nubicus* (3/4, 1/1)

- Hamata, Red Sea governorate, 1 ind., 27 July 2013, photographed (Frédéric Vanhove, Raphael Lebrun, Vincent Legrand, David Monticelli)

This 2013 record is the first documented record for Egypt since 1985 and the most northerly. All previous records were from Gebel Elba (Goodman & Meininger 1989). The date of this record (July) is particularly interesting, as it is in the breeding season of the species. A single specimen collected at Gebel Elba belonged to the nominate subspecies *C. n. nubicus* (Goodman & Meininger 1989), which is breeding in central Sudan. In the Middle East (Israel, Jordan and discontinuously in SW Saudi Arabia and Yemen), the breeding subspecies is *C. n. tamaricis* (Cleere 2010).



Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, Hamata, Red Sea governorate, 27 July 2013 (Vincent Legrand)



Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, Hamata, Red Sea governorate, 27 July 2013 (Vincent Legrand)

BROAD-BILLED ROLLER *Eurystomus glaucurus* (0/0, 1/1)

- Adal Dieb, Gebel Elba (22°41'N, 36°05'E), adult, found dead, 30 October 2010, photographed (Ahmed Badry Sayed, Sherif Baha El Din)

This is the first record for Egypt of a dead bird photographed in the Hala'ib Triangle, so outside the Western Palearctic sensu Cramp & Simmons (1977). The corpse was found on a coastal mudflat by the ranger of the Elba Protected Area. On the photograph, the blue uppertail coverts are visible, as are the large, strong, yellow bill with a hook at tip. The species occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the nearest breeding grounds in the southern Sudan (subspecies *E. g. after*). Recently, the first record for Israel was obtained in September 2019.



Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*, Adal Dieb, Gebel Elba, adult, 30 October 2010 (Ahmed Badry Sayed)

BEARDED REEDLING *Panurus biarmicus* (0/0, 1/5)

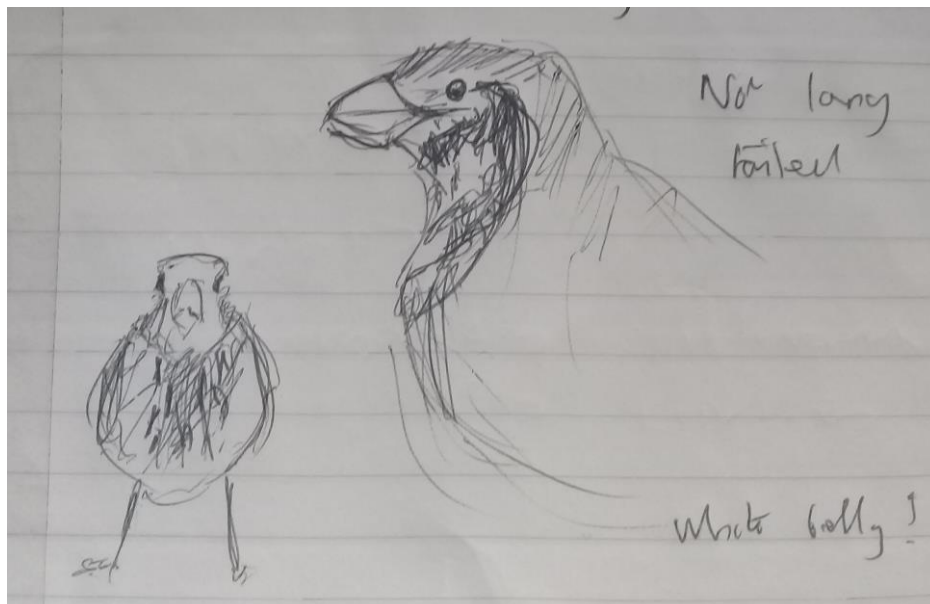
- northern shore of Lake Manzala, at least 5 ind. (including 2 males and 2 females), 31 December 1989 (Xanja Andriessse, Douwe de Boer)

This first record for Egypt was published in Dutch Birding (Andriessse et al. 1995). The observers heard the characteristic call of the species (twanging *ping* call), which they were familiar with from the Netherlands, and saw a flock of five birds that flew past them and landed in a reed bed. A description of this observation and a photograph were submitted to the book 'The Birds of Egypt' (1989) but, although the record was accepted by the book's author, it was received just too late to be included (note that the photo was not available for examination by the EORC). The species nearest breeding grounds are in Turkey (formerly also in Syria) and it is an irregular winter visitor to Cyprus and a vagrant in Israel.

