



## OMAN BIRDING TOUR: ENDEMIC BIRDS OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA SET DEPARTURE TRIP REPORT

5 - 16 November 2025

By Fraser Bell



*Arabian Wheatear* is a wonderfully abundant endemic of the Arabian Peninsula, we enjoyed seeing several pairs of these charismatic birds up close while in the highlands of southern Oman.

## Overview

Our inaugural tour across Oman was designed to offer an excellent introduction to birding in the Middle East. The tour was designed to target birds endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, of which there are nine in Oman, plus many near endemics, globally rare species, and desert specialists that are best targeted here.

This birding tour of Oman began in the north, in the capital Muscat on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2025, and concluded in Salalah in the south on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2025. Aside from the Arabian endemics, our tour enjoyed many Central Asian and Indian species, African species at the northwestern edge of their range, and the region's localized seabirds. Oman in the fall is an excellent place for birdwatching, as the country is home to many migratory species passing through or wintering in Oman. Our November Oman tour was therefore well timed to enjoy the thrill of finding interesting migrants and seeing a few rare vagrants too.



*The beautiful (and monotypic family) **Grey Hypocolius** was a major tour highlight! It was superb seeing a pair of these desert nomads as they gorged dates in a remote village in southwest Oman.*

We recorded 214 bird species on this Oman birdwatching tour, with two heard only. The tour started by exploring northern Oman. First we birded the wetlands and coast around Muscat and enjoyed a boat trip where we saw **Sooty Falcon** at Fahal Island, plus **Red-billed Tropicbird** and **Masked Booby**. Birdwatching in the Nakhl area produced an amazing daytime encounter with more than 100 **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, alongside **Plain Leaf Warbler** and **Arabian Babbler**. We then headed into the Al Hajar and Jebel Akhdar mountains west of Muscat where we found

**Sand Partridge, Streaked Scrub Warbler, and Hume's Wheatear.** Our night birding paid off and we had a brief but unforgettable encounter with the enigmatic and rarely seen **Omani Owl!**

After a busy but successful first few days, we flew to Oman's southwest on a domestic flight to **Salalah**. Using Salalah as our base we quickly added many Arabian specials, such as **Arabian Scops Owl, Arabian Warbler, and Arabian Sunbird**. It was also very enjoyable being immersed in a high diversity of African species, including near-endemics of Arabia such as **Abyssinian White-eye, Blackstart, and Rüppell's Weaver**. We found many Palearctic migrants, and witnessed some incredible bird aggregations, such as large flocks of gorgeous **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters**, and of course, had fun seeing some rare migrants too. The highlight was a lone **Sociable Lapwing**, a Critically Endangered species (**BirdLife International**) that winters in low numbers in Oman, and a major tour target. Sadly this species was once much more common in Oman, but given how rare it is, we had to make a special effort to find one. **Night birding** around Salalah was very successful, and we had walk-away views of **Desert Owl**, a pair of **Arabian Eagle-Owls**, and an unexpected **Egyptian Nightjar**.



*We were spoilt on our pelagic trip with **Persian Shearwater** constantly around the boat, at times sitting on the water just alongside us.*

Our two days in the desert were very memorable, not only because we quickly connected with the nomadic and monotypic **Grey Hypocolius**, with the pair gorging themselves on dates in a remote **desert village**. We also saw all of our main targets, including three more species of sandgrouse, **Cream-colored Courser, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, and Nile Valley Sunbird**, and we had a lot of fun searching for migrants at a **desert oasis**. After a rest back in Salalah, we traveled east to end the tour at coastal Mirbat. A **special effort** rewarded us with views of **Forbes-Watson's Swift, Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak, and Yemen Serin**, but unfortunately, despite a lot of effort, the secretive **Arabian Partridge** remained heard only. The famous **Mirbat pelagic** was excellent, with close views of **Persian Shearwater, Jouanin's Petrel, and Swinhoe's Storm Petrel**.

In addition to the exceptional birding, we also encountered an exciting range of other wildlife, including a chance encounter with **Blanford's Fox**, and some endemic reptiles such as the beautiful **Arabian Chameleon** and characterful **Arabian Semaphore Gecko**. The local food was delicious, with an interesting mix of cuisine from Oman, Lebanon, Yemen, and India. The landscapes of Oman are impressive and vast, from towering mountains to shifting deserts to wooded wadis full of dense scrub and fruiting trees. The accommodation was comfortable throughout, and the Omani people went out of their way to make us feel welcome throughout the tour.



*Only found in Yemen and southwest Oman, the brilliant and localized **Arabian Chameleon** was the non-bird wildlife highlight of our tour.*

Bird and animal lists for this Oman birding tour follow the report and you can also view the eBird trip report [here](#), where you can see more bird photos.

