

Israel 26/4-5/5 2007

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This is a chronological resume of the trip. Actual birding sites have been underlined and are shortly introduced for every first visit. Not all species are mentioned, the most common are often excluded. Generally, larger numbers of birds have been estimated.

26/4

Arrival at Ben Gurion International airport, Tel Aviv on April 26th 2007. Approx. 2 hours of customs, luggage claim and car rental. Headed south at approx 5 a.m towards desert area of Nizzana in the Negev Desert. In the breaking light the agricultural fields south of Tel Aviv offered drive-by views of several **White Storks** and a single **Black Kite**. **Collared** and **Palm Doves** were common on the roadside wires. Further south, as the landscape turned more desertlike, several flocks of **Rock Doves** and **Cattle Egrets** crossed the road. As we entered Negev Desert by highway 210, 2 **Little Owls** were seen on rocks by the roadside – the only ones on our trip – and also a 2cy **Montague's Harrier**.

We reached Nizzana around 07.15. (We only birded from the road going south from Nizzana Castle towards Azzuz). Birds were seen on both sides of the road, app. 6 km. south of the castle. The area is known for **Macqueens Bustard** and four species of sandgrouses. During app. 2 hours we noticed **Macqueens Bustard** 2, east of the road, including one displaying male, **Cream-coloured Courser** 2 W of road, **Spotted Sandgrouse** 60+, only in flight, **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** 2 birds in flight, **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** 50+ in flight (all sandgrouses were very vocal; they appeared to roost out of sight by gravel pits 1 km. east of the road near military camp on hill, see Gosney Guide), **Chukar** 2, **White Stork** 8, **Spur-winged Plover** 4, **Marsh Harrier** 1 2cy NE, **Peregrine** 1 2cy perched on a pylon, **Hobby** 2, **Lesser Kestrel** 1 male, **Turtle Dove** 40+ perched on telephone wires by road 210, **Pallid Swift** 5, **Desert Lark** 1, **Bar-tailed Desert Lark** 4 by the gravel piles where a dirtroad runs east, **Thick-billed Lark** 2 (male and female) west of the road (male photographed), **Tawny Pipit** 4, **Yellow-vented Bulbul** 2, **Northern Wheatear** 2, **Scrub Warbler** 10, **Masked Shrike** 1, **Southern Grey Shrike** ssp *aucherii/elegans* 4, **Arabian Babbler** 1 by road 210 and an adult male **Golden Oriole**.

Also 2 **Mountain Gazelles** and a desert **Red Fox** were seen here.



Macqueen's Bustard male, Nizzana



Thick-billed Lark male, Nizzana



Scrub Warbler, Nizzana



Bar-tailed Desert Lark, Nizzana

By the gas station a 2cy **Lesser Spotted Eagle** flew N, and 2 **Rufous Bush Robins** were in the scrub. Also 3 **Bee-eaters** were seen here.

From Nizzana we drove southeast towards the Arava Valley (Wadi Araba). On the trip **White Stork** 10, **Egyptian Vulture** 1, **Chukar** 2, **Mourning Wheatear** 3 and **Palestine Sunbird** 2 were seen from the car.

As we reached the Arava Valley the first signs of raptor migration appeared on the skies above. A 10 minute stop at the roadside produced **Lesser Spotted Eagle** 1, **Honey Buzzard** 400, **Montague's Harrier** 1, **Levant Sparrowhawk** 1 – all migrating N. On the drive to Eilat we also noticed about 100 **Bee-eaters** and a **Roller**.

We stopped at the km 20 pools (K20), 3 large sewage ponds east of the main road (highway 90), app. 15 km N of Eilat. The site is for the time being the supreme spot for waterfowl in the Eilat region, and most of the birds give excellent views from the car. The site is worth a daily visit due to relatively large exchange of roosting migrants. At our first visit the site produced: **Greater Flamingo** 325, **Purple Heron** 5, **Squacco Heron** 1, **Shoveler** 1, **Levant Sparrowhawk** 1, **Collared Pratincole** 5, **Little Ringed Plover** 1, **Ringed Plover** 15, **Kentish Plover** 1, **Spur-winged Plover** 5, **Black-tailed Godwit** 23, **Black-winged Stilt** 40, **Wood Sandpiper** 10, **Red-**

