



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Egypt & Petra

*14<sup>th</sup> April – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2009*



**Tour Leaders:** Mark Beevers & Markus Lilje

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Markus Lilje**

**Favourite 10 birds as voted for by participants:**

1. Pharaoh Eagle-Owl
2. Pied Kingfisher
3. Palestine Sunbird
4. White-throated Kingfisher
5. Egyptian Nightjar
6. Eurasian Hoopoe
7. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater
8. Sinai Rosefinch
9. Green Bee-eater
10. Nile Valley Sunbird

## Tour Summary

The first day of the tour was an arrival day for most participants, while those that had arrived early had their first taste of Egyptian birding at the Gezira Sports Grounds. This is a green oasis in the middle of the densely populated Cairo. Some of the highlights here included the difficult Rüppell's Warbler, Woodchat and Masked Shrikes, the ever-popular Eurasian Hoopoe and feral populations of Rose-ringed Parakeet and Indian Silverbill. During the afternoon the hotel garden proved great with Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin, Whinchat and a stunning Eurasian Wryneck much enjoyed by all present.

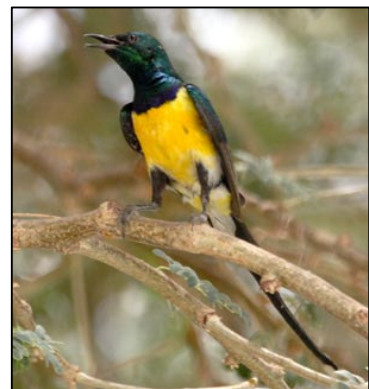


After our flight to the southern end of the country, near the Sudanese border, we checked in to our hotel at Abu Simbel. Some participants were prepared to brave the heat and we scanned the edges of one of the largest man-made waterbodies on Earth – Lake Nasser. This shoreline proved productive and produced scope views of Yellow-billed Stork, Kittlitz's, Common and Little Ringed Plovers, Eurasian Spoonbill and Red-throated Pipit among many others. In this area we also saw the highly sought-after Egyptian Nightjar on the second evening. Then it was on to the area's main attraction: the

Abu Simbel Temples, where we spent the rest of the day. This site has two massive temples, both of which were moved to higher ground in the 1960's when the Aswan Dam was built. The first temple is dedicated to the sun god Ra, although it was actually built to proclaim the greatness of Rameses II! The second temple is unusual in that it was dedicated to Rameses' favourite wife, Nefertari (he had over 34 wives). This was a great introduction to the famed and legendary temples of ancient Egypt. To round off the day we stayed to watch the Sound and Light show at the site after darkness had fallen. From Abu Simbel we also drove into the desert to search for sandgrouse – we were rewarded with very good views of Spotted Sandgrouse and a real bonus: Cream-coloured Courser! Scanning the shorelines and bays from an enjoyable boat trip, we racked up close looks at Yellow-billed Stork, Pink-backed Pelican, African Pied Wagtail, Western Osprey and many Black-crowned Night Heron and other members of this common water-associated family.



The next destination on our Route was Aswan, where we would drive in the only convoy of the tour. After checking into our cruising vessel and enjoying lunch we spent the afternoon on a motorized felucca and at the new Nubian Museum. On the Nile itself we saw the cataracts and Elephantine Island as well as the Mausoleum of Aga Khan, while birding highlights included several sightings of Little Bittern, close Pied Kingfisher and numerous other water-associated species. While in Aswan, there was also an opportunity to walk through the local market and look at or buy some of what was being offered. From the boat we then visited the Aswan High Dam, a remarkable structure, 3,6km wide and 111m high, completed in 1971 after 11 years of work. The temple of Philae was the next port of call after a short boat trip to the island to which the temple was moved after the High Dam caused it to be permanently flooded. The temple of Philae was dedicated to the



goddess Isis.

The following stage of the tour began when we started cruising down the Nile on our boat, the Nile Odyssey, on the afternoon of day 5 of the tour. The first stop was for our next temple at Kom Ombo on the same afternoon.



The main temple building consisted of two equal halves; one side was dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek and the other to Horus. This temple was extremely impressive and it was the first temple where we saw remains of some of the original colour on the walls. The next temple on our list was the Temple of Horus at Edfu: an exceptionally well preserved example as it was hidden under the desert sands for hundreds of years. This temple contains fabulous examples of embossed