### **Detailed Report**

#### **Day 1, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Arrival in Muscat**

Our small-group birdwatching tour across Oman started with the group arriving into the capital Muscat. We enjoyed the first of many tasty meals at a local restaurant, this one serving Turkish and Lebanese food, before we all got a good rest ahead of what would be a very bird-filled tour.

**Day 2, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Birding Muscat**

What an incredible first day we had in store for us. We started off at the local Al Ansab Wadi and lagoons, spending some time walking the trails around the various wetland pools lined with scrub and reeds. This was a great start to the tour, and we saw more than fifty species in the first few hours of birding. We saw our only **Ferruginous Duck**, **Grey-headed Swamphen**, and **Common Kingfisher** of the trip, plus we had excellent close views of species such as **Greater Flamingo**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Temminck's Stint**, **Little Stint**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Indian Roller**, **Clamorous Reed Warbler**, **Delicate Prinia**, **Indian Silverbill**, **Citrine Wagtail**, and the stunning aerial acrobat **Arabian Green Bee-eater**, our first Arabian endemic. Due to the good opportunities to see species well, we had fun working through the identification features of **Common Snipe** and **Pin-tailed Snipe**, and **Squacco Heron** and **Indian Pond Heron**. **Grey Francolin** and **White-eared Bulbul** were nice to see, despite being non-native!



*One of the many highlights on our first full day birding in Oman was seeing several large groups of **Red-necked Phalarope** at close range from our boat.*

After a strong start we headed through Muscat city, bound for a small harbor just onshore from Al Fahal Island. We then boarded a small boat and enjoyed a private tour out to the island. This short trip was so much fun that it remained one of the highlights of the tour. Almost as soon as we arrived close to the island we saw our main target, the elegant **Sooty Falcon**. These falcons breed on the island and have an incredible life history, as they time their breeding to coincide with the southwards autumn migration of songbirds, and feed their chicks almost exclusively on migrating birds which they catch on the wing. We were very happy to see at least five adults and one juvenile still at the island, as soon they would join the others and migrate south to Mozambique and Madagascar. The falcons were not the only highlight though, as we passed several groups of spin

feeding **Red-necked Phalaropes** on our journey to the island, and found both **Red-billed Tropicbird** and a close-up **Masked Booby** too. It was an incredible experience.

Both before and after the boat trip we visited the coastal wetlands of Wadi Adai Nature Reserve and Al Qurum Beach. This proved an excellent idea, as we saw many waterbird species, including nine species of gull and tern, with the comical **Sooty Gull** and hulking **Pallas's Gull** the best, plus **Osprey**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, great comparative views of **Tibetan Sand Plover** and **Greater Sand Plover**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, and many other waders. We then finished the day by driving north to Barka, where we checked in for a single night stay. For most of the group, the quest for the enigmatic Omani Owl also began, and those keen enough headed out for several hours to search the wadis in the Nakhl area. Despite our best efforts, this was a very quiet night, but the wadis were a stunningly beautiful and peaceful place to spend time under a sky filled with stars.

### Day 3, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Birding farmland and arid semi-desert near Barka and Nakhl

Our morning began with us exploring some quiet roads and irrigated fields close to our hotel in Barka. We quickly had great views of a large group of boisterous **Arabian Babblers**, with individuals all around our vehicles bouncing, hopping, and crashing through the vegetation while chattering to one another. After this encounter we moved on to the main agricultural area, which was a mecca for wintering migrants from Europe and Asia, and we saw **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Isabelline Shrike**, **Isabelline Wheatear**, **Pied Wheatear**, **Western Yellow Wagtail**, **Tree Pipit**, and our first **Namaqua Dove**, a tiny resident of the Acacia scrub and dry plains here.



*Endemic Arabian Babbler are brilliant fun to watch, moving around in raucous and active parties, calling loudly and climbing over one another.*

After breakfast we birded in some arid thorny scrub and semi-desert at a site near Nakhl. Here we found our target **Plain Leaf Warbler** and **Red-tailed Wheatear**, and also enjoyed **Brown-necked Raven**, **Desert Lark**, **Tawny Pipit**, and **Striolated Bunting**. The undoubted highlight however was finding a large flock of the very shy, elusive, and mostly nocturnal **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**. While these birds are often seen by visiting birdwatchers, unlike the other three species of sandgrouse in Oman, they typically come to drink at dusk, so views are often in poor light. In comparison, we saw hundreds in flight and some on the ground, sheltering near a small watering hole that likely attracted them.