necked Phalarope 8, Greenshank 200, Ruff 70, Little Stint 65, Common Sandpiper 5, Herring Gull ssp. barabensis/armenicus 1 2cy, Black-headed Gull 40, Slender-billed Gull 175, Common Tern 1, White-winged Black Tern 4, Bee-eater 80 – very numerous around the greenhouses along the road to the ponds, **Barn Swallow 20** (including 1 ssp. transitiva), **Red-throated Pipit 5, White Wagtail 1, Yellow Wagtail 150** (mainly ssp. thunbergi, but also beema, a few feldegg and one lutea), **Black-eared Wheatear 1**, and around the greenhouses **Sardinian Warbler 1, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler 2, Spotted Flycatcher 1 and Masked Shrike 1.**



Yellow Wagtail ssp. lutea, K20 pools



Little Stint (pale individual), K20 pools

After having disposed our luggage at our residence, we tried late-noon seawatching at North Beach. From here you can monitor most of the bottom (top) of the Gulf of Aqaba, traditionally a good place for migrating as well as roosting (especially terns) seabirds. A few weeks prior to our visit the bay had hosted a **Red-billed Tropicbird**, but unfortunately it had departed. In southerly winds the place is good for shearwaters and rarely **Brown Booby**. In the spring, though, the wind is mainly from the north – as was the case during our stay. At our first visit we saw:

Little Egret 27, Squacco Heron 5, Purple Heron 1, Striated Heron 4 (2 adults and 2 2 cy – apparently, they are breeding on the fishcages), **Shoveler 40, Common Tern 70, White-winged Black Tern 1, Little Tern 20, Caspian Tern 2, Sandwich Tern 6, Slender-billed Gull 30, White-eyed Gull 1, Lesser Black-backed Gull ssp. fuscus 30, Spur-winged Plover 1, Common Sandpiper 1, Pied Kingfisher 3, Kingfisher 2, Ring-necked Parakeet 2**, and in and around the scrubs along the stream **Sedge Warbler 1, Pale Crag Martin 1, House Martin 1, Graceful Warbler 1, Red-backed Shrike 1, Masked Shrike 1 and Indian House Crow 7.**

On the way home we stopped at the Salt Ponds in the northern part of Eilat. Here, we saw: **Marsh Harrier 1, Grey Plover 1, Kentish Plover 2, Black-winged Stilt 5, Dunlin 3, Little Stint 15, Broad-billed Sandpiper 1, Red-necked Phalarope 2, Slender-billed Gull 135, Whiskered Tern 1 ad.**, and the only two **Alpine Swifts** we saw on our trip.

First observation of the day was 18 **Night Herons** crossing the parking lot in front of our residence, The Royal Park. We drove to Eilat Ringing Station, a bird sanctuary just northeast of city. Here ringing is performed, but the area is fenced in and was closed for repairs during our stay. The southern fence lies straight up to the salt ponds we checked the day before, and the ponds can be monitored well from here. A small canal runs past the ringing station to the north beach, and it is worth checking for rails and acros. On our first brief visit we saw **Red-necked Phalarope 5, Eastern Orphean Warbler 1, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler 1, Wood Warbler 1, Bee-eater 2, Little Green Bee-eater 2, Rufous Bush Robin 1, Masked Shrike 1.**

From here we went straight to the Eilat Mountains. The raptor migration already begins around 7 am late April, sometimes even earlier. Three plateaus next to the road can be used for raptor spotting, all approximately 10 minutes drive from Eilat center. When the raptors pass at higher altitude, you can use the peak of Mount Yoash, but getting there requires a 4-wheel-drive (and is, according to locals, still not easy). Around 11-12 a.m the migration is going so high, that it is hard to determine the identity of the birds. The mountains are good in winds between N and W, but in easterly winds any point in the Arava Valley should be better – for example K20.

