

## **Bird and Nature Trip to Jordan**

### **January 19-26 2019**



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*My son and I visited Jordan during the “marbaniyeh”, i.e., the forty coldest days of winter stretching from the winter solstice to about January 30. We were, however, very lucky with the weather, had no snow or rain and sunny or partially sunny skies every day.*

*It was our first visit to Jordan, and we came to enjoy the landscape during the winter, and of course the birds. The aim of this report is to give some practical tips to travelers with similar aims to ours. Note that we are not listers and did not get out of our way to maximize the number of species seen.*

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## Travel and airport

We flew direct with Norwegian Copenhagen - Amman and back. A very comfortable flight; checked luggage costs extra but the hand luggage allowance is 10 kg + one “personal item” (the weight was not checked in either direction).

Airport security in Jordan is extremely strict and caused some problems for us due to camera equipment. We had to argue for a long time and request the attention of a superior before being allowed to proceed with a rubber air blower (for cleaning lenses) which was arbitrarily confiscated.

Visa is on arrival, 40 JOD, but we advise to buy a Jordan pass in advance (70-80 JOD) which includes not only the cost for the visa but most entrance fees. If you intend to visit Petra the Jordan Pass is a very good deal - Petra entrance is otherwise very expensive. Note that when you buy the Jordan Pass you need to decide whether to visit Petra for one, two, or three days - and beware that these days are meant to be consecutive and cannot be any two or three days.

Upon arrival at Queen Alia airport there are ATM machines easily available before and after customs, although note that for cash withdrawal in Jordan there is a 3 JOD transaction fee (in the two we tried, not sure about all banks). After customs there are also Orange and Zain stores if you want to get a local SIM card, the cost for this was 15 or 16 JOD. Also the rental car desks are located in the same area.

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## Driving

We rented a Chevrolet Trax, a compact SUV which was very suitable for our purposes although not the cheapest car. We used Dollar via Rental Cars which worked out fine. The car was very carefully controlled for scratches etc both at pickup and return. Fuel policy was to check how much petrol there was on pickup with the expectation to return with the same amount. There were no surprise charges for cleaning or similar. No international driver's license required.

Roads are generally in good condition and signage in English is good. There are two highways, the Desert Highway in the East and the Dead Sea Highway in the West, which allow high speeds (around 100 km/h) along long stretches but sometimes are slower (somewhat surprisingly, the tarmac on the Desert Highway is often in quite poor condition). The so called King's Highway, route 35, is not a highway but a series of country roads which winds its way through every settlement, dips down into several wadis including Wadi Mujib and up again on the way and takes

a long time to drive. Crossing between the Dead Sea Highway and King's Highway means winding roads to handle the elevation difference, but nothing we tried was scary to drive (Tafilah-Fifa road (route 60) and the Ma'in road between Madaba and the Dead Sea).

Note that no matter where you drive speed bumps are ubiquitous - also on the major highways. They are usually but not always signposted in advance, anything from 1 km to a few meters before.

Petrol is rather cheap but sometimes the petrol stations are few and far between - make sure you fill up when you can.

We encountered check points, both temporary and permanent, here and there but as soon as they saw we were foreigners we were always waved through with a smile.

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## Maps

We used Google Maps since we had a local SIM card, but as far as we could tell offline navigation with Maps.me would also have worked fine. Note that there can be some differences in transliteration of the Arabic names.

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## Housing

We stayed first and last night in Madaba, just over 20 minutes from the airport and a nice town in itself. There and in Petra we used Airbnb; in Dana Historic Village we chose Dana Hotel. There are, I believe, four hotels in the small village, all are very close and as regards location there is no interesting difference (except perhaps as regards the view). We chose Dana Hotel because it is run by the community and were happy with our choice. Good service, great breakfasts (included) and great dinners (for which we payed extra - these need to be preordered) with enough food for a company twice our size. We booked the hotel via Hostelworld.

No matter where we stayed it was cold at night. We deliberately chose only places with heaters (no central heating anywhere although always hot water) but they did not make much of a difference as due to fire and choking hazards they were usually only allowed when you were in the room and awake. So bring lots of warm underwear and maybe, if you tend to be cold at night, a sleeping bag if you travel at this time of year.