*Active and inquisitive **Plain Leaf Warbler** is a short-distance migrant that breeds in Central Asia then winters in a localized area centered around the Gulf of Oman.*

Much of the afternoon was taken up by our drive first east, then south, where we checked in for a two night stay in a comfortable hotel in Nizwa. After check-in we headed out to a local wadi. Pre-dusk birding in the wadi was quiet, but we added **White-spectacled Bulbul**, a near endemic to Arabia, **Lesser Whitethroat**, and **Grey Wagtail**. It was very lovely spending time in these beautiful wadis as the sun set. We then stayed on into darkness, trying for our two owl targets.

The night started quietly, with late flying **Indian Rollers** and massive **Egyptian Rousettes** (a fruit bat) causing us to jump when their shadows passed overhead. After some time, we then chanced upon a medium-sized owl flying along the wadi cliffs while spotlighting for Pallid Scops Owl (which we didn't find). For those who saw the bird in flight, the two toned underwing pattern of an **Omani Owl** was immediately apparent, and as we followed it with the torch higher up along the wadi sides, it settled on a small overlook above us. Unbelievably, we had found our number one tour target, the near endemic and extremely mysterious **Omani Owl**. All of the group managed to see the owl as it peered back at us from its lofty perch, with its rounded head and darker markings

visible on the crown. However, the sighting was all too brief, and soon it sailed off into the dark once again. The magnitude of our encounter did not fully sink in until the next morning, but we had done it, we had seen the very rarely recorded **Omani Owl** (less than 100 eBird observations at the time of writing)!



*We kept our distance from these **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, not wanting to flush them, but it was brilliant to see these secretive and mostly nocturnal birds during the day.*

#### **Day 4, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Birding the Jebel Akhdar mountain range**

Although we started early, bird activity was low at the local Wadi Birkat, but we did see several inquisitive **Menetries's Warblers** and a stylish **Hume's Wheatear**. After a nice buffet breakfast back at our hotel, we climbed into the heights of the Al Jebel Al Akhdar mountains. This was a brilliant adventure, and during the ascent we had great views of **Egyptian Vulture**, often at eye level, as they soared below us. After some time searching, we scored our big target in the form of a **Streaked Scrub Warbler**. This sole member of its genus is a tiny bird with a big attitude, and it gave everyone good views as it paraded around on some rocks and heath in front of us. While on the mountain we also found some nice migrants, such as our first **Common Chiffchaff**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Common Redstart**, **Black Redstart**, and **Northern Wheatear**. After lunch and descending the mountain, we had some time to relax and swim back at the hotel.

That night we returned to the same wadi we visited the previous night. We had two aims in mind, we wanted to try to see the Omani Owl again, but we had not even heard Pallid Scops Owl yet, which was surprising because they are much more commonly encountered than Omani Owl. Unfortunately, after several hours we only heard a few quiet hoots from an **Omani Owl** in the distant gloom. At the end of our long night we finally heard a **Pallid Scops Owl** from the wadi

cliff opposite us, but by the time we reached close to where the bird had called from it was nowhere to be found. Still, it is an exceptional experience being in the realm of these mysterious owls.



*Seeing **Egyptian Vultures** at eye-level on Al Jebel Al Akhdar was a memorable experience!*



*The characterful **Streaked Scrub Warbler** was a top tour target in northern Oman.*

**Day 5, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Transfer to Salalah, Southern Oman**

Today was our last day in northern Oman before we took an internal flight to the south. As we had not yet connected with Sand Partridge, a near-endemic to the Arabian Peninsula, we took a packed breakfast and set off to try a different wadi that looked like perfect habitat for them. Sure enough, within an hour of searching we were watching a small covey of **Sand Partridge** that came low down the dusty wadi sides to drink. A female sat in the shade of a small tree up on the slope and gave us brilliant walk-away views. While here, we had our first **Long-billed Pipit** and a memorable close encounter with a **Little Owl**, likely of the Lilith's subspecies.

We then checked out of our hotel and drove north back to Muscat. We arrived in good time and were able to check the river mouth near the airport. Here we saw a good diversity of wetland and coastal birds and added **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Dunlin**, **Sanderling**, **Lesser Crested Tern**, **Greater Crested Tern**, and enjoyed seeing large numbers of many waterbird species.

The rest of the day was spent at the airport, where we took a domestic transfer to Oman's cooler and greener southwest. After picking up our vehicles, we checked in to our excellent hotel for our three-night stay in the city of Salalah. After an early dinner at a great Lebanese restaurant (so good we revisited four times), we retired early for a well-deserved rest.