4 hours watch gave **Steppe Eagle 1, Marsh Harrier 3, Black Kite 1, Steppe Buzzard 35, Honey Buzzard 10.000, Levant Sparrowhawk 350** (including one flock totalling 300 birds), **Barbary Falcon 1** (local), **White-crowned Black Wheatear 1** (by the oil tanks, western outskirts of Eilat) and **Blackstart 1.**



Honey Buzzards, Eilat Mountains

Afterwards we checked the canal and the Palm Grove, a nesting place for the category c **Indian Silverbill**. This species is not easy at all. The scrub fences north of the palm grove seemed to be

richer on birds than the palm plantation itself. A little stroll gave **Night Heron 1, Grey Heron 1, Squacco Heron 1, Cattle Egret 2, Booted Eagle 2, Coot 1** dead, trapped in phone wires!, **Moorhen 1, Namaqua Dove 2, Bee-eater 40, Roller 2, Ring-necked Parakeet 10, Tree Pipit 1, Red-throated Pipit 5, Eastern Orphean Warbler 1, Reed Warbler 2, Graceful Warbler 10, Woodchat Shrike 1.**

In the midday heat, which on some days made it impossible to do birding between 12 and 16, we tried out Ofira Park, a small park in downtown Eilat, known for roosting passerines. Here, you can find shade under the trees and do some relaxed birding. Not much variation during our time in Eilat, but lots of **Blackcaps, Lesser Whitethroats, Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** and **Yellow-vented Bulbuls**, which all were common everywhere in the region. Besides that, our first visit to the park gave **Purple Heron 5** in flight, **Pied Kingfisher 1, Ring-necked Parakeet 2, Tree Pipit 6, Redstart 1, Garden Warbler 1, Masked Shrike 1, Indian House Crow 6** and an **Ortolan Bunting**.

North Beach (afternoon)

Western Reef Egret 1 light morph, **Little Egret 30, Shoveler 75, Garganey 1, Honey Buzzard 100, Black Kite 1, Curlew Sandpiper 1, Lesser Black-backed Gull 40, White-eyed Gull 15, Common Tern 150, Caspian Tern 5, White-cheeked Tern 1** 3cy+ - an almost daily visitor to the fishcages just outside the beach, **Pied Kingfisher 1, Ring-necked Parakeet 2, Pallid Swift 3.**

At dusk – from about 19-19.45 we tried out the K19 pools, the only certain spot for **Lichensteins Sandgrouse** in the Eilat area. The birds come to drink at the north-western corner of the northern pond – in late April around 19.30. 19.35, we heard the first calls and soon after 4 birds could be seen at close range in the very last light. Besides these nice birds, we saw **Night Heron 18** migr. N (perhaps same birds as seen at first light at Royal Park) + 2, **Cattle Egret 17, Purple Heron 1, Mallard 3, Shoveler 30, Coot 2, Collared Pratincole 1, Green Sandpiper 2, Wood Sandpiper 5, Common Sandpiper 5, Snipe 1, White-winged Black Tern 2, Barn Swallow 200, Red-throated Pipit 2, Yellow Wagtail 30, Sedge Warbler 1, Reed Warbler 1, Ortolan Bunting 1.**

28/4

North Beach 06.20-07.00

Sooty Shearwater 1, Garganey 1, Barbary Falcon 1, Arctic Skua 2, Caspian Tern 2, White-cheeked Tern 1 3 (2cy + 2 3cy+), **Bee-eater 11N.**

Eilat Mountains

Egyptian Vulture 2 imm., **Marsh Harrier 1, Montague's/Pallid Harrier 1** 2cy, **Steppe Buzzard 200, Honey Buzzard 5000, Levant Sparrowhawk 5, Hobby 1, Bee-eater 1, House Martin 3.**

Fields N of Eilat Palm Grove

Lesser Kestrel 1, Turtle Dove 1, Spotted Flycatcher 1, Arabian Babbler 1. At the football field on the other side of the canal, a **Whinchat** and a **Red-throated Pipit**.

We decided to try the circular fields of Yotvata 40 km north of Eilat. The fields should be good for larks, pipits, buntings and at night time nightjars. On the way we made a brief stop in an acacia wood about 1 km south of Yotvata. Here, we saw **Hoopoe 1, Redstart 1, Blackstart 2, Masked Shrike 1, Tristams Grackle 4** and an unidentified Ficedula flycatcher. Also 3 **Nubian Ibexes** were seen at close range.