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## Climate

We visited Jordan during the "marbaniyeh", the forty coldest days of winter stretching from the winter solstice to about January 30. We were, however, very lucky with the weather, had no snow or rain and sunny or partially sunny skies every day. Temperatures ranged between lows of 3 degrees centigrade and highs of maybe 13-14 in the shade - meaning very pleasant temperatures in the sun. Nights, however, were very cold, especially indoors due to the lack of central heating.

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## Food

Except for Madaba where we found a huge Carrefour to stock up, we only saw mini-markets with very limited supplies during our trip. Fast food like falafel or shawarma is available in most communities, easily found also on a Friday. We took no precautions about food and had the impression there was no danger of getting sick from fresh vegetables or similar.

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## Toilets

Except for Petra we saw very few public toilets and unfortunately the landscape is usually too open to allow discrete visits behind the bushes. But it was still possible to manage.

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## Electricity

In theory, Jordan has standard European sockets, although the guidebook warns that you can encounter the British type also (which we didn't). Unfortunately however, everywhere we went the assumption was that the pins were thinner than they are in Sweden, making it anything from really hard to impossible to insert/extract our plugs. In the end, we used a power strip that easily accepted our standard plugs yet had thin enough pins to use in the Jordanian wall sockets.

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## Wifi

Wifi was often not present where we stayed or took our meals, so it is a good idea to invest in a local SIM card (these come with a very large data package, so no issues on that front). Dana Hotel had wifi in the dining area.

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## Money

In many places only cash is accepted. ATMs where you can withdraw cash are found at the airport and in urban areas (for example in Wadi Musa), but we only found ones with a 3 JOD transaction fee. Also in restaurants we were warned about a transaction fee if using a credit card.

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## Preparations and literature

Various trip reports found on [www.cloudbirders.com](http://www.cloudbirders.com):

### **Jos Stratford**

[http://josstratford.co.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=249&Itemid=103](http://josstratford.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=249&Itemid=103)

### **David Karr's** reports from his trips to Dana

[https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR\\_Dana\\_Jordan\\_12\\_2016.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR_Dana_Jordan_12_2016.pdf), Petra

[https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR\\_JordanPetra\\_12\\_2016.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR_JordanPetra_12_2016.pdf), and Wadi

Rum [https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR\\_Jordan\\_0112\\_20162017.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/KARR_Jordan_0112_20162017.pdf).

**Rosemary Royle** (who travelled in spring, but who gave some useful tips, not least about Al Barra forest in Dana), <http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/jordan/jordan-7/jordan-march-2011.htm>.

**Collins bird guide** accompanied us on our trip, as did **Lonely Planet Jordan**.

Before the trip I also enjoyed reading **Guy Mountfort's Portrait of a Desert. The Story of an Expedition to Jordan**, published in 1965.

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## Itinerary

Since we had only one week at our disposal we decided to limit ourselves to visiting

- Dana Biosphere Reserve, including Al Barra Forest.
- Petra with Little Petra
- Wadi Rum
- Dead Sea area

and of course any sites we would pass by while driving to these places.

Our itinerary was:

- Late arrival Saturday, night in Madaba.
- Sunday spent stocking up on groceries for picnics and then a long slow drive along King's Highway to Dana Biosphere Reserve which we reached at sunset, stopping at the wadis along the way (this time of year with water). Night in Dana Village.
- Monday morning walk to Al Barra Forest. After breakfast we hiked down Wadi Dana for a few hours and then up again finishing off the day by walking through the orchards along the slope next to the village in the last light. Night in Dana Village.
- Tuesday at dawn we took the car to Al Barra and spent the early morning there. After breakfast took a longer walk in the orchards just below the village. Around lunch time we left Dana and drove towards Little Petra. There are some Nabatean ruins to watch there; we also walked around the cultivated fields next to it. Night in Wadi Musa.
- All day in Petra - entered from the Visitor Centre through the Siq just after 6 am and did not leave until closing time at 5 pm. Night in Wadi Musa.
- Excursion to Wadi Rum. Night in Wadi Musa (we decided not to stay the night in Wadi Rum due to the cold nights).
- Second day in Petra, this time entering via Umm Sayhoun entrance, walking the Turkmaniya Road down to the Basin Restaurant and then walking Wadi Siyagh as far as we could comfortably manage with cameras and binoculars. Early afternoon we left Petra and drove route 60 (Tafila - Fifa) down to the Dead Sea where we had about one hour left of daylight. Night in Madaba.
- Finally, we spent all of Saturday along the Dead Sea before going to the airport late in the evening.