*We had great views of this chunky Arabian Warbler on our first day in Southern Oman.*

**Day 6, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Birding around Salalah**

After a buffet breakfast we headed out to the wadis east of Salalah for what proved to be a long yet exceptional day of birding. We saw flocks of non-native **Rose-ringed Parakeets** and the Arabian endemic **Tristram's Starling** during the drive, arriving at Ayn Hamran and Wadi Kheesh later than planned due to the large numbers of new trip birds we kept finding by the roadside!

Throughout the morning we connected with several of our target species, such as the characterful **Arabian Sunbird**, and, importantly, an **Arabian Warbler**, which inquisitively watched our group while actively jumping around in the scrub, and alarmed in response to the **Arabian Scops Owl** calling further up the wadi (where the vegetation was too dense to find it). Other localized targets we connected with included **Graceful Prinia**, **Abyssinian White-eye**, charismatic **Blackstart**, and **Rüppell's Weaver**. Birding in southern Oman was very different from the north, with many species that are otherwise widespread in Africa, such as **Fan-tailed Raven**, **Black-crowned Tchagra**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **African Silverbill**, and **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting**, along with numerous migrants that are either moving south through Oman or wintering there, including **Pallid Swift**, **Red-tailed Shrike**, **Common Whitethroat**, and **Spotted Flycatcher**.



*Birding Oman in November is brilliant fun, the country is full of many migrants that breed in Eurasia, such as the stunning **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**.*

The stony plains we then drove across were equally productive for us, with **Eastern Imperial Eagle**, **Bonelli's Eagles**, **European Roller**, **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark**, and **Desert Wheatear** seen well. The best, however, was the spectacle of hundreds of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** lining up on the wires and hawking for insects around our vehicles. Having spent most of the morning in the hot arid wadis around Salalah, we rounded off our session with a visit to a khor (a watercourse) to the east of the city. Birding this lush, coastal wetland and beach proved to be a bird-bonanza, and we added **Garganey**, **Grey Plover**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Caspian Tern**, **Glossy Ibis**, and many others, then finished the session with a **Spotted Thick-knee** family on the way back to our hotel.

After a well-earned afternoon rest we picked up falafel wraps for a picnic dinner, then traveled west of Salalah into the home of a true desert phantom. We arrived just as it was getting dark and

checked a small wetland before heading into the wadis, where we found a **Jack Snipe** and another top tour target, an **Egyptian Nightjar** – a great start to our night birding session! After some off-roading to get deeper into the rocky desert wadi, followed by a short hike, we were finally in position to try for **Desert Owl**. This species is closely related to Omani Owl, but it uses rocky gorges and canyons in semi-desert habitat and is more widespread in Arabia. We did not have long to wait before we started hearing the hooting of a pair and, after an adrenaline filled search with the thermal scope, we sighted one of the birds high on the rock cliffs above us. Everyone enjoyed scope views of this awesome bird. To make the night even better, we saw several **Red Foxes**, of the Arabian subspecies, and, amazingly, a rarely seen **Blanford's Fox** crossed in front of our vehicles.



*The localized **Rüppell's Weaver** was in its less bright non-breeding plumage.*

### **Day 7, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Birding the wadis of Salalah**

Our morning started slowly in the wadis east of Salalah. We were targeting harder Arabian endemics, and they did not play ball this morning. While we heard a group of **Arabian Partridges**, they remained too far from us, hidden on a high scrub-covered slope. The third location we visited, Ayn Athum, proved to be the charm, and we finally had daytime views of an **Arabian Scops Owl**, a species we had heard at almost all sites but which had always been in too thick cover to see. Throughout the morning we also added **Tufted Duck**, **Abdim's Stork**, **Steppe Eagle**, a female **Palestine Sunbird**, and a gorgeous endemic **Arabian Chameleon**.

While enjoying our lunch at an Indian restaurant, news broke of a lone **Sociable Lapwing** seen west of Salalah. This Critically Endangered species (BirdLife International) used to winter in Oman in large numbers, but is now a hard species to encounter, so we altered our afternoon plans and headed west. Two hours after the bird had first been found, we were watching the **Sociable**

**Lapwing.** The settling pools were a mecca for waterbirds, and we also added **Northern Pintail**, **Spur-winged Lapwing**, and **Spotted Redshank**. We then continued our quest for rare migrants, and went to see a vagrant **Watercock** and **Black Heron** close by, and also found a **Peregrine Falcon**, of the interesting Barbary subspecies. The **Black Heron** was a big favorite, and everyone enjoyed watching it canopy-feed. The sighting of the **Watercock** was brilliant, though unusual, as this typically extremely shy bird was feeding in an open wetland on the edge of the mountainous semi-desert.

We finished our birding at the gull and tern roost at Mughsayl Beach where, alongside hundreds of **Common Terns**, we found several localized **White-cheeked Terns** and appreciated the subtle differences in plumage. We drove back against a picturesque sunset and enjoyed a nice meal once back at our comfortable hotel.