THICK-BILLED LARK *Ramphocoris clotbey* (7/68, 1/3)

- between Siwa and Mersa Matruh, off the Siwa-Matruh highway, Western Desert, 3 adults, 14 November 2018 (Richard Hoath)

The species breeds in the deserts from NW Africa to Libya and in the Middle East. Goodman & Meininger (1989) described the status of this species in Egypt as a rare and irregular passage and winter visitor, but mentioned only 7 records (although some concerned flocks of up to 50 birds), with the last record in 1946.



Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey*, between Siwa and Mersa Matruh, Western Desert, adult, 14 November 2018 (Richard Hoath)

BANDED MARTIN *Riparia cincta* (0/0, 1/1)

- *Elephantine Island, Aswan, 1 ind., 15 November 1988 (Andy Clements)*

This is the first record for Egypt and the Western Palearctic (sensu BWP). The bird was found by an experienced observer and a detailed description was published in Sandgrouse (Clements 1990). There was some discussion in the EORC whether to accept extremely rare vagrants without specimen, photograph or sound-recordings, but it was agreed to keep this possibility open provided the observer has a well-established and credible track record; as was the case here. Banded Martin is an intra-African migrant reaching Sudan in winter. There are also records of single birds in Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Turner 2020).

GREY HYPOCOLIUS *Hypocolius ampelinus* (6/31, 2/2)

- *Hamata, Red Sea governorate, female, 29 November 2018, photographed (Ibrahim Saad)*
- *Sea Club Gorgonia Beach (24°42'22.78"N, 35°5'11.10"E), Marsa Alam, Red Sea governorate, adult male, 18-19 December 2018, photographed (Andrea Tarozzi)*

These two new records in 2018 bringing that exceptional year' total to 4 records with 28 individuals (Jiguet et al. 2019). These are the seventh and eight record of the species in Egypt.



Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Hamata, Red Sea governorate, female, 29 November 2018 (Ibrahim Saad)



Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Sea Club Gorgonia Beach, Marsa Alam, Red Sea governorate, adult male, 19 December 2018 (Andrea Tarozzi)

BLACK SCRUB ROBIN *Cercotrichas podobe* (9/9, 2/2)

- Shalaten, Red Sea governorate, 1 ind., 29-31 December 2018, photographed (Mahmoud Saber, Ahmed Abdelhafz)
- Lahami Bay Resort, near Berenice (24°12'21.126"N, 35°25'40.47"E), Red Sea governorate, 1 ind., 4-5 January 2019, photographed (David Monticelli, Vincent Legrand)

The first record of Black Scrub Robin for Egypt was in 2000, but in the last decade it was recorded almost annually. Most of the records are from the Red Sea coast and mainly from late autumn-winter. With more than 10 records now, the species is no longer considered by the EORC from 1 January 2020.



Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, Shalaten, Red Sea governorate, 29 December 2018 (Mahmoud Saber)



Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*, Lahami Bay Resort, near Berenice, Red Sea governorate, 5 January 2019 (Vincent Legrand)

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus* (5/5, 1/1)

- Lahami Bay Resort, near Berenice (24°12'21.126"N, 35°25'40.47"E), Red Sea governorate, 1 ind., 5 January 2019, photographed (David Monticelli, Vincent Legrand)

The first documented record since 1982. Goodman & Meininger (1989) mention five previous records in Egypt. The species is probably underdetected in Egypt because, e.g., in Israel it is a rare but regular migrant and winter visitor (Perlman & Meyrav 2009).



Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Lahami Bay Resort, near Berenice, Red Sea governorate, 5 January 2019 (Vincent Legrand)

Acknowledgements

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