(raised) as well as engraved hieroglyphs. Years later the original users had left, this temple was re-used by Coptic Christians who defaced many of the Egyptian gods and engraved their own signs on the temple walls. At the Esna lock, where our ship had to wait its turn to go through, we added a few good birds including Black-necked Grebe, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. Many hours were spent on the deck as we cruised further down the Nile toward the Luxor area. It was great just watching the world go by on the banks of the Nile, where birds would frequently catch our attention. The final excursion from the boat was a morning around Luxor to visit the Valley of the Kings, Queen Hatshepsut's Temple and the Colossi of Memnon. We started off by visiting the Valley of the Kings, a desolate area that was used to hide the mummies and treasures of buried pharaohs, as tomb robbery was a huge problem even in ancient times. There is not much to be seen from the outside, but deep shafts lead to highly decorate burial chambers, most of which still failed to evade the robbers. A number of tombs were open and various tombs were chosen by the participants, depending on a number of factors. Some tombs are known for their colour, others for the different stages of decoration that can still be seen on the walls. Some of us also went to see the tomb of King Tutankamun, the only pharaoh's tomb that had evaded the ancient robbers – famous for the incredible treasures found within it. The birding highlight was a flock of attractive Trumpeter Finch coming to drink at a dish of water nearby. Next we were off to the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, a magnificent sight. Although it has been damaged, the greater part of it still gives justice to its former beauty. Here we could also see beautiful hieroglyphs and large areas still had brilliant color remnants. Before lunch we quickly visited the Colossi of Memnon.



Near our hotel on the nearby Crocodile Island we found some excellent birds due to the well watered lawns and abundance of plants. Stunning Nile Valley Sunbird, scope views of Senegal Thick-knee, Little Bittern, European and Green Bee-eaters, Pied Kingfisher, Eurasian Golden Oriole and Red Avadavat were all recorded during the afternoon. From here we also visited the last two ancient Egyptian temples of the tour: Karnak and Luxor. Few sights in Egypt are as impressive as the colossal temple complex of Karnak. It was built in the time of Rameses III, and is the largest temple complex ever built in antiquity. An unexpected bonus here was to find the highly sought-after and difficult Pharaoh Eagle-Owl among the huge blocks that make up the temple walls! The Luxor temple is also very impressive and has produced numerous archaeological finds in the last few years. Interestingly, today one can see a mosque, still in use, perched on top of the original temple.

After a bus drive through the desert we were at our lodging for the next two nights: the El Gouna beach resort, north of Hurghada. In this area we enjoyed birding highlights that included many



White-cheeked Tern and Sooty Shearwater were much admired.

From Hurghada we then caught a ferry to the Sinai Peninsula, where we docked at Sharm El Sheikh. Our time in this area was spent birding and snorkelling in Ras Mohammed National Park while some participants visited the Sharm Sewage Works or explored some of the tourism hub that is Sharm el Sheikh. Our visit to Ras Mohammed, a world renowned Marine Reserve produced the sleek Sooty Falcon, Whimbrel and Eurasian Curlew as well as around 35 migrating Eurasian Honey Buzzard. The snorkeling here was was incredible! Just off the beach, the reef dropped off forming a sheer face covered with amazing corals and a diversity of fish that could be watched. For most of us this was one of the highlights of the trip! Other birds around Sharm were Peregrine Falcon, Wood Warbler and numerous shorebirds.

A beautiful drive through a part of the Sinai Desert took us to St. Katherine. The monastery located here is considered a very holy place to some Coptic Christians who perform an annual pilgrimage here. Among other



things it is believed to contain a descendant of the original Burning Bush, and it is built at the foot of Mt Sinai where Moses received the Ten



Commandments. Around the monastery we found a number of new birds that included European Pied Flycatcher, Sinai Rosefinch, Scrub and Garden Warblers and Tristram's Starling. In this area we also visited Wadi Feiran, an orchard holding mainly palms, in search of new species. Spectacled Bulbul and Blackstart were two targets and other birds we found included Ortolan Bunting, Common Nightingale. Hume's Owl did not show up in the evening, but not for lack of trying.

Returning to Africa via the tunnel at Suez, we headed to our next hotel at Ain Sukhna. En route we stopped at a wetland where some were fortunate to glimpse Water Rail, while a few other birds were more obliging. This area is a well-known raptor migration point where thousands of birds use the thermals of the nearby Bir Abu Darag Mountain range to migrate across the desert into Israel. It lived up to its reputation at St. Paul's Monastery, where some kept the eyes skyward, while others took an in-depth tour of the monastery itself. Some of the highlights were Egyptian Vulture, Short-toed Snake, Booted, Eastern Imperial, Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Common and Long-legged Buzzards. A flock of around 200 Levant Sparrowhawk provided a spectacle at huge height. A short excursion to Suez in the afternoon produced many Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin and Curlew Sandpiper, Slender-billed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls as well as Swift, Lesser

Crested and Sandwich Terns. A number of the above shorebirds showed good breeding plumage. We also birded through the Eastern Desert at Wadi Hagul en route to Cairo, where we found 5 species of wheatear that included Finsch's, Pied and Mourning. We then headed to Abassa, east of Cairo where we enjoyed a few hours. Here we had excellent looks at a pair of Greater Painted Snipe, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, stunning White-throated Kingfisher, Little Bittern and Spotted Redshank.