Yotvata

Black Kite 1, Marsh Harrier 2, Sparrowhawk 1, Levant Sparrowhawk 35, Bee-eater 30, Little Green Bee-eater 5, Turtle Dove 450, Collared Dove 150, Lesser Short-toed Lark 2, Short-toed Lark 3, Crested Lark 6, Red-throated Pipit 4, Tawny Pipit 2, Rufous Bush Robin 10, Lesser Whitethroat 300, Reed Warbler 15, Great Reed Warbler 1, Spotted Flycatcher 2 and Ortolan Bunting 27.

A small pond south of Yotvata held **Little Egret 1, Black-winged Stilt 1, Hoopoe 1, White Wagtail 4, Whinchat 1, Northern Wheatear 1, Masked Shrike 1.**

We headed further north in an attempt to see the **Nubian Nightjars** at Neot Hakikar, a military area in the southern end of the Dead Sea region and the only breeding ground for the species in the Arava valley. The area cannot be entered on your own.

On the way we stopped at K76,5 (highway 90), a small road heading east from the main road and a known site for **Crowned** and **Spotted Sandgrouse**. We managed to find 10 **Crowned Sandgrouses** north of the road. Also 2 **Southern Grey Shrikes** ssp. *aucheri* and 3 **Ortolan Buntings** were here.



Crowned Sandgrouses, K76,5 Wadi Araba

We met up with our guide (Yoav Perlman) at a road junction in the south-western corner of the Dead Sea. We spend the last hours of the day checking fresh water ponds near Neot Hakikar. A large pond, which can be seen from the main road held **Little Grebe 5, Spoonbill 2, Great White Egret 2, Little Egret 15, Mallard 3, Teal 2, Garganey 2, Ringed Plover 5, Kentish Plover 3, Little Stint 40, Marsh Sandpiper 1, Coot 30, Moorhen 6, Clamorous Reed Warbler 1 sing., and Dead Sea Sparrow 2 sing.**

Some reed-surrounded fishponds a few km to the south gave **Little Bittern 1, Little Crake 1** female, **Pallid Swift 500+**, **Pale Crag Martin 100+**, **Cetti's Warbler 2, Reed Warbler 5, Clamorous Reed Warbler 2, Graceful Warbler 2** and **Dead Sea Sparrow 1**.

Finally, night fell and in the lights of the car we saw 5-7 **Nubian Nightjars** on the dirt-tracks in the military area – including two freshly fledged juveniles fed by an adult. Probably, we were the first western birders ever to see this in Israel, our guide told us.



Nubian Nightjar juvenile, Neot Hakikar

29/4

The morning was spent at North Beach.

North Beach

Striated Heron 1, Marsh Harrier 1 male, Montague's Harrier 1 ad. female N, Wood Sandpiper 1, Greenshank 1, Arctic Skua 2 ad. pale phase N, large gull sp. (heuglini?) 1, White-eyed Gull 2, Caspian Tern 4, White-cheeked Tern 2 (3cy+, 2cy), Pied Kingfisher 1.

K20 pools

European Flamingo 325, Osprey 2 migr., Booted Eagle 1 2cy, Red-winged Pratincole 3, Kentish Plover 2, Grey Plover 1, Ruddy Turnstone 1, Dunlin 10, Curlew Sandpiper 8, Broad-billed Sandpiper 10, Little Stint 200, Marsh Sandpiper 2, Red-necked Pratincole 12, Black Tern 1, White-winged Black Tern 6.

Around midday we birded Yotvata Sewage Pools. Turn east from highway 90 at Yovata. After app. 300 meters take a dirt track on your right hand (going south). After app. 300 meters you will reach the sewage works.

Yotvata Sewage Pools

Cattle Egret 1, Squacco Heron 4, Little Egret 1, Glossy Ibis 1, Montague's Harrier 1 2cy male, European Nightjar 1, Hoopoe 2, Little Green Bee-eater 4, Nightingale 1, Rufous Bush Robin 15, Hooded Wheatear 1 male, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler 1, Masked Shrike 1, Palestine Sunbird 4, Arabian Babbler 3.

This is a well known site for Hooded Wheatear. Our bird was located app. 100 m N of the Sewage Pools.