Note that the whole country appeared very accessible, and you can walk anywhere that is not obviously private.

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More about the sites

### **Driving to Dana Biosphere Reserve on the King's Highway**

We spent a large part of Sunday on the long drive on the King's Highway from Madaba to Dana. The drive was mostly uneventful, except when passing through the wadis which all held water at this time of year and of course birds.

In Wadi al Wala we had the trip's only Jay, apart from getting our first general feel for Jordanian bird life next to the stream. Graceful Prinias were abundant, with a lone Cetti's Warbler singing in a bush.

Before the descent into Wadi Mujib we stopped for the view and were rewarded also by two subadult Steppe Eagles as well as a fox and our first Tristram's Starlings. At the bottom of the wadi we enjoyed a Great Grey Shrike spearing its prey on a barbed wire fence and then saw



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several more on the ascent - curiously the only ones of the trip until we reached the Dead Sea on our last day. Other notable birds near the bottom of Wadi al Mujib were our first European Stonechats and Blackstarts.

Our first Mourning Wheatear was spotted in a third wadi, Wadi al Hasa (near Karak) to be followed by many more during the trip.

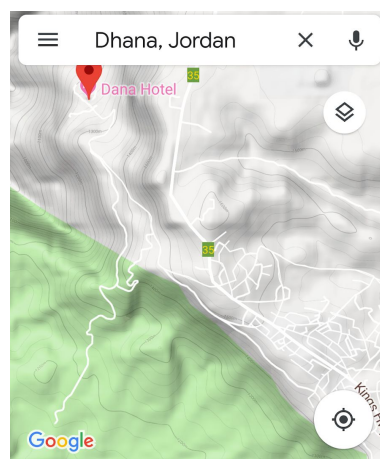


## Dana Biosphere Reserve

We reached Dana Historic Village at sunset on our first day, Sunday, too late for any birding that day, mostly noticing the calling Blackbirds, apart from Spectacled Bulbuls and Laughing Doves - two species that are always present.



Monday morning we walked to Al Barra Forest (see map). A nice walk with Chukars everywhere, the trip's only Rock Sparrow (by the school) and one male Blue Rock Thrush, to mention the highlights on the bird front. Apart from the birds, the landscape is incredibly beautiful, well worth a visit on its own merits. Unfortunately, the walk proved a lot longer than we expected and with a considerable elevation difference. As a result, having only three hours from dawn to breakfast, we basically walked to the forest and back, no time to linger once there. Not surprisingly, we did not see any Syrian Serins, supposedly residents of the forest.



Al Barra forest shown in green:

After breakfast we hiked down Wadi Dana for a few hours and then up again. We had heard the evening before that with luck it could be possible to spot Syrian Serins in the Wadi, and had read similar things in previous trip reports, so you can imagine our surprise when they turned out to be very common. During a five hour hike they were the most frequently encountered species (possibly rivaled by Tristram's Starlings), in total at least 40 or 50 (maximum 25 at a time). In the beginning, as the first observations were rather distant, we didn't want to believe our eyes and ears, but no, several flocks came up very close - we even had our picnic surrounded by one flock - and we got superb views of many different individuals, both male and female.

Apart from the Serins, main highlights of the Wadi Dana hike were the charming Scrub warblers,



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also quite common, one, or probably two Bonelli's Eagles, a Finsch's Wheatear and two female Palestine Sunbirds. Two Little Owls (in a side wadi) directed our attention to an African Wild Cat. What we did *not* see, despite being told we would, were Griffon vultures.