In Cairo we then turned our focus first to the Citadel, where we visited the Muhammed Ali Mosque, an imposing structure overlooking the huge metropolis. After a while at the Bazar and lunch on a Moored boat on the Nile, we headed to the much-anticipated Cairo Museum. After a guided tour of the highlights, we had a while to roam around on our own. The collection of ancient artifacts, consisting of over 120 000 exhibits, was truly remarkable. The room containing the fabulous death mask and jewellery of Tutenkhamun was a favourite. The Egyptian part of the tour was then concluded on the final day by visits to pyramids and the Sphinx. First it was off to Giza, where the three most famous pyramids are the burial place of three pharaohs, father (Cheops), son (Khafre), and grandson (Menkaure). Some visited the recently discovered solar boat, a truly spectacular ceremonial boat that was wonderfully preserved in the sands next to the pyramid, from where it was destined to take the king into the afterlife. We next visited another celebrated structure: the Sphinx, where one enters the area through the temple dedicated to it. Zoser's Step Pyramid was the very first pyramid to be built. The king wanted a more elaborate tomb than his predecessors and got the best architect of the time, Imhotep to design it to this end. The final product was this fabulous step pyramid, the first of over 100 pyramids built in ancient Egypt! Then it was on to Jordan and its capital Amman, where we would spend one night.



Wadi An Sir was where we headed on the first morning in Jordan – what a great area it turned out to be. The greenery on the hills, combined with a variety of flowers was refreshing after weeks of mainly dry and dusty surroundings in Egypt. The area produced some wonderful sightings that included Syrian Woodpecker, Common Linnet, Eurasian Jay, Barbary Falcon and Cretzschmar's Bunting. After a Jordanian lunch in Amman, we headed south across the desert and arrived in the modern town of Petra in the late afternoon. Our hotel was situated on a mountainslope, allowing panoramic views of the mountains around the ancient city below. Birding around the hotel delivered Palestine Sunbird, Thrush Nightingale and Mourning Wheatear. The ancient city of Jordan was of course the main reason for our visit here and is regarded as the most astounding ancient city left in the modern world. Petra flourished as a vast trading city and controlled a large part of the "Incense Route", thus profiting from the trade between the Greeks, Persians, Medes and Egyptians. The Nabataean's were at their peak from the 3rd century before Christ until the 1st century after Christ when Petra was annexed by the Romans. The journey to the ancient city starts off with a kilometer walk to the Siq entrance. After walking through a two-kilometer long narrow crevasse through tall canyon walls, we found ourselves standing before the famous Treasury, hewn from the Sandstone cliffs. This stone-carved facade is approximately 88 feet tall and is extremely well preserved considering the soft sandstone from which it was hewn. All the tombs and other structures in the valley were cut from the

rock from the top down. Our local guide then took us further into the old city and it was amazing to see how many rock-cut tombs and other structures there were. A few also walked the extra mile to see the Monastery as well as the great view of the mountainous desert beyond. While walking in Petra birds seen included Fan-tailed Raven, Blue Rock Thrush as well as the much sought after Sinai Rosefinch. This tour was then rounded off in Amman, in time to catch our international flights home or for a few more days in the country, so ending an exciting antiquities and bird-filled tour in a part of the world where tourism began.

## Annotated Checklists of Birds and Mammals

**Birds:** Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. *Birds of the World: Recommended English Names*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Version 2.0 generated on 2009-01-19. When the taxonomy differs from that of Clement's, the Clement's name will be written in brackets or differences will be explained in a note below the species.

**Mammals:** nomenclature and taxonomy follows J. Kingdon *The Kingdon Fieldguide to African Mammals* (1997) Academic Press.

### BIRDS (180 species seen)

#### Swans, Geese & Ducks Anatidae

**Egyptian Goose**

*Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Commonly seen on the shoreline of Lake Nasser. In Egypt this species is only found in the south of the country around Abu Simbel

**Northern Pintail**

*Anas acuta*

A good flock of 23 birds was seen upstream from Luxor on the Nile.

**Common Pochard**

*Aythya ferina*

Four birds were seen at the lock at Esna.

**Tufted Duck**

*Aythya fuligula*

Three birds were found from the boat at the Esna lock.

#### Shearwaters Procellariidae

**Sooty Shearwater**

*Puffinus griseus*

A single bird was found during our boat trip, to snorkel near Hurghada, where we enjoyed good views.

#### Grebes Podicipedidae

**Little Grebe**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A few birds were seen on our visit to Abassa Fish Ponds, also near Ain Sukhna.

**Black-necked (Eared) Grebe**

*Podiceps nigricollis*

Three birds were scoped near our lock crossing at Esna.

#### Storks Ciconiidae

**Yellow-billed Stork**

*Mycteria ibis*

Three birds were seen at Lake Nasser on both days. This is the only site in Egypt where they are regularly recorded.

**White Stork**

*Ciconia ciconia*

This species was recorded on 7 days during the tour, on 4 days flocks of 50 or more were seen.

#### Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

**Glossy Ibis**

*Plegadis falcinellus*

Small numbers were encountered along the Nile, we later had a flock of around 30 at Abassa.