Hooded Wheatear male, Yotvata Sewage Pools

Yotvata Circular Fields

Marsh Harrier 1, Montague's Harrier 1 2cy male, Quail 1, Namaqua Dove 3, Rufous Bush Robin 5, Northern Wheatear 6, Arabian Babbler 4, Ortolan Bunting 1.

We were told by Jonathan Meyrav, that the organic date plantation around K44, Peacock Date Plantation, was one of the best spots for Indian Silverbill. Although it was in the middle of the day, and thus very hot, we decided to give the silverbills a try. 3 birds were seen about 100 meters south of the main gate. Remember to ask the staff whether it is all right that you go birding in their plantation.

Peacock Date Plantation

Steppe Buzzard 3, Rufous Bush Robin 10, Spotted Flycatcher 1, Masked Shrike 2, Indian Silverbill 3.

The late afternoon was, as usual, spent at North Beach.

North Beach

Sooty Shearwater 5, Night Heron 1 migr., Squacco Heron 12 migr., Little Egret 14 migr., Western Reef Heron 1 pale morph, Purple Heron 5 migr., Little Ringed Plover 1, Ringed Plover 5, Whimbrel 1, Lesser Black-backed Gull ssp. fuscus 12, Pallas's Gull 1 2cy, White-eyed Gull 13, Common Tern 80, White-cheeked Tern 2 (1 3cy+, 1 2cy), White-winged Black Tern 1, Red-rumped Swallow 3 migr.



Pallas's Gull 2cy (and LBB Gull), North Beach Pied Kingfisher, North Beach

30/4

North Beach 06.00-07.00

Sooty Shearwater 1, Striated Heron 5, Cattle Egret 3, Little Egret 15, Ruddy Turnstone 2, Common Tern 250, Caspian Tern 15, White-cheeked Tern 6 (1 3cy+, 5 2cy), Kingfisher 1, Pied Kingfisher 2.

Eilat Mountains

Black Stork 5, Booted Eagle 1, Black Kite, Marsh Harrier 2, Steppe Buzzard 20, Crested Honey Buzzard 1 ad. male migr. 09.15, Honey Buzzard 7.000, Levant Sparrowhawk 20, Bee-eater 60, Desert Lark 1, Blackstart 1.

Finally, a Crested Honey Buzzard was located amongst the Honey Buzzards. The bird was discovered by JSH, as it came gliding in a flock of Honey Buzzards. The bird was also observed by

Jonathan Meyrav. It was a classic pale morph male. The best way to locate CHB is by its distinctive jizz. It is broader winged and seems shorter tailed compared to HB. It appears large, and somewhat serpent eagle like. In the field, it is difficult to count fingered primaries (6 in CHB, 5 HB), but easy if you manage a photo of a soaring bird. Pay attention to the under-wing pattern, carpal patch, and barring on the primaries and secondaries. The identification of CHB is a challenge, and identification in the mountains is difficult, since honey buzzards migrate at quite high speed. Try to arrive as early as possible, because the honey buzzards are flying at low altitude during the morning and as the day progresses the birds migrate at such a high altitude that identification of CHB gets very difficult and often impossible. We suggest that you get a copy of the identification article concerning honey buzzards in *Birding World* vol. 7, number 10, p. 396-403 (1994). We have not been able to find newer literature.

Eilat Ringing Station

Booted Eagle 1, Marsh Harrier 2, Green Sandpiper 2, Red-necked Phalarope 4, Lesser Black-backed Gull ssp. fuscus 10, Little Gull 1 2cy, Pied Kingfisher 1, Bee-eater 5, Red-rumped Swallow 3, Rufous Bush Robin 1.



Booted Eagle, Eilat



Bee-eater, Eilat

Eilat Palm Grove

Booted Eagle 1 pale phase, Barred Warbler 1, Spotted Flycatcher 1, Masked Shrike 2.

K19 Pools

Cormorant 1, Night Heron 3, Squacco Heron 5, Little Egret 2, Purple Heron 1, Mallard 6, Shoveler 60, Coot 2, Red-winged Pratincole 2, Temminck's Stint 1, Little Stint 5, Ruff 20, Pied Kingfisher 1, Bee-eater 16, Tree Pipit 2, Red-throated Pipit 10, Yellow Wagtail 40, Black-eared Wheatear 1.