View over Wadi Dana:



Arriving back at the village before the last light we ended the day by walking through the orchards along the slope next to the village. Nothing spectacular, but we did see the trip's only Dunnock as well as a female Sardinian Warbler up close, a rather common bird in Jordan (that we also saw earlier in the day in Wadi Dana). In the orchards, mainly olive and pomegranate trees are grown, but also almond trees (these were in bloom), fig trees, and prickly pear cacti.





Tuesday at dawn we took the car to Al Barra (there were signs that you had to have a permit - we decided that Jordan passes were enough and just drove on), parked in the space indicated by Rosamund Royle on her hand-drawn map (you drive past the forestry station and then follow the winding road downhill until there is a small space for parking 2-3 cars to the right) and spent the early morning there. The landscape is quite stunning. Still no Syrian Serins in Al Barra, but several Song Thrushes, with Chiffchaffs as the most common bird among the trees (I might mention that we were initially mystified by these birds as their call is different from the call of the Northern European Chiffchaffs, but the mystery was cleared up by studying Collins Bird Guide). Also the trip's first Collared Doves (later seen also in the Dead Sea area) - Laughing doves otherwise dominate the region, together with Rock Pigeons / Feral Pigeons.



After breakfast at 9 we went for a longer walk in the orchards next to the village, and were rewarded by a flock of eight Arabian Babblers, entertaining us for more than half an hour, quite unafraid. A Cetti's Warbler was busy singing in a bush; another unexpected bird was a female Blackcap. We also noted the trip's only Goldfinches. Around lunch time we left Dana and drove south towards Little Petra.

### **Little Petra / Al Beidha**

Little Petra was nothing spectacular either as regards the Nabatean ruins or the birds, although we quite enjoyed our visit. There were hardly any tourists at Little Petra and none at all after walking a few meters towards the Neolithic remains. located in an area of cultivated fields. The area is very beautiful, and presented us with several Mourning Wheatears and White Wagtails, as well as flocks of Common Linnets (common also in Dana). The drive from Little Petra to Petra is quite lovely, passing some wadis (where there may be Hume's Owls, although our only attempt at listening in the dark did not turn up anything promising). Driving there in the last light we saw numerous local families gathering for picnics.



## **Petra** (for photo, see title page)

We spent two days in Petra. The first day we entered via the Siq - a spectacular passage with considerable bird interest most notably seven Sinai Rosefinches, a Fan-tailed Raven swooping down very low, screeching, and flocks of Swifts (unfortunately not checked closely enough to determine the species). The rest of the area provided us with Mourning Wheatears, a Blue Rock Thrush now and then, intensely green Green Finches, Desert Larks, in total five more Sinai Rosefinches, to mention some of the more memorable birds. Rock Martins were also common.

The second day in Petra we started at the Umm Sayhoun entrance which proved to be a great choice (to enter there you must have your ticket in advance). From there it is quite a long walk down along Turkmaniya Road which is flanked by orchards on both sides before you reach the ruin Qasr-al-bint, the Basin Restaurant, and the tourist groups. The scenery is stunning, and there are quite a few Nabatean remains that you can enjoy in solitude. Except for a local woman chasing an escaped duck, we were basically alone on this road in the morning. The orchards act as bird magnets, presenting birds like Palestine Sunbirds, Greenfinches, Sardinian Warblers, as well as huge numbers of House Sparrows. The cliffs beyond sported Mourning Wheatears, Desert Larks and Black Redstarts, we also saw a Blue Rock Thrush, and a Long-legged Buzzard both in the early morning and during the return.

At the bottom of the road we turned right at the Basin restaurant hiking along Wadi Siyagh (hold right when the path forks), an interesting walk in itself, with resident bedouin families and orchards, but nothing spectacular in terms of birds. The most interesting wildlife experience in Wadi Siyagh was actually watching a crab, most likely *Potamos potamios*, in the stream while having our picnic. On our return up Turkmaniya Road, just at the beginning, we encountered a flock of more than 25 Sinai Rosefinches which presented themselves for prolonged viewings.