**Eurasian Spoonbill***Platalea leucorodia*

One flock of 25 were seen at Lake Nasser on the first visit, further sightings near El Gouna.

**Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae****Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus*

This skulking species was seen well during our tour, four birds were seen on our motorized Felucca ride at Aswan, others along the Nile and again at Abassa Fish Ponds.

**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

This worldwide species was regularly recorded, highest numbers near Luxor on the Nile.

**Striated Heron***Butorides striata*

Small numbers were seen on the Nile, one also scoped at the Abassa Fish Ponds.

**Squacco Heron***Ardeola ralloides*

Regularly recorded at most wetland sites during the tour, highest day total was around 500 between Edfu and Esna.

**Western Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Regularly recorded throughout Egypt in good numbers with highest number being over 500 in a day along the Nile.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Eastern Cattle Egret B. coromandus of south and east Asia and Australasia as Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis.*

**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Regularly recorded at most wetland sites and along the Nile River.

**Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea*

Commonly recorded during the first week, one day produced a high count of 30 along the Nile.

**Western Great Egret***Alba alba*

A singleton was seen at Lake Nasser on both days we visited the airport bay.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Eastern Great Egret B. modesta of south and east Asia and Australasia as Great Egret Alba alba.*

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta*

Regularly recorded at water bodies with highest number being 200+ on our Nile boat cruise.

**Western Reef Egret (-Heron)***Egretta gularis*

A few of these off-white birds were seen near Hurghada and at Ras Mohammed NP.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Dimorphic Egret E. dimorpha as Western Reef-Heron E. gularis.*

**Pelicans Pelecanidae****Pink-backed Pelican***Pelecanus rufescens*

Two birds were found on Lake Nasser was a good find at their most northern distribution in Africa.

**Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae****Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo*

Small numbers were seen between Aswan and Luxor.

**Ospreys Pandionidae****Western Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

Single birds were seen at Lake Nasser, along the Nile and Ras Mohammed NP, a nest with 3 chicks was scoped on one of the Red Sea islands we visited from Hurghada.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Eastern Osprey P. cristatus of Australasia as Osprey P. haliaetus.*

**Kites Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae****European Honey Buzzard***Pernis apivorus*

We had great views of around 35 birds moving north over Ras Mohammed NP, distant views at St. Paul's Monastery.

**Black-winged (shouldered) Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

Sightings of this widespread bird were had on 2 consecutive days: on the Nile and Crocodile island.

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

This raptor was recorded on most days during the first half of the trip, with more around Ain Sukhna later.

**Egyptian Vulture***Neophron percnopterus*

Single birds were seen near Esna and El Gouna, before we saw 5 birds among other raptors at St. Paul's Monastery.

**Short-toed Snake Eagle***Circaetus gallicus*

We were fortunate to record 11 birds over St. Paul's Monastery.

NOTE: Clements calls this Short-toed Eagle.

**Western Marsh Harrier***Circus aeruginosus*

First recorded at Abu Simbel, further sightings on the Nile, near El Gouna and near Sharm el Sheikh.

**Pallid Harrier***Circus macrourus*

A few of this species was seen around the El Gouna area.

**Montagu's Harrier***Circus pygargus*

Single birds were seen near El Gouna, Ras Mohammed NP and near Ain Sukhna.

**Levant Sparrowhawk***Accipiter brevipes*

This was one of the trip's big targets, single males were seen well at El Gouna and in Jordan, a flock of around 200 made an appearance high above St. Paul's Monastery.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk***Accipiter nisus*

40+ were found migrating along the Abu Shir Mountain range at El Gouna, north of Hurghada, others were seen at Wadi Feiran and at Ain Sukhna.

**Common (Eurasian) Buzzard***Buteo buteo*

Around 800 birds were seen over the mountains near Hurghada, another 300+ birds were recorded on our "raptor watch" day in the Ain Sukhna area. Smaller numbers were seen migrating elsewhere in Egypt and Jordan.

**Long-legged Buzzard***Buteo rufinus*

A single bird was seen well by some participants at St. Paul's Monastery.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle***Aquila pomarina*

Three birds were seen with other migrating raptor species at St. Paul's near Ain Sukhna.

**Steppe Eagle***Aquila nipalensis*

Around 30 of these migrants were seen above St. Paul's Monastery, mostly juveniles.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle***Aquila heliaca*

Two of these large birds were seen with other migrating raptor species near Ain Sukhna.

NOTE: Clements calls this species Imperial Eagle.

**Booted Eagle***Hieraetus pennatus*

Two birds were seen north of Hurghada, while we had an impressive 25 birds near Ain Sukhna.

NOTE: Clements places this species in the genus Aquila.

### Caracaras, Falcons Falconidae

**Common (Eurasian) Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Regularly recorded, almost daily, in small numbers throughout Egypt and Jordan.