K20 Pools

Little Egret 8, Grey Heron 13, Spoonbill 2, Curlew Sandpiper 10, Broad-billed Sandpiper 9, Red-necked Phalarope 3, Black Tern 1, White-winged Black Tern 7, Bee-eater 20, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater 1, Spotted Flycatcher 1.

Royal Park

Bee-eater 8, Pale Crag Martin 2.

Ofira Park

Black Kite 2, Marsh Harrier 1, Crested Honey Buzzard 1 female migr. 16.07, Honey Buzzard 200, Rose-ringed Parakeet 4, Nightingale 1, Thrush Nightingale 1, Rufous Bush Robin 1, Redstart 1, Barred Warbler 1, Blackcap 30, Great Reed Warbler 1, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler 15, Masked Shrike 2.

On our way from Ofira Park to our residence at Royal Park, a female CHB was observed passing low over our heads. It was discovered due to its larger size compared to Honey Buzzards. It was a red morph female.

North Beach (afternoon)

Sooty Shearwater 2, Striated Heron 1, Squacco Heron 3, Little Egret 10, Booted Eagle 1, Montague's Harrier 1 ad. male, Pallid Harrier 1 2cy, Honey Buzzard 750, Levant Sparrowhawk 20, Kestrel 3, Oystercatcher 2, Wood Sandpiper 50, Arctic Skua 2, Lesser Black-backed Gull ssp. fuscus 55, Pallas's Gull 1 2cy (same as 29/4), White-eyed Gull 4, Little Tern 20, Common Tern 120, Caspian Tern 4, White-cheeked Tern 1 2cy, Pied Kingfisher 2, Bee-eater 10, Rose-ringed Parakeet 12, Red-rumped Swallow 2, House Martin 2, Indian House Crow 10.

1/5

We were up early, since we had planned to start birding at dawn at the kibbutz, Neot Smadar. To reach Neot Smadar, drive 40 km north on highway 90, and turn west on highway 40 towards Mitzpe Rapon. The kibbutz is easily located north of the road, a couple of km's before the road 40 x 12 junction. The kibbutz is huge, several square km's, including olive- and apricot groves. In the NW-part of the kibbutz you will find an artificial pond, which is a good spot for various egrets, including Little Bittern. Some small sewage pools are located just east of the kibbutz. This site is a good spot for shorebirds, and Citrine Wagtail. Along the eastern entrance road to the kibbutz, you will find crops attracting seed-eaters including Ortolan Bunting and Black-headed Bunting. Right at the road 40 x 12 junction a small café is located. This is an excellent place to enjoy your breakfast or lunch, since the lush garden holds many migrants, including at least 3 Thrush Nightingales during our visit. Neot Smadar was beyond doubt the place where we found the highest migrant density during our trip.

App. 7 km E of Neot Smadar

Osprey 1.

Neot Smadar (07.00-14.00)

Black Stork 25, Little Bittern 1 female, Night Heron 1, Cattle Egret 2, Squacco Heron 5, Grey Heron 1, Booted Eagle 1, Marsh Harrier 1, Steppe Buzzard 1, Honey Buzzard 2, Sparrowhawk 1, Levant Sparrowhawk 1, Barbary Falcon 1, Chukar 2, Quail 1, Moorhen 5, Coot 1, Wood Sandpiper 1, Green Sandpiper 3, Common Sandpiper 1, Pied Kingfisher 1, Bee-eater 130, Desert Lark 2, Crag Martin 1, Pale Crag Martin 5, Yellow-vented Bulbul 200, Nightingale 1, Thrush Nightingale 8, Rufous Bush Robin 30, Redstart 6, Blackstart 2, Hooded Wheatear 1 male, Whinchat 2, Barred Warbler 9, Garden Warbler 4, Blackcap 2.000, Sedge Warbler 2, Reed Warbler 3, Great Reed Warbler 2, Eastern Orphean Warbler 2 (1 male, 1 female), Lesser Whitethroat 500, Sardinian Warbler 2, Common Whitethroat 1, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler 100, Willow Warbler 2, Wood Warbler 1, Spotted Flycatcher 15, Pied Flycatcher 3 females, Collared Flycatcher 1 female, Woodchat Shrike 2, Masked Shrike 25, Palestine Sunbird 4, Brown-necked Raven 15, Golden Oriole 2 (1 male, 1 female/imm.), Linnet 2, Ortolan Bunting 40, Black-headed Bunting 1 male, Desert Red Fox 2.