## Wadi Rum

Wadi Rum is a spectacular red desert of Hollywood fame - it is a particularly popular location for filming life on Mars (as in *The Martian* from 2015) - and well worth a visit. Thursday we drove from Wadi Musa to Wadi Rum (a just under 2 hour drive), arriving there at 8 am and leaving just before sunset. Along the drive to Wadi Rum we saw one of the trip's many Kestrels, this one surprising us by carrying a House Sparrow in its claws. In the distance we noted a large sitting Eagle, but unfortunately no way to identify the species from the highway. Near the Visitor Centre to Wadi Rum we saw first one and then another Long-legged Buzzard.



We did not go on jeep tour, instead we parked the car in Wadi Rum Village and made our way on foot to Lawrence's Spring. It was easy to find with the help of Google Maps and the tourist jeeps and camels converging there. The Spring itself is high on the cliff side but it is easy to climb up there. We were accompanied by a few Desert Larks, Sinai Rosefinches and a pair of White-Crowned Wheatears during the climb, species also seen before and after. Along the walk to and from the spring we also saw Brown-necked Ravens, a Desert Wheatear (the only one of the trip), Black Redstarts, among other birds. One of the ravens flew over us with a Rock Pigeon in its claws, raising the question of whether it had been able to catch it in a surprise attack or had somehow found a newly dead bird.

## Dead Sea and surrounding area

Our second day in Petra was not a full day so we had plenty of time to drive to Tafilah and take route 60 towards Fafa and the Dead Sea, arriving there with about one hour of daylight left. Bird life is spectacularly different as you descend towards the Dead Sea. Suddenly White wagtails and Crested Larks turned from occasional to common, and we were pleasantly surprised by three and then one more Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and a Hoopoe in quick succession when reaching the



flat area at the bottom. By the huge Arab Potash plant we encountered a flock of 27 Fan-tailed Ravens. A flock of Swifts was seen from the car, as well as a flying Little Egret.

We spent the night in Madaba then returned down the mountains on the Ma'in Road. We started by exploring the area to the north. Quite soon we encountered a White-throated kingfisher sitting very close to the road by a tiny pond and we could enjoy it for quite a while from the car. Frogs were croaking and a flock of Sparrows in a nearby bush turned out to be Spanish Sparrows. Later we took the turn towards the Baptism site and quickly found an Important Bird Area with plenty of tamarisk bushes - and plenty of trash, the area had recently been heavily flooded. Thinking this was our chance at Dead Sea Sparrows we explored the area for two hours or so. Unfortunately no sparrows, although several large nests that we assumed were theirs:



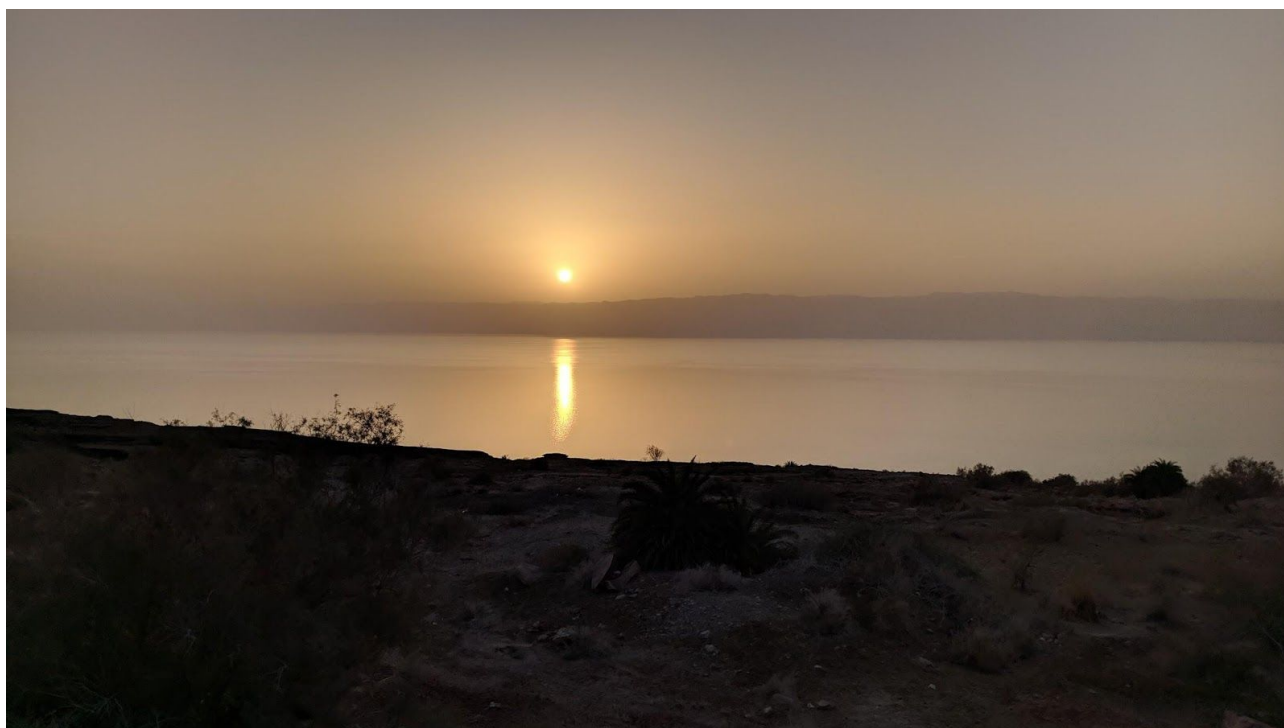
The area was quite birdy nevertheless with at least three Cetti's Warblers, a Spur-winged Plover flying over us twice, three Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, a pair of Palestine Sunbirds, and a flying Great White Egret, as well as the usual suspects such as Graceful Prinias, Spectacled Bulbuls, and Chiffchaffs.

Driving south again we noted two small flocks of Barn Swallows, two Hooded Crows (the only ones of the trip), another Spur-winged Plover, several White-crowned Wheatears on wires along the highway as well as more Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters.

We made several stops along the way, usually where there was water coming down from the mountains with the accompanying vegetation and bird life. The highlight of the day was at

31.599587,35.561719, a quite small area, but very wet and with a patch of bushes creating a low canopy over a small stream “delta”. We sat there for a long time, enjoying prolonged views of at least three, probably five, Bluethroats, a Grey Wagtail, and - stunningly - at least four Water Rails walking about searching for food. It was quite an experience to see Water Rails walk around openly for more than an hour, not seeming to mind our presence. For most of the time one of them kept going tyick-tyick-tyick, a sound which in the literature is described as a courtship song, although we saw nothing to suggest courtship in their behavior.

We finished the day driving and walking around the agricultural area south of the Dead Sea. Tomatoes, peas, bananas, corn, squash and chilies grew in the fields where we walked. Graceful Prinias were abundant, we saw another three White-throated Kingfishers, many Kestrels, and a large flock of Indian Silverbills. In the distance we saw a tree with three Great White Egrets perched at the top. An enormous flock of Swifts passed overhead, at least 500 birds, probably many more as more birds kept arriving. Not having looked carefully at the Swifts before during the trip we now directed our binoculars at them. Judge our surprise when we realized most of them seemed to be Pale Swifts. We also spotted at least two Little Swifts - most likely there were many more but too hard to keep track of individuals to know if you counted the same one twice. A great ending to a great trip.



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## Bird list

**Chukar Partridge** Common at Dana and quite common at Ajloun, though hard to see well

**Rock Pigeon** In especially Dana Biosphere Reserve there were flocks which we took to be genuine Rock Pigeons. Feral Pigeons were, as everywhere, common in the cities.

**Collared Dove** Common along the Dead Sea, also a few seen in Al Barra forest.

**Laughing Dove** Common everywhere.

**Swift/Pallid Swift** We did not pay much attention to the swifts until the last day of our trip so perhaps incorrectly assumed we saw flocks of “regular” swifts along the King’s Highway, in Petra, and when crossing the mountains on route 60 towards the Dead Sea.