**Sooty Falcon***Falco concolor*

Two birds were seen during the time we spent at Ras Mohammed NP, one gave most participants good views. These birds had just recently arrived from their wintering grounds around Madagascar.

**Lanner Falcon***Falco biarmicus*

A pair of these birds was seen circling between Luxor and Hurghada.

**Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus*

A singleton was seen flying above the Nile at Aswan, two more at the Sharm Sewage works.

**Barbary Falcon***Falco pelegrinoides*

We enjoyed views of a perched bird in Wadi An Sir in Jordan.

### Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

#### **Water Rail**

*Rallus aquaticus*

A few birds were seen and heard by some, at a small wetland near Ain Sukhna.

#### **African Swamphen**

*Porphyrio madagascariensis*

Fairly common on the Nile River where the highest count of twenty birds were made between Edfu and Esna.

*NOTE: This species is lumped by Clements with Purple Swamphen P. porphyrio, that enters Africa only in the extreme North-west and is otherwise widespread, as Purple Swamphen P. porphyrio.*

#### **Common Moorhen**

*Gallinula chloropus*

Seen at scattered localities throughout Egypt with the highest counts on the Nile and Abassa ponds.

#### **Eurasian Coot**

*Fulica atra*

6 birds were seen near the lock at Esna.

### Stone-curlews, Thick-knees Burhinidae

#### **Senegal Thick-knee**

*Burhinus senegalensis*

First recorded at Aswan, later more sightings on Crocodile island and Abassa Fish Ponds.

### Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae

#### **Black-winged Stilt**

*Himantopus himantopus*

This widespread species was seen on 4 days of the tour – highest numbers from our boat on the way between the Edfu Temple and Luxor.

### Plovers Charadriidae

#### **Spur-winged Laping (Plover)**

*Vanellus spinosus*

A very common wetland species, recorded at virtually every wetland, around 80 at Abassa Ponds.

#### **Grey (Black-bellied) Plover**

*Pluvialis squatarola*

Around 100 birds were seen near Suez during low tide, some already in breeding plumage.

#### **Common Ringed Plover**

*Charadrius haiticula*

Recorded at Lake Nasser, Sharm El Sheikh and around 70 on the shore near Suez.

#### **Little Ringed Plover**

*Charadrius dubius*

Recorded at Lake Nasser, these birds are scarce in Egypt and showed very well.

#### **Kittlitz's Plover**

*Charadrius pecuarius*

Recorded at Lake Nasser in small numbers, including a chick, this area is the northern range limit.

#### **Kentish Plover**

*Charadrius alexandrinus*

These birds were seen on a few days, with most records on the coast at Ras Mohammed and Suez.

*NOTE: This species is lumped by Clements Snowy Plover C. nivosus of the New World as Snowy Plover C alexandrinus.*

### Painted Snipes Rostratulidae

#### **Greater Painted Snipe**

*Rostratula benghalensis*

We enjoyed views of a pair of these stunning birds hiding on the edges of the Abassa Fish Ponds.

### Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae

#### **Common Snipe**

*Gallinago gallinago*

A single bird was flushed along Lake Nasser, another was taking cover from wind under some desert shrubs, on the Red Sea coast near Suez.

#### **Wimbrel**

*Numenius phaeopus*

7 of these birds were seen well on the Ras Mohammed NP coastline.

#### **Eurasian Curlew**

*Numenius arquata*

These birds were seen well with the above species as well as on the coast near Suez.

**Spotted Redshank***Tringa erythropus*

We enjoyed good scope looks at an almost fully breeding plumaged bird at Abassa Ponds.

**Common Redshank***Tringa totanus*

A few birds were seen at El Gouna and Sharm El Sheikh Sewage Works.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Recorded at scattered wetland sites throughout Egypt with most seen near Suez.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa achropus*

Single birds were seen along the Nile near Esna and at the Sharm Sewage Works.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

Recorded at scattered wetland sites throughout Egypt, good views near Sharm El Sheikh.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Another widespread shorebird that was present at most freshwater wetlands.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

Good numbers of around 50 of this species were seen on the Suez coastline.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

A few birds were seen near Abu Simbel, more around the Red Sea and 120+ at Suez.

**Temminck's Stint***Calidris temminckii*

Single birds were recorded at scattered wetland sites: near El Gouna, Sharm el Sheikh and Suez.

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea*

3 birds were seen along the Suez coast, one in very good breeding plumage.

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*

5 birds were seen, some in smart breeding plumage, with the above species at Suez.

**Ruff***Philomachus pugnax*

Highest numbers of around a dozen birds were recorded at the Abassa Fish Ponds, others at Sharm and north of Hurghada.

**Coursers, Pratincoles Glareolidae****Cream-colored Courser***Cursorius cursor*

We were fortunate to enjoy good views of a single bird on a morning trip near Abu Simbel.

**Collared Pratincole***Glareola pratincola*

3 birds were seen well in flight over the golf course at El Gouna.

