

Bird specimen records of some uncommon or previously unrecorded forms in Egypt

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This paper documents some new or rare distributional records of species and subspecies obtained in Egypt (excluding the Sinai) and examined as skins unless otherwise stated, in the following museums: Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH), Chicago, a portion of which is part of the Conover Collection (CC); Giza Zoological Museum (GZM), Cairo; and the National Museum of Natural History, formerly United States National Museum (USNM), Washington, D.C. The principal collectors include: Dr. Harry Hoogstraal (FMNH); the late Abdallah El Negumi (GZM); Palearctic Migrant Survey (PMS) (see Hubbard 1967a, b, Watson 1971). Notable new records from autumn 1966 and spring 1967 PMS field seasons were reported by Hubbard & Seymour (1968). Wherever possible we have used the gazetteer of Osborn & Helmy (1980) for the spellings and coordinates of Egyptian localities. The systematic order follows Vaurie (1959, 1965).

Tachybaptus ruficollis ruficollis Little Grebe

A ♀ (USNM 550933) collected at Lake Manzala, 8 January 1971, is the first museum specimen record from Egypt of the nominate form (identification kindly confirmed by R. W. Storer), which breeds in Europe, the Near East and northwestern Africa. Little is known about its winter movements, so that from which part of the breeding range this migrant likely came is unknown.

Milvus milvus milvus Red Kite

A ♂ (GZM B452) captured alive (date unknown) at Abu Rawash (30° 02'N, 31° 06'E), Giza Governate, later dying in the Giza Zoo, 14 Sep 1942 is the first definite specimen record from Egypt of this species. This subspecies breeds in portions of Europe, the Middle East and northwest Africa (Vaurie 1965), is migratory in the northern portion of its range and has been recorded in Israel (Arnold 1962) and during August in Libya (Bundy 1976). In the early ornithological literature of Egypt, *M. milvus* was confused with the common Black Kite *M. migrans*, and consequently all previous records reported from the country were rejected by Meinertzhagen (1930). The only reliable records of the Red Kite in Egypt are those of Moreau (1928), who observed one along the Suez Canal in May; of El Negumi *et al.* (1950), who reported taking single birds near Abu Rawash in Jan and Dec 1939 and Jan 1943; and of Bijisma (1982), who observed 11 individuals near Suez between 27 Sep and 7 Oct 1981. One of the 1939 records of El Negumi *et al.* could be the same bird as the specimen reported here.

Charadrius asiaticus Caspian Plover

One, unsexed, (FMNH, CC 23734) "netted in tamarisk tree" at Bahig (30° 56'N, 29° 35'E), Matruh Governate, 14 Oct 1962, is the first known from Egypt. This record was briefly mentioned by Hoogstraal *et al.* (1964). Heuglin (1874) reported sightings from the northern coast and the Gulf of Suez, but Meinertzhagen (1930) rejected the records as too inconclusive. On migration the Caspian Plover passes quickly from its central Asian breeding grounds via a narrow corridor through Iraq and Syria to the Arabian Peninsula and thence across the Red Sea to wintering grounds in eastern and southern Africa (Nielsen 1971). However, it has been reported in northwestern Sinai (Etchécopar & Hübner 1967), at Ras el Bar, 20 Oct 1943 (Meiklejohn 1944), near Cairo by Sherif M. Baha el Din, Apr 1980 (Anon. 1981) and Dakhla Oasis, 24 Apr 1981 (P. L. Meininger, W. C. Mullié and S. M. Goodman).

Pterocles coronatus coronatus Coronetted Sandgrouse

Specimens recording exceptional distribution in eastern Egypt include: ♂ (FMNH, CC 25103), Wadi Umm Taghir (26° 41'N, 33° 46'E), 35 km west of Safage, Red Sea Governate, 16 May 1968; ♂ (GZM A2469), Wadi Kansathrope (in the Eastern Desert near Gebel

Elba, precise locality not found), Sudan Government Administration Area, 30 Dec 1938; 2 ♀♀ (GZM A2018 & A2019), Mersa Halaib (22° 13'N, 36° 38'E), Sudan Government Administration Area, 22 Dec 1938. These are the first records from the Egyptian Eastern Desert—previously known in Egypt only from the Nile Delta, Wadi Natroun and other areas west of the Nile Valley (Vaurie 1965). The darker and more heavily barred *P. c. vastitas* is found in the Sinai and Israel.

