

EGYPT: BIRDS AND HISTORY

'Beginning with Sakkara (the oldest pyramid and the exquisite carvings in the mastabas of Mereruka and Ti), El Fayoun oasis (our only Marsh Sandpiper and our first Little Bitterns), the Egyptian Museum, and the Delta (15 Painted Snipe, 20 White-breasted Kingfishers, Kittlitz's Plover, Streaked Weaver, Senegal Thick-knee, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, and Woodchat Shrike), we crossed the eastern Desert to Suez encountering a remarkable number of desert specialities – Hoopoe Lark, Desert Lark, Lesser Short-toed Lark, and not only Mourning, Isabelline, Hooded, and Black-eared Wheatears but also a Cyprus Pied on passage. The missing target bird (Cream-coloured Courser) appeared unexpectedly alongside our coach the following morning en route to St Paul's monastery where (despite a praying and fasting day which denied us the monastery itself) several migrants awaited us at the entrance – Thrush Nightingale, Marsh Warbler, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, Wryneck – plus an all-too-brief pair of Sand Partridges. St Catherine's monastery the following day was even more productive with Sinai Rosefinch, Tristram's Grackle, Scrub Warbler, and a concentration of migrants in the gardens – Ortolan Bunting, Redstart, and Collared, Semi-collared, and Pied Flycatchers. Nearby Wadi Feran yielded the rest of the Sinai set – Palestine Sunbird, Blackstart, and Yellow-vented Bulbul - plus our first Masked Shrike. Deeper into the spectacular Sinai wilderness, Wadi Kid produced a second Blackstart (wing and tail flicking like a nervous Wallcreeper), a Persian Wheatear, and our only Cuckoo - though equally fascinating were a Nubian Ibex and a large green and blue Agama lizard. The mangoes then gave us our first Western Reef Herons (both light and dark morphs) and White-eyed and Sooty Gulls. But for some the most remarkable image from the southern tip of the Sinai was the instant kaleidoscope of tropical fish as we snorkelled from the beach at Ras Mohammed.

Our Sinai experience could have cost us dear in effort and exhaustion when the scheduled catamaran ferry to Hurghada was cancelled. However we were soon transported (with White-cheeked and Lesser Crested Terns for company) from Asia back to Africa and with more snorkelling and Red Sea endemics the next day on a private boat. Also impressive was the raptor passage at El Gouna – 10,000 Steppe Buzzards in one hour plus Imperial, Steppe, Booted, Spotted, Tawny, and Short-toed Eagles, Black Stork, and Egyptian Vulture.

After our convoy back across the Eastern Desert to the lush pastures of the Nile it was wonderful to spend two nights on Crocodile Island at Luxor surrounded by Nile Valley Sunbirds, Purple Swamphens, and Red Avadavats and to enjoy more classic Egyptian history with visits to Karnak temple (by night and day), Luxor temple, the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens (with close views of Trumpeter Finches), the mortuary temple of Ramses III, and the Colossi of Memnon. More birds and history followed with visits to the temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo - a route lined with Black-winged Kites and European Bee-eaters. Then another wonderfully relaxing afternoon on yet another private boat cruising around the islands and the first cataract at Aswan and seeing no less than eight species of herons (a Striated on a nest with young just feet from our cameras was particularly appealing) plus a pair of Ferruginous Ducks and even-better views of Nile Valley Sunbird, Senegal Thick-knee, and Pied Kingfishers. Our private-boat tradition continued the next day with a visit to Egelika island to view Philae temple (White-winged and Whiskered Terns en route), followed by a welcome break at Tut Amun village abandoned hotel for mid-morning drinks and casual birding before yet another convoy drive took us almost to the Sudan border at Abu Simbel and another sound-and-light spectacular at the awesome temples.

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Here we scored perhaps our greatest victory - in finally receiving permission to charter a private boat on Lake Nasser (the first time any tourists have been granted this privilege for four years), ensuring that this furthest point in our Egyptian odyssey provided us with an appropriately grand finale. On a day which began with Crowned and Spotted Sandgrouse and finished with Egyptian Nightjar we had amazing views of the sub-Saharan specialities for which this corner of the Western Palaearctic is famous - African Pied Wagtail, Yellow-billed Stork, and Pink-backed Pelican-with a supporting cast of White Pelican, Greater Flamingo, Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Egyptian Goose, and most excitingly two Nile Crocodiles. All this and the temples by daylight.