**Pallid Swift** An enormous flock of several hundred birds, possibly thousands, observed on our last day over the cultivated area south of the Dead Sea. May well have been also “regular” Swifts in this flock, but all individuals followed long enough to allow identification were Pallid Swifts, with the exception of:

**Little Swift** At least two birds in the flock just described, probably more, were Little Swifts.

**Water Rail** At least four birds at our favorite wet spot along the Dead Sea Highway.



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**Spur-winged Plover** Two observations north of the Dead Sea, one in the Important Bird Area.

**Grey Heron** One standing by Mujib dam.

**Great White Egret** At least four in a tree in the cultivated area just south of the Dead Sea. A few more flying during the same day.

**Little Egret** Around ten birds in total observed along the Dead Sea (all flying).

**Steppe Eagle** Two subadult individuals seen from a viewing point above Wadi Mujib along the King's Highway.

**Bonelli's Eagle** One or probably two in Wadi Dana.

**Long-legged Buzzard** Two seen at Petra (Turkmaniya Road) and two approaching Wadi Rum.

**Little Owl** A pair in Wadi Dana.

**Eurasian Hoopoe** One bird observed in the cultivated fields near the Dead Sea Highway.

**White-throated Kingfisher** A total of four birds observed in the Dead Sea Area, three of them in the northernmost part of the cultivated area south of the Dead Sea, one at the northern end of the Dead Sea.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** Observed along the end of route 60 towards the Dead Sea, also on several occasions on our last day when driving along the Dead Sea Highway.

**Eurasian Kestrel** Quite common in any hilly or rocky area, also in the cultivated area south of the Dead Sea. Often seen when driving. Observed all days.

**Great Grey Shrike** Three birds in Wadi al Mujib along the King's Highway and two along the Dead Sea Highway.

**Jay** One seen at Wadi al Wala, by the King's Highway.

**Hooded Crow** A pair seen just north of the Dead Sea.

**Brown-necked Raven** One seen by Wadi Mujib (King's Highway), two when driving to Little Petra and common at Wadi Rum. Also observed in low numbers in the mountains above the Dead Sea and along the Dead Sea.

**Fan-tailed Raven** Three seen in Petra, otherwise seen mostly in the vicinity of the mountainous edge to the Dead Sea, often in large flocks of 25 or more.

**Desert Lark** Quite a common bird in rocky or rocky desert habitats – seen at Petra both days, also in Wadi Rum and along the Dead Sea. In total around 40-45 birds.

**Crested Lark** A few seen when driving along the King's Highway. Quickly became quite common as we drove along route 60 to the Dead Sea and common all along the Dead Sea Highway.

**Pale Rock Martin** Common where there were cliffs and mountains.

**Barn Swallow** Two flocks of around 20 birds in total near the north end of the Dead Sea.

**Great Tit** Common in Dana Biosphere Reserve, especially in the orchards. One observed near the Dead Sea.

**White-spectacled Bulbul** Quite a common bird wherever there was a tree or two, even inside the Siq at Petra or at little Petra.





*White-throated Kingfisher*

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**Scrub Warbler** Mostly seen in Dana Biosphere Reserve (five individuals on the walk down Wadi Dana), but also a pair along Turkmaniya Road at Petra and one when stopping along route 60.



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**Cetti's Warbler** One bird singing in Wadi el Wala, one in the orchards of Dana Village and at least three in different places along the Dead Sea.

**Common Chiffchaff** Observed on most days, quite common in Al Barra Forest, but also for example in Petra.

**Graceful Prinia** Found in cultivated areas along the Kings Highway, e.g. Wadi el Wala, and south of the Dead Sea where it was numerous.

**Blackcap** One female observed in the orchards of Dana Village.

**Sardinian Warbler** Observed in Dana Biosphere Reserve (quite common especially in cultivated areas), at Wadi Rum Visitor Centre, along Turkmaniya Road at Petra, and along the Dead Sea.

**Arabian Babbler** A flock of six birds in the orchards of Dana Village.



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**European Robin** Quite common in Dana Biosphere Reserve, one by Little Petra, and three along Wadi Siyagh at Petra.