Oena capensis capensis Long-tailed or Namaqua Dove

Two ♀♀ (USNM 551110 & 551111) taken near Kom Ombo (24° 28'N, 32° 57'E), Aswan Governate, 27 Dec 1971, had heavy fat deposits. These are the first records in Egypt other than those collected in the extreme southeastern corner near Gebel Elba, Sudan Government Administration Area (Goodman in press). Specimens from the Gebel Elba region, include a [♂] (sexed by plumage, FMNH, CC 25104), taken at Wadi Akwamtra (22° 13'N, 36° 18'E), 16 Feb 1967 and a ♂ (GZM A2190) and a ♀ (GZM uncatalogued) both taken at Gebel Elba (22° 11'N, 36° 21'E), 4 Mar 1938.

Apus pallidus brehmorum Pallid Swift

Apus pallidus illyricus

Although the small pale subspecies *A. p. pallidus* is known to breed in the Nile Delta and Valley south to Luxor, the Faiyum and in the Dakhla and Kharga oases (Meinertzhagen 1930), darker and larger individuals (USNM and FMNH) have been taken along the northern coast near Bahig in which the wing measurements of ♀♀ taken between 5 Apr and 20 May were 161–170 mm (n=13, av. 165.5) and of ♂♂ collected between 8 Mar and 24 May were 162–173 mm (n=15, av. 166.4). In colour and wing length these coastal birds are inseparable from a small series of *illyricus* collected in Aegean Greece between 24 Apr and 6 Jul (sexes combined, 162–174 mm, n=12, av. 167.8). The only other published record of *illyricus* from Egypt is a single bird obtained by Meinertzhagen (1930) at Salum, west of Bahig, 21 Jan 1920 (wing 170 mm, British Museum (National History) No. 1965.M.5551, examined by SMG). The presence of these dark birds in late May is strongly suggestive of local breeding along the northern coast, but this needs to be verified.

A ♀ (FMNH 256970) collected at El Lahun (29° 13'N, 30° 59'E), El Faiyum Governate, 4 Dec 1959, and a ♀ (USNM 551166) and a ♂ (USNM 551165) taken in the Dakhla and Kharga oases, Western Desert Governate, 13 and 16 Jan 1972, (wings 164, 167 & 171 mm respectively) approach the plumage colouration of *A. p. brehmorum*, the breeding subspecies of eastern Mediterranean Europe and northwestern Africa east to Cyrenaica (Vaurie 1965). Until these specimens were available, there was no indication that *brehmorum* occurred in Egypt. Meinertzhagen (1930) assigned the breeding Pallid Swifts of the Faiyum and Dakhla and Kharga oases to nominate *pallidus*. Since the specimens reported here were taken during the winter it is not possible to determine if they were migrants or local breeding residents.

Very little is known about the movements of *brehmorum* and *illyricus* owing to the difficulty of identifying to subspecies the few specimens that have been collected on migration or on the wintering grounds (Lack 1956); *brehmorum* has been reported from Derna, northeastern Libya in early Apr (Hall & Goodwin in Stanford 1954) and from Darfur, Sudan in June (de Roo in Moreau 1972).

Apus melba melba Alpine Swift

A ♂ (GZM uncatalogued) was secured at Dokki, just outside Cairo, 31 Oct 1957. Although the Alpine Swift has been observed frequently in Egypt, this represents the first known specimen record. Sight records are scattered throughout most of the year; September (Schrader 1892); March 1923 (Meinertzhagen 1930) in El Faiyum; 6 Apr 1943 (Hutson 1944) at Cairo; 18 Jan 1979 (Meininger & Mullié 1981) between Beni Suef and El Minya; and 23 Feb 1979 (S. M. Goodman and P. F. Houlihan) at Luxor.