Collared Flycatcher female, Neot Smadar



Crag Martin, Neot Smadar

North Beach (17.00-19.00)

Black Stork 1, Egyptian Vulture 1 ad., Lesser Spotted Eagle 1, Aquila sp. 1, Black Kite 8, Marsh Harrier 2, harrier sp. 1, Steppe Buzzard 100, Honey Buzzard 10.000, Kestrel 1, Arctic Skua 4 ad., White-cheeked Tern 1 3cy+, Whiskered Tern 2 (1 ad., 1 2cy), Bee-eater 1.

2/5

Eilat Mountains

The migration was quite good this day and resulted in **Lesser Spotted Eagle 6, Egyptian Vulture 1, Black Kite 30, Honey Buzzard at least 10.000, possible Crested Honey Buzzard 2.** Other birds included **Hobby 1 and Barbary Falcon 2** (local birds).

Finally all participants of the trip got Indian Silverbill on their trip list. The date plantation in Eilat close to the Jordanian border revealed **Bee-eater** 15 and **Indian Silverbill** 2.

Salt pools near the ringing station

Black-winged Stilt 5, **Kentish Plover** 3, **Grey Plover** 3, **Dunlin** 1, **Curlew Sandpiper** 2, **Broad-billed Sandpiper** 1, **Little Stint** 1, **Slender-billed Gull** 57, **Little Gull** 1 2cy.

In the evening we went on a night trip with Noam Weiss who works at Eilat ringing station. We first searched the Circular Fields at Yotvata for the **Pharaoh Eagle Owl**. This species breeds in wadis and uses the fields as its hunting grounds. Despite great efforts it was not found. The place was good for a few mammals though. One was **Lesser/Greater Egyptian Jerboa** (*Jaculus jaculus* / *Jaculus orientalis*) 3. Both species should live in the area and look quite similar. The Jerboa is really a charming little animal. It looks mostly like a mouse but has long hindlegs and jumps fast across the desert like a kangaroo! **Desert Hedgehog** (*Paraechinus aethiopicus*) 3 and **Golden Jackal** (*Canis aureus*) 1 were also seen. We went on to the Negev Desert in search of the **Humes Tawny Owl**. Two known and one potential breeding site were visited with no luck. It seems that the owl is very quiet this time of year. It is recommended to try earlier in spring instead.

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) 2, **Dorcas Gazelle** (*Gazella dorcas*) 2, **Nubian Ibex** (*Capra nubiana*) 2 were a minor compensation.

3/5

The morning was spent at Eilat North Beach which yielded **Sooty Shearwater** 4, **Western Reef Heron** 1, **Ringed Plover** 6 migr. N, **Arctic Skua** 7 migr. N, **Caspian Tern** 1, **White-cheeked Tern** 3, **Whiskered Tern** 1 2cy, **Pied Kingfisher** 2.

In the afternoon Ofira Park was visited which yielded **Tree Pipit** 2, **Red-throated Pipit** 1, **Redstart** 1, **Barred Warbler** 3, **Great Reed Warbler** 1, **Spotted Flycatcher** 2, **Masked Shrike** 2.

K20 pools

Temminck's Stint 1, **Red-necked Phalarope** 12, **Gull-billed Tern** 3.

The evening was spent at North Beach which yielded massive migration of **White-winged Black Terns**. 1.430 were counted from late afternoon and onwards (about 5.000 were seen during the day). Other sightings included **Black-crowned Night Heron** 3 migr. N, **Pochard** 3, **Whimbrel** 2, **Arctic Skua** 11, **White-eyed Gull** 18, **White-Cheeked Tern** 1.

4/5

We were early off to Neot Semadar.