**Gulls, Terns, Skimmers Laridae**

NOTE: Clements places all the gulls below in the genus *Larus*.

**Slender-billed Gull***Chroicocephalus ichthyaeus*

Around 300 birds were seen near Suez, smaller numbers seen north of Hurghada.

**Black-headed Gull***Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Recorded in small numbers at scattered sites throughout Egypt: most on the Nile and near Suez.

**White-eyed Gull***Ichthyaeus leucophthalmus*

Many hundreds of these birds were seen on three consecutive days near Hurghada – stunning close views were had from the snorkeling boat.

**Sooty Gull***Ichthyaeus hemprichii*

Around 6 birds were seen at Gifton Island, near Hurghada.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull***Larus fuscus*

A single bird was seen at a distance over Lake Nasser, others near Hurghada and Suez.

**Gull-billed Tern***Gelochelidon nilotica*

Recorded in biggest numbers on the Nile near Aswan, others seen near Suez.

**Caspian Tern***Hydropogon caspia*

This widespread, large and distinctive bird was seen at most coastal Red Sea sites.

**Swift (Great Crested) Tern***Thalasseus bergii*

Near the northern limit of its range – 10 were seen at the beach near Suez.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Around a dozen birds were seen where they were sitting on rocks on the coast near Suez.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

10 birds seen with other species on the Suez coast, where a small roost was found.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

Recorded along the Red Sea coast, highest numbers near Suez, a single bird on the Nile.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

20 on our boat trip off Hurghada 2 each at Sharm Sewage Works and Ras Mohammed NP.

**White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*

We were very happy to find 8 birds in a small flock off Hurghada. A breeding migrant to the Red Sea.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

Recorded at many localities during the first half of the trip with hundreds seen on our Nile, many in great breeding plumage.

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

First recorded at Aswan, dozens were seen on the Nile two more near Sharm el Sheikh.

### Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

**Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus*

Around 16 birds were seen well and scoped at an old Camel feeding station near Abu Simbel.

### Pigeons, Doves Columbidae

**Common (Rock) Pigeon** *Columba livia*

Commonly seen at scattered localities throughout the trip. Many of the birds seen in the Sinai were truly wild and pure-bred Rock Pigeons and can be safely ticked by the purist!

**European (Eurasian) Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

Seen at many localities throughout the tour, except around the Sinai Peninsula, most at Abu Simbel.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

First recorded at El Gouna, it proved common during the latter half of the tour.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Commonly recorded and one of the birds that was seen daily throughout the tour in good numbers.

### Parrots Psittacidae

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*

10 birds were recorded at Gezira Sports Ground in Cairo, and again near Amman, Jordan.

### Cuckoos & Coucals Cuculidae

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

We had good looks at a single bird near our accommodation near Petra in Jordan. It was first heard, before being seen perched and in flight by all present.

### Owls Strigidae

**Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus*

We had incredible close views of a single bird at one of the temple sites along the Nile, this bird was voted as the top bird of the tour by participants.

### Nightjars Caprimulgidae

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

A single bird was seen by all near the airport bay at Abu Simbel as dusk was fast descending.

**Swifts Apodidae****Common Swift***Apus apus*

Good numbers were seen around the Luxor area, small number on the Sinai Peninsula and Jordan.

**Pallid Swift***Apus pallidus*

Recorded in good number in Cairo and later around temples and Valley of the Kings near Luxor.

**Rollers Coraciidae****European Roller***Coracias garrulus*

A single stunning bird was seen and scoped by all near Abu Simbel.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae****White-throated Kingfisher***Halcyon smyrnensis*

Ten at Abassa where we were treated to good views of this stunning bird, one of Egypt's most colorful. More birds near Saqqara Pyramid and one in Jordan.

**Pied Kingfisher***Ceryle rudis*

These very popular birds were seen in very good numbers along the Nile and in smaller numbers at many other wetland and coastal sites.

**Bee-eaters Meropidae****Green Bee-eater***Merops orientalis*

Small numbers of these colorful birds were seen at scattered sites throughout Egypt. Our highest day count of 6 was obtained at Crocodile Island, the first bird was seen at Aswan.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater***Merops persicus*

Best views were had at Abassa, the first birds were seen flying alongside our boat on the Nile.

**European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*

Recorded almost daily throughout Egypt and Jordan. Our highest count was of 100 birds seen migrating along the Nile. We had stunning close views of these elegant birds at Crocodile Island.

**Hoopoes Upupidae****Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Small numbers of this always popular bird were seen on almost every day of the tour, other than near Hurgada and the Sinai Peninsula.

*NOTE: Clements only recognises two species of Hoopoe; Eurasian U. epops and Madagascar U. marginata. One further species, is widely recognised namely African U. africana, a sub-saharan resident.*

**Woodpeckers Picidae****Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

We had an excellent look at a pair at our first Cairo hotel gardens. Another near our Petra hotel

**Syrian Woodpecker***Dendrocopos syriacus*

We had an excellent look at a few birds in the Wadi An Sir on the first morning in Jordan.