**Bluethroat** At least four birds at our favorite wet spot along the Dead Sea Highway.

**Black Redstart** Quite common, observed in Dana Biosphere Reserve, at Petra, and at Wadi Rum (Village and beyond).

**Blue Rock Thrush** One male on the walk from Dana Village to Al Barra, two at Petra (one male and one female), and one more on our second day there, along Turkmaniya Road.

**European Stonechat** Two individuals in Wadi al Mujib, two in Dana Biosphere Reserve, one at Little Petra, and a few south of the Dead Sea.

**Blackstart** A common roadside bird along the central mountains, the Dead Sea; also a few individuals in Dana Biosphere Reserve.



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**White-crowned Wheatear** Only saw birds with a white crown, mostly in Wadi Rum, also a few when driving towards or along the Dead Sea.

**Mourning Wheatear** A total of perhaps 15 birds observed, often when driving, also in Petra (not in Wadi Rum).

**Finsch's Wheatear** Two observed in Dana Biosphere Reserve, also two at stops when driving.

**Desert Wheatear** One individual just outside Wadi Rum Village.

**Isabelline Wheatear** One uncertain sighting from the car when driving from Wadi Rum close to the Desert Highway.

**Song Thrush** Several seen in Al Barra, one or two at Little Petra.





*White-crowned Wheatear in Wadi Rum, close to Lawrence's spring (the tree is seen also in Sofia's photo of the view from the spring)*  
© Sander Broström

**Blackbird** Quite common in Dana Biosphere Reserve, especially in the village, one singing in Wadi Musa, one seen in Wadi Siyagh at Petra, and two near the Dead Sea.

**Common Myna** Three birds seen along the Dead Sea Highway, south of the Dead Sea.

**Tristram's Grackle** Quite a common bird among rocky cliffs.

**Palestine Sunbird** Two or three found at each of Wadi Dana, Turkamaniya Road in Petra, and just north of the Dead Sea (in the Important Bird Area).

**Dunnock** One bird seen in the Dana Village orchards.

**Gray Wagtail** One bird at our favorite wet spot along the Dead Sea Highway.

**White Wagtail** One or two observed most days when driving, very common along the Dead Sea.

**Common Chaffinch** Quite common in and around Dana Village, also along Wadi Siyagh in Petra.

**Sinai Rosefinch** Common at Petra, in total 18 observed the first day and approximately 30 the second day. In Wadi Rum we observed at least seven individuals.

**Greenfinch** One seen in Dana Village, flocks in Petra on both days and in Ma'in the last day (where we made a quick stop in a grove of trees). Males much more intense green than the ones we are used to.

**Linnet** Flocks along the King's Highway, around Dana Village, and next to Little Petra.

**Goldfinch** 2-4 seen in the orchards in Dana Village.

**Syrian Serin** A total of about 50 birds seen during a trek down Wadi Dana, most in flocks of half a dozen or more birds.

**House Sparrow** Common everywhere even away from houses.

**Spanish Sparrow** One flock seen north of the Dead Sea, by the highway, perhaps 20-25 birds.

**Rock Sparrow** One bird above Dana Village (by the school).

**Indian Silverbill** Flock of about 50 birds seen in the agricultural area south of the Dead Sea.

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## Mammal list

**Arabian Red Fox** One seen just before the descent into Wadi Mujib along the King's Highway.

**African Wild Cat** One seen in Wadi Dana.

Also noted small rodents, scurrying across the road in the dark. No identification possible.

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## Other notable wildlife

Lizards were common, especially **Starred agama**, *Stellagama stellio*, seen in Dana, Petra, and Wadi Rum and also along the roads.

An unidentified **Gecko** was seen at Petra.

**Desert Darkling Beetles**, *Adesmia clathrata*, were common in Petra and in Wadi Rum (the kind with very long legs and the ability to collect dew on its back)

A **crab**, *Potamon potamios*(?), in Wadi Siyagh (Petra).

Unidentified **frogs** were heard in Wadi al Wala and from ponds around the Dead Sea.