*Arabian Scops Owls are very common in Southern Oman and we heard them calling both during the day and at night.*

### Day 8, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Oman desert birding

Today was a much anticipated day, as we headed north after breakfast into Oman's desert. Passing through the Dhofar hills that run like a spine behind Salalah, where we saw groups of **White Storks** feeding, we then descended into the open vastness of the desert. As soon as we left the main road that winds its way north through the Empty Quarter (560 miles or 900 kilometers, back to Muscat), we started looking for our desert targets and straight away spied some sandgrouse. Amazingly, the small flock turned out to be **Crowned Sandgrouse**, one of the harder species to encounter. It was brilliant watching the group happily waddling around, foraging and interacting with one another, oblivious to our presence.

After this we continued west, towards the Yemen border, though some 38 miles (60 kilometers) away. The reason for this detour was that the nomadic **Grey Hypocolius** was recently seen at the remote desert town of Mudayy. On arrival we found **African Collared Doves**, **Great Grey Shrikes**, of the Arabian subspecies, and a lone **Nile Valley Sunbird**. After what turned out to be a short search of the date palms that line the streets of the town and the park, we re-found the pair of **Grey Hypocolius** – first seen gorging themselves on dates and so engrossed that only their tails were visible poking out from the fruit! This was a major tour highlight, and everyone was able to appreciate a pair of this truly beautiful species, a monotypic family.

After lunch, we pushed on north again through the desert. A few choice stops at irrigated agricultural fields, sand banks, and drinking pools gave us views of **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Cream-colored Coursers**, **Eurasian Hobby**, **Greater Hoopoe-Lark**, and **Asian Desert Warbler**. It was an amazing day, where we had seen the majority of our desert targets. While the accommodation and food were more basic in the remote desert, the peace and beauty more than made up for it.



*Grey Hypocolius are awesome birds. They are monotypic, have an interesting life strategy (a desert nomad that migrates to follow fruiting date palms), and of course, they are stunning!*

### Day 9, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Desert birding and return to Salalah

We left before dawn and headed to Muntasar Oasis, arriving just as the sun was rising. Birding in the beautiful expansive desert was a brilliant experience for all, and one of the major reasons for overnighing in this remote area. We were here to await the arrival of sandgrouse, which come in the morning to drink at this vital water source. We enjoyed at first seeing groups of **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, which started to gather in the distance, and they were soon joined by large numbers of **Spotted Sandgrouse** – our fourth and final sandgrouse target in Oman. While it was

unfortunate that they remained too distant for photographs, we had good scope views for more than an hour.

Aside from the desert species, the oasis is a brilliant trap for migrants which seek out the few trees and scrub surrounding the water as a refuge from the harshness of the desert. It was great fun birding around the oasis and seeing migrants that would otherwise be in very different habitats. A **Hume's Leaf Warbler** was the rarest and most exciting, but several **Bluethroats** and **Red-breasted Flycatchers**, and a lone **Water Pipit** and **Red-throated Pipit** were also appreciated. Given we had seen all of our desert targets, we pulled ourselves away from watching the sandgrouse and headed south out of the desert, bound for Salalah.

We arrived in the mid afternoon and had a few hours to enjoy the comfort of our hotel after our more basic accommodation the night before. We went for our final night birding of the tour, and what a trip it turned out to be! After getting a picnic dinner, we drove to a local wadi to try for our final owl target of the tour. Some nights owling works well, and this night was a great example. Soon after we arrived we heard the deep calls of a pair of the endemic **Arabian Eagle-Owl**, and it was not long until we could see both birds sat calling on the wadi sides. What a great experience being in the peaceful wadis under the stars and listening to both **Arabian Eagle-Owls** and **Arabian Scops Owls** calling into the night.



*We quickly found a pair of impressive **Arabian Eagle-Owls** on our final night based in Salalah.*

### **Day 10, 14th November 2025. Birding Djebel Samhan Nature Reserve**

We checked out of Salalah early with a packed breakfast and headed east towards Mirbat. We had two Arabian endemic finches still to find, so went to the upper slopes of Wadi Darbat, where an Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak had been reported. On the drive we found several pairs of striking **Arabian Wheatears**, which gave us brilliant views (see the cover image), as they happily

bounced around between rocks along the roadside. Once in the wadi we set up overlooking a cave mouth where water was collecting at the bottom of stalactites and songbirds were coming to drink from them. This was a beautiful location to spend the morning, with the scrubby wadi sides high around us and fruiting trees lining the bottoms of the slopes. While we waited for the grosbeak, we enjoyed seeing a number of other species coming to drink, which surprisingly included another major tour target, the localized **Yemen Serin**! We also enjoyed watching **Rock Doves** (wild ones!), **Palestine Sunbirds**, including beautifully plumaged males, and a pair of **Rock Hyraxes**.