**Shrikes Laniidae****Woodchat Shrike***Lanius senator*

First seen in Cairo with further sightings at El Gouna and in Jordan.

**Masked Shrike***Lanius nubicus*

Seen in small numbers at scattered sites throughout Egypt, in Jordan we recorded around 10 birds.

**Figbirds, Orioles Oriolidae****Eurasian Golden Oriole***Oriolus oriolus*

We enjoyed small numbers of this stunning bird at Crocodile island, Wadi Feiran and St. Paul's.

**Crows, Jays Corvidae****Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius*

20 of these birds were around in the Wadi we visited near Amman, where they showed well.

**House Crow***Corvus splendens*

Encountered at Ain Sukhna and around Suez where they were common, 2 birds near Sharm.

**Hooded Crow***Corvus corone*

Commonly seen throughout Egypt and Jordan.

**Brown-necked Raven***Corvus ruficollis*

Quite regularly encountered at scattered sites throughout Egypt, mainly in dry, rocky areas.

**Fan-tailed Raven***Corvus rhipidurus*

Around 6 birds were seen during our visit to the ancient city of Petra.

**Tits & Chickadees Paridae****Great Tit***Parus major*

Half a dozen birds showed well in the relatively lush gardens and trees of Wadi An Sir.

**Larks Alaudidae****Bimaculated Lark***Melanocorypha bimaculata*

We had very good looks at a single bird at the Sharm El Sheikh Sewage Works.

**Desert Lark***Ammomanes deserti*

These birds were seen well near St. Kathryn's Monastery, near Suez and on both Jordan days.

**Greater Short-toed Lark***Calandrella brachydactyla*

A few birds were seen very well near the shores of Lake Nasser.

**Crested Lark***Galerida cristata*

Recorded on a number of days with high numbers around Abu Simbel.

**Bulbuls Pycnonotidae****White-spectacled Bulbul***Pycnonotus xanthopygus*

Common at Wadi Fieran and several seen daily at Petra.

**Common Bulbul***Pycnonotus barbatus*

Seen quite commonly at scattered sites throughout Egypt.

**Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae****Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)***Riparia riparia*

Large numbers were seen at several sites, recorded on most days.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Recorded commonly on every day of the tour. The Egyptian race *H.r. savignii* which are a deep rusty reddish color were seen on several occasions at scattered sites and we observed flocks of migrating white-bellied Palearctic birds.

**Rock Martin***Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Regularly seen throughout Egypt and in Petra, Jordan with the highest numbers around the rocky cliffs at Lake Nasser.

**Common House-Martin***Delichon urbica*

Recorded in small numbers at scattered sites on most days outside Cairo.

NOTE: Clements just calls this House Martin

**Red-rumped Swallow***Hirundo daurica*

Seen in small numbers on five days, Jordan produced the highest numbers during the tour.

### Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

A small number of birds were seen on the Sinai Peninsula.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

This lovely little bird was seen in small numbers at scattered sites: Cairo, Sharm and Wadi Feiran.

### Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

This large warbler and vocal bird was first heard and seen at Aswan, more along the Nile and later some showed very well at Abassa Fish Ponds.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

A few birds were seen: at the first hotel in Cairo and later along the Nile valley.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Small numbers of these birds were seen, some calling, at scattered locations around the Egypt.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida*

A fairly common species seen at scattered localities throughout Egypt and Jordan where it is a breeding migrant. Highest numbers were recorded during the first days along the Nile.

### Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*

Several birds were seen on and near Crocodile Island and later at Abassa.

**(Streaked) Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta*

Very quick views were had by some participants near St. Kathrine's Monastery.

**Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis*

Commonly seen at wetland sites throughout Egypt. Large numbers at our Abu Simbel hotel.

### Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae

**Eurasian Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

We had good views at St. Katherine, Wadi Feiran, near Suez and in Jordan.

*NOTE: Clements just calls this Blackcap.*

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

A single bird was seen well in the St. Katherine's Monastery garden.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

Small numbers were seen throughout the tour, at most sites with some trees or shrubs.

**Common (Greater) Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

Small numbers seen at Gezira Sports Club, the monastery at St. Katherine's and in Jordan.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*

Two stunning male birds were seen well on a walk in the Wadi An Sir near Amman.

**Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli*

A single bird was seen well on the morning of the arrival day at the Sports Club in Cairo.

### Starlings Sturnidae

**Tristram's Starling** *Onychognathus tristramii*

A few of these were seen on both occasions we went near the St. Katherine's Monastery.

### Thrushes Turdidae

**Common (Eurasian) Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

Seen very well and in good numbers in the Amman area, also Gezira Sports Club.

### Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

- Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*  
We enjoyed excellent views of a few birds near our Petra hotel.
- Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*  
2 birds were seen on two days when we visited Wadi Feiran, near St. Katherine.
- Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes*  
A single bird was seen well by some in the garden of the first Cairo hotel.
- Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
First recorded at Abu Simbel with very good numbers later at St. Katherine and also in Jordan.
- Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*  
Small numbers were seen on 8 days of the tour, including in Cairo and Abu Simbel and El Gouna.
- Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*  
Small numbers were seen first at Abu Simbel, later also on both sides of the Red Sea: near Hurgada and on the Sinai Peninsula.
- Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*  
A female only near the town of Suez.
- Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica*  
Fantastic males were seen in Jordan, other sightings at Abu Simbel and near Suez.
- Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens*  
A male was seen well near Suez and it was quite common in and around Petra on the last day.  
*NOTE: This extremely variable complex with an extensive range and many distinctive isolated populations is a perfect candidate for multi-splitting. This was the O.l. lugens race*
- Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii*  
A fine male was found in a little valley near the City of Suez – very good bird in Africa.
- White-crowned (White-tailed) Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*  
Common around Abu Simbel and in the desert around the Sinai Peninsula and near Suez.
- Blackstart** *Cercomela melanura*  
A few birds were seen very well at Wadi Feiran and later again in Petra.
- Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*  
Single birds were seen at the golf course at El Gouna and in St. Katherine's Monastery garden.
- Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*  
A single bird was glimpsed near Suez, later good views were had around the ancient city of Petra.
- Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*  
First recorded Sharm el Sheikh, it was common around St. Katherine and seen in Jordan.
- European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*  
A stunning male was seen well in the garden at the St. Katherine's Monastery.

### Sunbirds Nectarinidae

- Nile Valley Sunbird** *Hedydipna metallica*  
A few birds were seen very well on 4 days around Aswan and Luxor – in the Nile Valley. 15+ birds were seen at Crocodile Island, Luxor.
- Palestine Sunbird** *Cinnyris oseus*  
This bird proved to be extremely common in Wadi An Sir and our Petra hotel in Jordan – another favourite among the participants as it afforded extreme close-up views.

### Old World Sparrows Passeridae

- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*  
Common and seen daily throughout the tour.

### Waxbills, Munias & Allies Estrildidae

**Indian Silverbill***Eodice malabarica*

Two birds were seen at the Sports Club in Cairo on the arrival day.

NOTE: Clements calls this White-throated Munia

**Red Avadavat***Amandave amandava*

3 birds were seen in wheat fields at Crocodile Island, Luxor. As the above species, it was introduced into Egypt from southern Asia.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae****Western Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

Good numbers seen almost daily throughout Egypt, with the exception of Cairo. The attractive and distinctive black-headed *M. f. feldeggi* was frequently recorded during our tour.

NOTE: Clements just calls this bird Yellow Wagtail.

**White Wagtail***Motacilla alba*

Single birds were seen at Abu Simbel and near El Gouna.

**African Pied Wagtail***Motacilla aguimp*

Two birds were seen at Lake Nasser, at their most northerly distribution.

**Tawny Pipit***Anthus campestris*

This pale bird was seen at a few locations that included Abu Simbel and El Gouna.

**Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis*

Small numbers were first seen at the Cairo hotel and later at Sharm sewage works and Wadi Feiran.

**Red-throated Pipit***Anthus cervinus*

Good numbers were seen around Lake Nasser, others around Hurhada and Sharm el Sheikh areas.

**Finches Fringillidae****European Greenfinch***Carduelis chloris*

Recorded on both days in Jordan – at Wadi An Sir and near the Petra hotel.

**Common Linnet***Carduelis cannabina*

Great views of small numbers of males and females were observed in Jordan – Wadi As Sir.

**Trumpeter Finch***Rhodopechys githaginea*

Around 12 birds were seen at very close quarters in the Valley of Kings, Luxor, others near Suez.

**Sinai (Pale) Rosefinch***Carpodacus synoicus*

Around 7 birds were seen well near the monastery at St. Katherine, more seen later at Petra, Jordan.

**Buntings & Allies Emberizidae****Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana*

A few of these birds were seen very well at Wadi Feiran and on both Jordanian days.

**Cretzschmar's Bunting***Miliaria caesia*

A singing male was enjoyed near a poppy field in the Amman area in Jordan.

**Mammals (species)****Dogs & Allies Canidae****Red Fox***Vulpes vulpes*

We had excellent looks at an individual hunting at St Katherine and two were seen at Saqqara Pyramid.

**Rüppell's Sand Fox***Vulpes ruepelli***Dolphins Delphinidae****Bottle-nosed Dolphin***Tursiops aduncus*

We enjoyed good views of these cetaceans at a distance near Hurgada and again near Ain Sukhna.

**Photo credits (in order of appearance):** Bird hieroglyphics, Abu Simbel statue close-up, Graceful Prinia, Nile Valley Sunbird, Sobek embossed at Kom Ombo, Trumpeter Finch, White-eyed Gull, Sinai scenery and Sinai Rosefinch, Cheops pyramid and Petra Treasury all by Markus Lilje on the 2009 tour.

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