Our flight back to Cairo was in time for us to lunch at the traditional Egyptian restaurant in Khan el-Khalili (a fascinating maze of retail therapy opportunities) and another afternoon with our charming and lucid history guide at the Great Pyramids, the Sphinx, and the Solar Boat. Yet even after this our final half day was no anticlimax as our hotel grounds provided new birds (Rufous Bush Robin, Common Nightingale, and Common Whitethroat) and our stroll around the Gezira Sports Club grounds gave us not only Ring-necked but also Alexandrine Parakeet, the latest Eastern species to establish a feral breeding population in the Western Palaearctic, leaving time for our sixth and final boat experience - lunch on the Nile - before a speedy transfer to the airport and on on-time flight home.' – Bryan Bland.

Bird List:

Column A: Number of tours on which this species has been recorded.

Column B: Number of days this species was seen on the last tour.

Column C: Maximum daily count for this species on the last tour.

A	B	C	
4	2	2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
2			<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
6			<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
5			<i>Sula leucogaster</i>
7	2	4	<i>Phalacrocorax (carbo) sinensis</i>
1			<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
8	1	27	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
2			<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
7	1	2	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>
9	3	5	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
10	6	100	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
10	1	5	<i>Butorides striatus brevipes</i>
10	11	'00s	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
10	11	500	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
10	3	10	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
10	13	60	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
8	1	1	<i>Egretta alba</i>
10	11	46	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
10	4	6	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
7			<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
4	1	8	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
10	3	500	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
5	3	15	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
10	1	40	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
6	1	75	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
10	2	100	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
4			<i>Anas penelope</i>

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4	Teal			<i>Anas crecca</i>
5	Mallard	3	3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
4	Pintail			<i>Anas acuta</i>
7	Garganey			<i>Anas querquedula</i>
9	Shoveler	1	20	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
3	Pochard			<i>Aythya ferina</i>
3	Ferruginous Duck	1	2	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
7	Tufted Duck	1	2	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
1	Goldeneye			<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
1	Honey Buzzard			<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
10	Black-winged Kite	3	7	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
10	Black Kite	11	100	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
2	Black-eared Kite	4	10	<i>Milvus lineatus</i>
1	Griffon Vulture			<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
1	Lappet-faced Vulture			<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>
10	Egyptian Vulture	1	1	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
10	Short-toed Eagle	2	3	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
8	Marsh Harrier	4	3	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
3	Pallid Harrier			<i>Circus macrourus</i>
8	Montagu's Harrier	2	1	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
8	Sparrowhawk	4	9	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
3	Levant Sparrowhawk			<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>
10	Steppe Buzzard	7	10,000	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>
9	Long-legged Buzzard	3	2	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
7	Lesser Spotted Eagle			<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
5	Spotted Eagle	2	2	<i>Aquila clanga</i>
10	Steppe Eagle	3	40	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
3	Tawny Eagle	1	1	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
7	Imperial Eagle	2	10	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
8	Booted Eagle	4	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
3	Bonelli's Eagle			<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>
10	Osprey	4	20	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
4	Lesser Kestrel	2	1	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
10	Kestrel	10	3	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
3	Sooty Falcon	2	1	<i>Falco concolor</i>
4	Lanner	1	1	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
1	Saker			<i>Falco cherrug</i>
1	Peregrine			<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
2	Barbary Falcon	3	2	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>
6	Chukar			<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
6	Sand Partridge	1	2	<i>Ammoperdix heyi</i>
9	Quail			<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
1	Spotted Crake			<i>Porzana porzana</i>
10	Moorhen	9	30	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
10	Purple Swamp-hen	4	2	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
5	Coot			<i>Fulica atra</i>
4	Common Crane			<i>Grus grus</i>
6	Painted Snipe	1	7	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>
8	Oystercatcher	1	2	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
10	Black-winged Stilt	8	6	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>