*Bright and colorful **Bruce's Green Pigeons** were enjoyed by the group after we had connected with a duo of Oman's hardest birds: Yemen Serin and Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak.*

A few hours into our vigil, we heard the telltale jingling call of **Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak**. After some nervous scanning we first had brief views, then much longer views of a male sat in a tree on the scrub-lined hillside, singing out across the valley. It was such a thrill to have such long views of one of Arabia's most iconic but elusive endemics. On the short walk out of the wadi we found some nice **Arabian Semaphore Geckos**, and a pair of colorful **Bruce's Green Pigeons**, quietly feeding in one of the fruiting trees right next to our vehicles. This was satisfying given we had heard their whistles and cheerful rattling calls throughout the morning.

Given the morning was quickly heating up, we opted to have a cold drink and an ice cream to celebrate our success before heading higher into the Djebel Samhan mountains. The mountains here are vast and the landscape breathtaking. After our successful morning it was a shame we could not find our main targets of Arabian Partridge and Verreaux's Eagle, however we did enjoy seeing many different birds of prey in the mountainous heights. We added **Griffon Vulture**, **Short-toed Snake Eagle**, and had close-up views of a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles**. After descending the mountains we arrived in Mirbat and had a quick look around the local park, which is a well-known

hotspot for rarities. While we did not see any vagrants, we did add **Sand Martin** and **Song Thrush**, which were new for the trip, and enjoyed seeing a high abundance of pipits and wagtails, including many **Red-throated Pipits**. We finished the day checking in to our final hotel for the tour, a plush resort on the outskirts of Mirbat, with some downtime to relax, swim, and watch the sun set along the coast before dinner.



*Stunning African Paradise Flycatchers were common in the wadis of southern Oman.*

### Day 11, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Mirbat pelagic

Our final full day was the much anticipated pelagic out of Mirbat harbor. As there is no continental shelf here, the sea plummets to around 3,000 feet (910 meters) right off the shore and large numbers of petrels and shearwaters can be seen almost as soon as you leave the harbor. We saw many localized **Persian Shearwaters** and **Jouanin's Petrels**, the shearwaters would often come in to our chum (bait) and sit just alongside the boat. A major highlight was a brief fly through of a **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel**, a species with a fairly large range when away from its breeding colonies, but one that is hard to encounter. Other highlights included **Brown Noddy**, **Bridled Tern**, **Little Tern**, and **Masked Booby**. The sheer abundance of seabirds was a joy to witness, and we were only out on the water for three and a half hours. The gulls were also a treat, with **Sooty Gulls** constantly accompanying us throughout the morning, sitting alongside and even in the boat! In the harbor we finished the trip seeing a nice dark morph **Little Heron** and several **Green Turtles**.

After some down time at the hotel to rest, swim and enjoy the stunning coast, we headed off towards the Djebel Samhan hills once again. The picturesque Wadi Shaabon was busy with locals enjoying the weekend in this beautiful area, however for us this resulted in a fairly quiet birding session with a flock of **Bruce's Green Pigeons** and a duo of **Short-toed Snake Eagles** the best. Moving higher into the hills we enjoyed finding some uncommon migrants along the roadside,

including **Black-winged Kite**, **Siberian Stonechat**, and a rare **Masked Shrike**, which all showed brilliantly. A **Common Quail** briefly flew through and a lucky few in the group saw it before it vanished into some long grasses. We finished our birding around a small water tank in the hills, with top birds such as **Montagu's Harrier**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Temminck's Stint**, **Little Stint**, **Blackstart**, and a major highlight in the form of a small flock of the mysterious and much wanted **Forbes-Watson's Swifts**. The swifts were foraging over the water, allowing for extended looks, so we all could appreciate the subtle differences between **Pallid Swift**, **Common Swift**, and these iconic **Forbes-Watson's Swifts**. We returned to have our last evening meal of the tour, enjoyed talking through our many tour highlights, and decided on the bird of the trip.



*One of our bird tour targets was **Jouanin's Petrel**, a very localized species found only in the Northwest Indian Ocean.*

### **Day 12, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Tour conclusion**

We checked out early, but chanced upon a vagrant **White-breasted Waterhen** in the resort gardens! We then headed west for Salalah, where the tour would end. En route we stopped at the beautiful wetlands at Khawr Rawri and enjoyed seeing many species we had become familiar with, such as **Blackstart** and **Arabian Sunbird**, while a **Pallid Harrier** was new for the trip. Our final birding was at the coastal wetlands and lagoons of Khawr Taqah. Here **Red-knobbed Coot**, **Medium Egret**, and **Common Buzzard**, of the Steppe subspecies, were new for the trip, and other highlights included **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** and **Red-tailed Shrike**.