Nominate *melba* breeds in Morocco and southern Europe, east through Asia Minor to northern Iran, and winters in portions of sub-Saharan Africa (Brooke 1971, Vaurie 1965). The paler subspecies *tuneti* breeds in the Middle East to southern Iran and in North Africa from Libya west to Algeria, and is thought to winter in southern Arabia, northeastern Africa and the Sahara. Intermediate birds occur on islands in the eastern Mediterranean. The migration routes and wintering grounds of the 2 subspecies are poorly known. The nominate form has been recorded in northern Libya (Hall & Goodwin in Stanford 1954) and in Israel (Brooke 1971). The form *tuneti* may also winter in Africa and may be represented by some of the Egyptian sight records.

Jynx torquilla tschusii Wryneck

Two specimens, one unsexed (USNM 569056) and a ♂ (USNM 552625) taken at Bahig, 18 Apr and 10 Mar 1971, both had heavy fat deposits and are distinctly smaller and darker than nominate *torquilla*. These are the first known Egyptian specimens of *tschusii*, which breeds in Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and perhaps Corsica and was previously known in Africa only as a winter visitor to northern Tunisia and Algeria (Vaurie 1965). The lighter and larger European form *torquilla* is a fairly common migrant in Egypt and is represented by over 35 PMS specimens.

Rhampocorys clotbey Thick-billed Lark

One, unsexed, (GZM B472) was found injured at Mersa Matruh (31° 21'N, 27° 14'E), Matruh Governate, 16 Sep 1941 and expired 30 Sep 1941. The soft parts were recorded as "legs pale straw, bill dull pink, eyes black". Meinertzhagen (1930) reported 3 other specimens of this desert lark taken along the Cairo-Suez Road 2 Jul 1922, Aug 1923 and 21 Jan 1928. Jourdain & Lynes (1936) described 2 more specimens (both examined by SMG) in the collection of the Entomological Society Museum, Cairo collected along the same road 21 Jul 1922. Excluding the type ("ex Deserto Egypt"), the Mersa Matruh specimen represents the only September record and the first in Egypt west of the Nile.

Prunella modularis obscura Dunnock*Prunella modularis modularis*

Two subspecies of Dunnock are represented in the PMS collections. Three specimens are the first records of *obscura* in Egypt. A ♂ (USNM 533469) collected at Bahig, 23 Nov 1966, had an unossified skull, light fat and weighed 17.8 gms. Another ♂ (USNM 550596) and a ♀ (USNM 550594) taken at Bahig, 4 and 12 Nov 1969, had unossified skulls and medium and heavy fat deposits (respectively). This subspecies breeds in the Crimea, Caucasus, Transcaucasia and portions of the Middle East, and was previously thought to winter only on the breeding grounds and in Iraq and Iran (Vaurie 1959). Hubbard & Seymour (1968) listed the 23 Nov specimen as *P. m. modularis*; however, the distinct heavily streaked brown flanks, light brownish-grey upperparts and brown dorsal spotting of this and the other 2 specimens are characteristic of *obscura* rather than of European *modularis* (Watson 1961).

Nominate *modularis* was recorded in Egypt by Meinertzhagen (1930) on the basis of a specimen collected by Nicoll at Giza, 26 Feb 1917, and is represented by 3 PMS specimens: a ♀ (USNM 533470) taken at Bahig, 14 Nov 1966 (Hubbard & Seymour 1968); another ♀ (USNM 550595), with unossified skull and medium fat deposits, collected at Bahig, 27 Nov 1969, and a ♂ (USNM 551771), with ossified skull and heavy fat deposits, taken at Mersa Matruh, 11 Mar 1970.

Locustella fluviatilis River Warbler

The first known specimen of the River Warbler from Egypt was a ♀ (USNM 533474) taken at Bahig, 30 Sep 1966 (Hubbard & Seymour 1968). Since then, 7 additional specimens have been taken at Bahig between 28 August and 3 October (all in USNM). This species' main passage from the central and eastern European breeding grounds is recorded from Kenya to Transvaal, but it has been found several times in North Africa and the Middle East, for example: at sea (33° 15'N, 26° 10'E), in the cockpit of a helicopter, c. 420 km northeast of Alexandria, 12 May (Tuck 1964); in northeast Sinai, 29 Sep (Etchécopar & Hüe 1967); in northwestern Libya, 11 Apr (Guichard 1957); in Algeria, 23 Mar (Dupuy & Johnson 1967); in Morocco, 3 Apr and 23 and 25 Mar (Smith 1968). These records and specimens may indicate that River Warblers migrate predominantly through North Africa to the wintering grounds rather than via the Arabian Peninsula and then across the Red Sea into East Africa.