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3	Avocet	1	14	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
1	Stone-curlew			<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
10	Senegal Thick-knee	4	7	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>
6	Cream-coloured Courser	1	2	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
5	Collared Pratincole			<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
10	Little Ringed Plover	2	1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
10	Ringed Plover	4	30	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
7	Kittlitz's Plover	1	2	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
10	Kentish Plover	2	3	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
3	Greater Sand Plover			<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>
1	Caspian Plover			<i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>
10	Grey Plover	2	6	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
10	Spur-winged Lapwing	10	50	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
1	White-tailed Lapwing			<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>
1	Knot	1	1	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
2	Sanderling			<i>Calidris alba</i>
10	Little Stint	5	50	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
5	Temminck's Stint	1	2	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
8	Curlew Sandpiper	1	1	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
10	Dunlin	1	4	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
10	Ruff	3	100	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
1	Jack Snipe			<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>
9	Common Snipe	1	2	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
7	Black-tailed Godwit	1	1	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
6	Bar-tailed Godwit			<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
8	Whimbrel	2	2	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
10	Curlew	1	1	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
10	Spotted Redshank	2	20	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
9	Redshank			<i>Tringa totanus</i>
10	Marsh Sandpiper	1	1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
10	Greenshank	8	6	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
10	Green Sandpiper	1	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
10	Wood Sandpiper	4	10	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
4	Terek Sandpiper			<i>Xenus cinercus</i>
10	Common Sandpiper	5	4	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
6	Turnstone	1	3	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
3	Arctic Skua			<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
10	Sooty Gull	2	10	<i>Larus hemprichii</i>
10	White-eyed Gull	4	'00s	<i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>
3	Great Black-headed Gull			<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>
10	Black-headed Gull	4	20	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
10	Slender-billed Gull	4	'00s	<i>Larus genei</i>
10	Lesser Black-backed (Baltic) Gull	5	3	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
9	Caspian Gull	1	1	<i>Larus (cachinnans) cachinnans</i>
5	Armenian Gull			<i>Larus armenicus</i>
10	Gull-billed Tern	3	20	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
10	Caspian Tern	5	7	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
8	Sandwich Tern	1	10	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
9	Common Tern			<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
8	Little Tern	2	98	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>

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7	Crested Tern			<i>Sterna bergii</i>
3	Lesser Crested Tern	1	1	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
7	White-cheeked Tern	3	150	<i>Sterna repressa</i>
10	Whiskered Tern	7	40	<i>Chidonias hybrida</i>
4	Black Tern	1	4	<i>Chidonias niger</i>
6	White-winged Black Tern	2	6	<i>Chidonias leucopterus</i>
3	African Skimmer			<i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>
6	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse			<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>
9	Crowned Sandgrouse	1	12	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>
8	Spotted Sandgrouse	1	6	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>
10	Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	15	100	<i>Columba livia</i>
4	African Collared Dove			<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>
10	Collared Dove	8	20	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
10	Turtle Dove	4	4	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
10	Laughing Dove	15	'00s	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
1	Great Spotted Cuckoo			<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
2	Cuckoo	1	2	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
9	Senegal Coucal			<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
8	Barn Owl			<i>Tyto alba</i>
7	Pharaoh Eagle Owl			<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>
7	Little Owl			<i>Athene noctua</i>
4	Hume's Tawny Owl			<i>Strix butleri</i>
4	Egyptian Nightjar	1	1	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>
2	Alpine Swift			<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
10	Common Swift	2	20	<i>Apus apus</i>
10	Pallid Swift	5	6	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
10	White-breasted Kingfisher	2	20	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
7	Kingfisher	3	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
10	Pied Kingfisher	8	50	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
10	Little Green Bee-eater	6	8	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
10	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	2	20	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>
8	European Bee-eater	5	94	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
3	European Roller	1	2	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
10	Hoopoe	11	20	<i>Upupa epops</i>
1	Rose-ringed Parakeet (I)	2	30	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
1	Alexandrine Parakeet (I)	1	15	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
9	Wryneck	2	2	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
4	Bar-tailed Desert Lark			<i>Ammomanes cincturus</i>
10	Desert Lark	2	2	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>
9	Hoopoe Lark	1	4	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>
2	Bimaculated Lark			<i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>
10	Short-toed Lark	2	10	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
1	Lesser Short-toed Lark	1	6	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
10	Crested Lark	7	15	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
10	Sand Martin	7	10	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
10	Rock Martin	9	20	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
5	Crag Martin	2	5	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
10	Swallow	15	50	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
1	Mosque (Egyptian) Swallow	5	50	<i>Hirundo rustica savignii</i>
10	Red-rumped Swallow	6	20	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>