After a last lunch together in Salalah we said our goodbyes and headed our separate ways. Overall, we recorded 214 species over 12 days of birding in Oman. While there were many contenders for bird of the trip (11!), the unique and beautiful **Grey Hypocolius** was named the top bird, while the mysterious duo of **Forbes-Watson's Swift** and **Omani Owl**, the rare **Sociable Lapwing**, and the impressive **Sooty Falcon** received honorable mentions. I would like to thank the group for all the

good times and the many memories from this tour. Oman was a joy to explore with such an engaged and skilled group of birders, and I look forward to birding with you all again.



*Oman is brilliant for birds of prey, such as this impressive **Bonelli's Eagle**.*



*Characterful **Blackstart** were lovely to watch on most days we were birding in southern Oman.*

**Bird List – Following IOC (Version 15.1 March 2025)**

Two birds ‘heard only’ are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen.

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened. (Introduced) = nonnative.

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Ducks &amp; Geese (Anatidae)</b>	
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Common Pochard (VU)	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck (NT)	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
<b>Pheasants &amp; Allies (Phasianidae)</b>	
Grey Francolin (Introduced)	<i>Ortygornis pondicerianus</i>
Sand Partridge	<i>Ammoperdix heyi</i>
Arabian Partridge (H)	<i>Alectoris melanocephala</i>
<b>Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)</b>	
Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>
<b>Swifts (Apodidae)</b>	
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Forbes-Watson's Swift	<i>Apus berliozi</i>
<b>Sandgrouse (Pteroclididae)</b>	
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>
Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>
Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>
<b>Pigeons &amp; Doves (Columbidae)</b>	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
African Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>
<b>Rails, Crakes &amp; Coots (Rallidae)</b>	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Grey-headed Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
<b>Grebes (Podicipedidae)</b>	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
<b>Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae)</b>	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
<b>Thick-knees (Burhinidae)</b>	
Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
<b>Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)</b>	
Eurasian Oystercatcher (NT)	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
<b>Stilts &amp; Avocets (Recurvirostridae)</b>	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
<b>Plovers (Charadriidae)</b>	
Grey Plover (VU)	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Sociable Lapwing (CR)	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>
Tibetan Sand Plover	<i>Anarhynchus atrifrons</i>
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Anarhynchus leschenaultii</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>
<b>Jacanas (Jacanidae)</b>	
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
<b>Sandpipers &amp; Snipes (Scolopacidae)</b>	
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew (NT)	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit (NT)	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Black-tailed Godwit (NT)	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>
Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Ruddy Turnstone (NT)	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
Broad-billed Sandpiper (VU)	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>
Curlew Sandpiper (VU)	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Dunlin (NT)	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
<b>Couriers &amp; Pratincoles (Glareolidae)</b>	
Cream-colored Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
<b>Gulls &amp; Terns (Laridae)</b>	
Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
White-cheeked Tern	<i>Sterna repressa</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>
Sooty Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus hemprichii</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
<b>Tropicbirds (Phaethontidae)</b>	
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>
<b>Northern Storm Petrels (Hydrobatidae)</b>	
Swinhoe's Storm Petrel (NT)	<i>Hydrobates monorhis</i>
<b>Petrels &amp; Shearwaters (Procellariidae)</b>	
Persian Shearwater	<i>Puffinus persicus</i>
Jouanin's Petrel (NT)	<i>Bulweria fallax</i>
<b>Storks (Ciconiidae)</b>	
Abdim's Stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
<b>Gannets &amp; Boobies (Sulidae)</b>	
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>
<b>Cormorants &amp; Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)</b>	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
<b>Ibises &amp; Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae)</b>	
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Herons &amp; Bitterns (Ardeidae)</b>	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
Little Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
<b>Ospreys (Pandionidae)</b>	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
<b>Kites, Vultures, Hawks &amp; Eagles (Accipitridae)</b>	
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Egyptian Vulture (EN)	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Greater Spotted Eagle (VU)	<i>Clanga clanga</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Steppe Eagle (EN)	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
Eastern Imperial Eagle (VU)	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Pallid Harrier (NT)	<i>Circus macrourus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
<b>Owls (Strigidae)</b>	
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Pallid Scops Owl (H)	<i>Otus brucei</i>
Arabian Scops Owl	<i>Otus pamela</i>
Arabian Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo milesi</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Desert Owl	<i>Strix hadorami</i>