Sylvia nisoria nisoria Barred Warbler

Hubbard & Seymour (1968) reported the first 2 specimens from Egypt: a ♂ (USNM 533473) and one, unsexed, (FMNH 268674) taken at Bahig, 4 May 1967 and 13 Oct 1962 (respectively), though the latter was first mentioned by Hoogstraal *et al.* (1964). Since then, an additional 16 specimens have been collected in Egypt (all in USNM), composed of 3 spring records between 4 and 9 May at Bahig and one on 24 Apr at Mersa Matruh, and 12 autumn records between 27 Aug and 23 Oct at Bahig. All specimens examined showed the distinctly darker dorsal colour in both sexes typical of European birds.

Sylvia hortensis crassirostris Orphean Warbler

Six PMS specimens (4 ♂♂ (USNM 552670, 551564, 552671 & 550750) taken at Bahig 23 Mar 1972, 16 Apr 1970, 26 Apr 1972, 18 Sep 1969 and a ♀ (USNM 550751) collected at

Bahig, 24 Aug 1969; and one, unsexed (USNM 551565), obtained at Mersa Matruh, 30 Apr 1970) establish the occurrence and subspecies of Orphean Warblers migrating on both passages through Egypt. *S. b. crassirostris* breeds in southeastern Europe, the Middle East and Libya, and winters in the Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia (Vaurie 1959). The only previous specimen record in Egypt appears to be that of Heuglin (1869), who reported taking an adult ♀ in May (year not specified) on Geziret el Roda, near Cairo. An Orphean Warbler banded in Rome, Italy, 29 May 1935, was reported to have been recovered in the Siwa Oasis, 26 Sep 1935 (although this record was questioned by Mackintosh 1941).

Sylvia cantillans albistriata Subalpine Warbler

The eastern subspecies *S. c. albistriata* is usually cited as a textbook example of a loop-migrant (e.g. Mauersberger & Vietinghoff-Scheel 1967). Its presumed route is unique. In spring it is postulated to head east from its winter quarters in western Mali, Niger and Chad across the Sudan, where there are only a few records (Moreau 1972) then to turn north across Egypt to follow the Nile and onwards to its breeding range in the Balkans and Aegean islands (Moreau 1961). There are numerous spring records from Egypt (Horner 1980) and Cyprus (Flint & Stewart 1983) and even as far east as Israel. In autumn, Subalpine Warblers are thought to fly directly from the breeding grounds southwest across Libya to the wintering grounds without crossing Egypt at all. Meinertzhagen (1930) had no autumn records from Egypt. The PMS on the other hand recorded 48 birds at Bahig during autumns 1966, '68 and '69 (Watson 1971), 19 of which are preserved as study skins (USNM). Two 1966 specimens were previously reported by Hubbard & Seymour (1968) and 3 additional birds were recorded in autumn 1972. The Egyptian dates range from 31 Aug to 22 Sep, plus one straggler on 17 Oct 1966. It is clear that there is in fact a significant autumn passage of eastern Subalpine Warblers over Egypt, but presumably the majority pass without stopping to rest or feed on land. This situation contrasts with that of the Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli*, which breeds in about the same area and winters at about the same latitude in Africa from Chad eastwards, but is commonly recorded on both passages in Egypt (Watson 1971). Misonne (1974) found Subalpine Warblers in the Gebel Uweinat region, near the Egyptian, Libyan and Sudanese borders, between 20 Oct 1968 and mid-Jan 1969. He noted their numbers to be unfluctuating and estimated that less than 300 individuals were wintering in the Gebel Uweinat area. Cowan (1982) recorded this species in west central Libya in Oct 1980 and on 7 occasions during Jan and mid Feb 1981. Although no Libyan specimens are known, these observations may be of eastern *albistriata* and if so represent a substantial extension of the known wintering grounds of this form.