Neot Smadar:

Little Bittern 2, **Cattle Egret** 2, **Squacco Heron** 2, **Booted Eagle** 2 (1 dark + 1 light morph), **Honey Buzzard** 5, **Stone Curlew** 2, **Temminck's Stint** 1, **Wood Sandpiper** 1, **Green Sandpiper**

1, Common Sandpiper 1, Turtle Dove 2, Pied Kingfisher 1, Bee-eater 65, Wryneck 1, Short-toed Lark 3, Tawny Pipit 1, Red-throated Pipit 1, White Wagtail 1, Yellow Wagtail 1, Citrine Wagtail 1 female, Yellow vented Bulbul 150, Thrush Nightingale 3, Rufous Bush Robin 40, Redstart 6, Wheatear 1, Blackstart 5, Whinchat 4, Barred Warbler 5, Garden Warbler 13, Blackcap 700, Eastern Orphean Warbler 4, Lesser Whitethroat 200, Whitethroat 1, Reed Warbler 8, Great Reed Warbler 3, Olive-tree Warbler 1, Willow Warbler 2, Spotted Flycatcher 12, Red-breasted Flycatcher 1 female/2cy, Red-backed Shrike 2, Palestine Sunbird 2, Arabian Babbler 6, Brown-necked Raven 14, Golden Oriole 6, Ortolan Bunting 14.



Little Bittern male, Neot Smadar



Little Bittern female, Neot Smadar



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Neot Smadar



Golden Oriole male, Neot Smadar

On the way home the K20 pools were visited once again.

K20 pools:

Marsh Harrier 1, Red-winged Pratincole 6, Caspian Plover 1 male, Broad-billed Sandpiper 9, Red-necked Phalarope 11, Gull-billed Tern 2, Red-rumped Swallow 1, Yellow Wagtail ssp. lutea 1.



Caspian Plover male, K20 pools



Curlew Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, and Little Stint, K20 pools

After a well deserved siesta the observation post was moved to North Beach.

North Beach:

Sooty Shearwater 2, Green-backed Heron 1, Squacco Heron 12, White-eyed Gull 13, Caspian Tern 12, White-cheeked Tern 1 2cy, White-winged Black Tern 1, Arctic Skua 4, Pomarine Skua 2 (1 ad. light + 1 ad. dark morph). Skua sp. (possibly Pomarine) 1, Lesser Black-backed Gull ssp. fuscus (Baltic Gull) 35, Pied Kingfisher 1.

5/5

Eilat Mountains (morning)

Booted Eagle 1, Marsh Harrier 2, Montague's Harrier 1 ad. female, Crested Honey Buzzard 1 female migr. 8.04-07, Honey Buzzard 5.000, Levant Sparrowhawk 1, Barbary Falcon 1.



Crested Honey Buzzard female, Eilat Mountains *Honey Buzzard female, Eilat Mountains*

K20 pools around 10 am

Pintail 1, Northern Shoveler 11, Wigeon 1, Collared Pratincole 1, Black-winged Pratincole 1, Broad-billed Sandpiper 4, Terek Sandpiper 1, Little Green Bee-eater 2, Red-throated Pipit 2.

We left Eilat and headed north. We stopped at a nature reserve located at K152 in Wadi Araba. Look for a dirt track, which lead you through a fence.

K152 Wadi Araba

Sand Partridge 1, Arabian Babbler 1, Garden Warbler 1, Arabian Warbler 1, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler 1.



Arabian Warbler, K152 Wadi Araba

We continued via The Dead Sea towards Tel Aviv.

Road 31 near Arad

Steppe Eagle 1 imm., Turtle Dove 5, Jackdaw 1.

Ashoud (near Tel Aviv) including the sea front and an adjacent park

Spur-winged Plover 2, Common Tern 50 migr. N, Syrian Woodpecker 1, Red-rumped Swallow 1, Sardinian Warbler 2, Icterine Warbler 1, Graceful Warbler 12, Spotted Flycatcher 1, Masked Shrike 2, Greenfinch 1, Common Mynah 10.

We reached Ben Gurion Airport during the night. Remember to arrive at the airport at least 3 hours before your scheduled departure, since security check takes ages. We left in the early hours of May 6th. We can only recommend a birding trip to Israel – especially Eilat. The diversity of species is astonishing.