Omani Owl	<i>Strix butleri</i>
<b>Hoopoes (Upupidae)</b>	
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
<b>Rollers (Coraciidae)</b>	
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
<b>Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)</b>	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
<b>Bee-eaters (Meropidae)</b>	
Arabian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops cyanophrys</i>
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>
<b>Falcons (Falconidae)</b>	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Sooty Falcon (VU)	<i>Falco concolor</i>
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
<b>Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)</b>	
Rose-ringed Parakeet (Introduced)	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
<b>Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae)</b>	
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>
<b>Monarchs (Monarchidae)</b>	
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
<b>Shrikes (Laniidae)</b>	
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>
Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>
Red-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius phoenicuroides</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Crows (Corvidae)</b>	
House Crow (Introduced)	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>
Fan-tailed Raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>
<b>Hypocolius (Hypocoliidae)</b>	
Grey Hypocolius	<i>Hypocolius ampelinus</i>
<b>Larks (Alaudidae)</b>	
Greater Hoopoe-Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>
Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
<b>Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)</b>	
Red-vented Bulbul (Introduced)	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
White-eared Bulbul (Introduced)	<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>
White-spectacled Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>
<b>Swallows &amp; Martins (Hirundinidae)</b>	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Pale Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
<b>Streaked Scrub Warbler (Scotocercidae)</b>	
Streaked Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>
<b>Leaf Warblers (Phylloscopidae)</b>	
Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>
Plain Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus neglectus</i>
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
<b>Reed Warblers &amp; Allies (Acrocephalidae)</b>	
Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>
<b>Cisticolas &amp; Allies (Cisticolidae)</b>	
Graceful Prinia	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>
Delicate Prinia	<i>Prinia lepida</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Sylviid Babblers (Sylviidae)</b>	
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>
Arabian Warbler	<i>Curruca leucomelaena</i>
Asian Desert Warbler	<i>Curruca nana</i>
Menetries's Warbler	<i>Curruca mystacea</i>
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>
<b>White-eyes (Zosteropidae)</b>	
Abyssinian White-eye	<i>Zosterops abyssinicus</i>
<b>Laughingthrushes &amp; Allies (Leiothrichidae)</b>	
Arabian Babbler	<i>Argya squamiceps</i>
<b>Starlings (Sturnidae)</b>	
Common Myna (Introduced)	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Tristram's Starling	<i>Onychognathus tristramii</i>
<b>Thrushes (Turdidae)</b>	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
<b>Chats &amp; Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)</b>	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>
Blackstart	<i>Oenanthe melanura</i>
Red-tailed Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe chrysopygia</i>
Hume's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe albonigra</i>
Arabian Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugentoides</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)</b>	
Nile Valley Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna metallica</i>
Palestine Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris osea</i>
Arabian Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris hellmayri</i>
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
<b>Old World Sparrows (Passeridae)</b>	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
<b>Weavers (Ploceidae)</b>	
Rüppell's Weaver	<i>Ploceus galbula</i>
<b>Waxbills, Munias &amp; Allies (Estrildidae)</b>	
African Silverbill	<i>Euodice cantans</i>
Indian Silverbill	<i>Euodice malabarica</i>
<b>Wagtails &amp; Pipits (Motacillidae)</b>	
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similis</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
<b>Finches (Fringillidae)</b>	
Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak	<i>Rhynchostruthus percivali</i>
Yemen Serin	<i>Crithagra menachensis</i>
<b>Buntings (Emberizidae)</b>	
Striolated Bunting	<i>Emberiza striolata</i>
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>
Total seen	212
Total heard only	2
<b>Total recorded</b>	<b>214</b>

**Mammal List – Following Mammalwatching.com (November 2025)**

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Hyraxes (Hyracoidea)</b>	
Rock Hyrax	<i>Procavia capensis</i>
<b>Rabbits &amp; Hares (Lagomorpha)</b>	
Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>
<b>Bats (Chiroptera)</b>	
Egyptian Rousette	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>
<b>Carnivores (Carnivora)</b>	
Blanford's Fox	<i>Vulpes cana</i>
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
<b>Total seen</b>	<b>5</b>

**Reptile List – Following Reptiles of World (October 2023)**

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Turtles (Cheloniidae)</b>	
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
<b>Agamid Lizards (Agamidae)</b>	
Dhofar Rock Agama	<i>Pseudotrapelus dhofarensis</i>
Changeable Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
<b>Chameleon (Chamaeleonidae)</b>	
Arabian Chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo arabicus</i>
<b>Dwarf Geckos (Sphaerodactylidae)</b>	
Arabian Semaphore Gecko	<i>Pristurus guweirensis</i>
<b>Geckos (Gekkonidae)</b>	
Yellow-bellied House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>
<b>Total seen</b>	<b>6</b>