



Qatar: One day of desert summer

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I did a stopover on the 6th of July in/around Doha. The highlights were Greater/Lesser Sand Plover, White-eared Bulbul and Lesser Crested Tern, as well as an insight in a complex country. In this report I give some advice how to plan the stopover, birding sites and some general information.



I was not sure first if even to bother writing a trip report – I honestly did not see much. But it is an interesting country with what I think big potential for a one-day stopover just like mine, once some of the routes/birding sites are a bit better known. It was my first visit to a gulf state and therefore interesting to briefly get an insight into a country like this, also considering the football world cup in 2022 will run in Qatar: There will be a lot of things written in the media about the country. For me the stopover was “free”, I did not have to pay a higher prize for staying 20 instead of the usual few hours, a good chance to explore a completely different ecosystem and culture! It’s always fun to do some exploring and I don’t regret spending this day in Qatar. For any comments/questions feel free to contact me on valentinmoser@hotmail.com.

Summer is for sure one of the worst **Seasons** of the year to visit Qatar. It is very hot during the day and the migration is very slow. I think any migration time can be (more) rewarding.

Logistics: I arrived at 1 in the morning – many flights are like that, as the day is too hot to work. I walked over to the rental car corner and organized a driver and car for the next day (flight was going to leave at 20:00) again. Most of the rental companies seem to have a stand-by driver, I went for Al Muftah, (rentacardoha.com/Vehicle-with-Driver), where I got a better deal than the online prize. We had a flat battery at one point, but generally very helpful and good service. The roads were generally good, some speeding was observed.

Information about the Country and the accessibility of the sites is very limited. At the time of writing this trip report there were 3 trip reports on cloudbirders.co, including one where sites in Saudi Arabia were visited too, which might not be possible given the tension between the two states. A great report is the one by Stig Jensen and Jon Lehmberg (2017). The Abba report (2003) demonstrates the diversity of the region and Karr (2014) proves what a morning can be like in migration times. I also used e-Birds hotspots to look for sites and their species. Unfortunately none of my e-Mails sent out to birdingpals and other people who might have an idea on birding in Qatar came back with a satisfying answer, most were left unanswered.



Birding

As mentioned before, not very successful. I think if we would have gotten access or able visit another site, it could have turned out a bit more rewarding. Note this was a Friday and driving time a bit less than on a weekday.

We started at **Arikhiya Farm/ Al Rakkiyah/ Irkayya farms**: Probably different names for the same place/area. Access point apparently is the big white gate (25.048872, 51.184372). However, we were denied access. My driver said the reason was something like too early and weekend (we were there at sunrise on a Friday).

People were able to access the site before, so maybe try a weekday and maybe bring along a little gift for the guard. I birded a bit along the road, there was some promising habitat along it and I found my first Crested Larks and doves. Lot's of tracks of both small mammals and snakes.

A bit disappointed I tried the next site: The waste dump (24.983710, 51.025929) a bit further west. Again here, access was prevented by a big, busy gate. As I am not familiar with the local customs and both driver and me a bit discouraged from the previous place, I did not try to get access.

Earlier than expected we drove to the next area of interest: Al Khor. At the place mentioned by Jensen/Lehmberg (25.705371, 51.555944) high reeds made viewing difficult and it was in progress of being fenced of, including the dirt tracks leading to Purple island, which is probably of interest for

birding. A bit further down (25.680141, 51.571169) there was another little Mangrove forest, as well as an abandoned port area. Finally, some good birds: Lesser/Greater Sandplover, White-eared Bulbul and Lesser Crested Tern.

Final site of the day was the Al Dhakira harbour (25.739361, 51.548669). Very nice place, some birds like Great Cormorant (the wrong one!), Striated Heron and Common Tern too. The mangroves on the other side of the bay could be worth to check out as well.

A site not visited, but possibly very interesting is could be **Abu Nackla** (25.157438, 51.366139). If you have more time, the Northern part around **Al Ruwais** could also be interesting (see Jensen/Lehmberg).

A small country with lots of potential, even on a hot July day – with the risk of loosing time because of the lack of information/guide, but the bonus of finding your own stuff. I would say, if you get the chance, go for it!



Birdlist

Great Cormorant
Gray Heron
Striated Heron
Lesser Sand-Plover
Greater Sand-Plover
Common Redshank
Eurasian Curlew
Gull-billed Tern
Common Tern
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Laughing Dove
Crested Lark
White-eared Bulbul
House Sparrow
Indian Silverbill