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10	House Martin	7	6	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
3	Richard's Pipit			<i>Anthus novaerseelandiae</i>
10	Tawny Pipit	2	8	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
1	Buff-bellied Pipit	1	1	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
10	Tree Pipit	5	50	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
9	Meadow Pipit	3	2	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
10	Red-throated Pipit	3	1	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
3	Water Pipit			<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>
10	Yellow Wagtail	7	6	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
6	Black-headed Wagtail	4	4	<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>
2	Grey Wagtail			<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
2	Citrine Wagtail			<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
10	White Wagtail	7	10	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
7	African Pied Wagtail	2	2	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
8	Yellow-vented Bulbul	1	40	<i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>
10	Common Bulbul	10	20	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
8	Rufous Bush Robin	1	1	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>
2	Robin			<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
3	Thrush Nightingale	3	1	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
9	Nightingale	1	1	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
6	Bluethroat			<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
3	Black Redstart			<i>Phoenicurus cinerea</i>
9	Redstart	4	3	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
6	Blackstart	2	2	<i>Cercomela melanura</i>
5	Whinchat	2	3	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
1	Stonechat			<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
9	Isabelline Wheatear	1	2	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
10	Northern Wheatear	5	10	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
6	Pied Wheateater			<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>
3	Cyprus Pied Wheatear	1	1	<i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>
10	Black-eared Wheatear	4	1	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
6	Desert Wheatear	3	1	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>
9	Mourning Wheatear	1	2	<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>
5	Hooded Wheatear	1	1	<i>Oenanthe monacha</i>
10	White-crowned Wheatear	4	10	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>
2	Persian Wheatear	1	1	<i>Oenanthe xanthopygna</i>
4	Rock Thrush			<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
8	Blue Rock Thrush	1	1	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
9	Blackbird	4	1	<i>Turdus merula</i>
10	Fan-tailed Warbler	5	10	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
10	Graceful Warbler	7	25	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>
6	Scrub Warbler	1	3	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>
2	Savi's Warbler			<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
3	Moustached Warbler			<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>
10	Sedge Warbler	1	1	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
5	Marsh Warbler	2	1	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
10	Reed Warbler	4	10	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
9	Clamorous Reed Warbler	5	20	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>
4	Great Reed Warbler			<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
10	Olivaceous Warbler	7	10	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>

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4	Icterine Warbler			<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
7	Subalpine Warbler			<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
1	Ménétries's Warbler			<i>Sylvia mystacea</i>
4	Sardinian Warbler			<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
8	Rüppell's Warbler	1	1	<i>Sylvia rueppelli</i>
10	Lesser Whitethroat	7	6	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
7	Whitethroat	1	1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
7	Blackcap	2	2	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
10	Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	2	2	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>
5	Wood Warbler	3	2	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
10	Chiffchaff	6	2	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
2	Willow Warbler			<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
3	Spotted Flycatcher	1	1	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
6	Semi-collared Flycatcher	1	1	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>
5	Collared Flycatcher	3	3	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
4	Pied Flycatcher	1	2	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
10	Nile Valley Sunbird	4	25	<i>Anthreptes metallicus</i>
7	Palestine Sunbird	1	2	<i>Nectarinia osea</i>
1	Golden Oriole			<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
3	Isabelline Shrike			<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>
10	Southern Grey Shrike	1	2	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
10	Woodchat Shrike	3	2	<i>Lanius senator</i>
10	Masked Shrike	6	3	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
10	House Crow	2	100	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
10	Hooded Crow	9	50	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
10	Brown-necked Raven	13	100	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>
8	Tristram's Grackle	1	24	<i>Pnychognathus tristramii</i>
9	House Sparrow	15	100	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
6	Spanish Sparrow			<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
1	Tree Sparrow			<i>Passer montanus</i>
1	Pale Rock Sparrow			<i>Carpospiza brachydactyla</i>
3	Streaked Weaver (I)	1	10	<i>Ploceus manyar</i>
4	Red Avadavat (I)	1	12	<i>Amandava amandava</i>
1	Chaffinch			<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
1	Serin			<i>Serinus serinus</i>
1	Tristram's Serin			<i>Serinus syriacus</i>
2	Greenfinch			<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
8	Goldfinch			<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
1	Siskin			<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
1	Linnet			<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
9	Trumpeter Finch	1	10	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>
8	Sinai Rosefinch	1	2	<i>Carpodacus synoicus</i>
4	Ortolan Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
1	Cretzschmar's Bunting			<i>Emberiza buchanani</i>

May 08