Phylloscopus inornatus inornatus Yellow-browed Warbler

A ♂ (USNM 551636) obtained at Bahig, 22 Oct 1969, is the second known specimen from Egypt. It had an ossified skull and light fat deposits. The first, unsexed (USNM 533475), was collected at Bahig, 17 Oct 1966 (Hubbard & Seymour 1968). Sight records include birds in El Faiyum, 10 Nov 1909 and at Giza, 19 Apr 1912 (Nicoll 1919). The wintering grounds of this Asian species are usually considered to be from southern China, south to Afghanistan, and east to the Malay Peninsula (Vaurie 1959). However, it has been found at Serir, Libya, 20 Nov (Bundy 1976), wintering in Iran (Hjort 1971) and as far west as the British Isles (e.g. Allsopp & Hume 1981). The somewhat indistinct facial markings and the yellow wing-bars and superciliary stripes of the 2 museum specimens are characteristic of the northern subspecies *inornatus* rather than October specimens of the southern *humei* collected in India (Ali & Ripley 1973), but the differences between these forms in autumn plumage are not marked.

Passer luteus Golden Sparrow

Two adults (♂♂ by plumage, FMNH 107784 & 107785), collected at Wadi Akwamtra, 16 Feb 1964, and preserved in fluid are the first records in Egypt. The Golden Sparrow is resident in portions of the Sudan, west through southern Libya to west Africa (Simon 1965).

Carduelis chloris aurantiiventris Greenfinch

A ♂ (USNM 551928) taken at Bahig, 15 Mar 1970, had an ossified skull and heavy fat deposits. Another [♂] (sexed by plumage, USNM 548644) taken at Port Said (31° 16'N, 32° 18'E), 12 Nov 1966, weighed 21.8 gm. These are the first records of this southern European and northwestern African subspecies in Egypt; however, the Near Eastern form, *chlorotica*, which is distinctly paler, occasionally winters in the Nile Delta. *C. c. aurantiiventris* is thought to be mainly sedentary during winter, although it has been recorded in eastern Libya (Vaurie 1959).

Carpodacus erythrinus kubanensis (?) Common Rose Finch

Two ♂♂ (USNM 533478 & 551960) collected at Bahig, 22 May 1967 and 21 Oct 1969, had ossified and unossified skulls, and medium-heavy and medium fat deposits (respectively). One, unsexed (perhaps immature ♂ by plumage, USNM 550324) taken at Bahig, 7 Oct 1968, had an unossified skull and light fat deposits. The 22 May 1967 specimen was the first record in Africa or the Middle East (Hubbard & Seymour 1968). Subsequently, however, the species has been collected in Iraq (Georg 1969) and Israel (USNM 549447, 549448, 550409, 550410 & 550411). The characters used to differentiate the various subspecies are subtle and most reliable only in adult males. Compared with series of *erythrinus*, *kubanensis*, *ferghanensis*, and *roseatus* in similar plumages, the Egyptian material is closest to *kubanensis* (from Iran); but since no Egyptian specimen is in breeding plumage, our subspecific identification is tentative. The recent appearance of this species in Egypt and Israel may be related to breeding range expansion of *kubanensis* into western Asia Minor (Kumerloeve 1966a).

Emberiza rustica rustica Rustic Bunting

One, unsexed (perhaps immature ♂ by plumage, USNM 568990), collected at Bahig, 22 Oct 1971, had an unossified skull and no fat and was the first record for Egypt and, as far as we can determine, for the African continent. The Rustic Bunting breeds in the taiga of eastern Scandinavia and Siberia, and winters in China and Japan (Vaurie 1959). It is known to wander extensively during spring and autumn, and has been recorded in Iraq, 10 Feb 1962 (Marchant & Macnab 1962), at Eilat, Israel, 23 Oct and 11 Nov 1968 (USNM 550466 & 550467), in Turkey, 24 Feb (Kumerloeve 1966b), in British Columbia, Canada, 26 Oct 1971 (Crowell & Nehls 1972), on numerous occasions in the Aleutian Islands, Alaska (Gabrielson & Lincoln 1959) and widely in Europe (Vaurie 1959).

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