

Southern Israel

22nd April - 7th May 2023



Birding Southern Israel: Trip Report for 22nd April - 7th May 2023

Purpose of this Trip Report / Guide

I have visited Israel numerous times in spring since 2012 and have produced birding trip reports for each of those visits however for this report I have collated all of my previous useful information and detail, regardless if they were visited this year or not. Those sites that were not visited this time around are indicated within the following pages. However, if you want to see the individual trip reports between March 2012 and March 2022 these can be found at www.Cloudbirders.com

Summary of the Trip

Following the trip I made to Israel in March 2022, my first since before Covid lockdowns, I decided to rotate my next visit and go later in the spring for the Levant Sparrowhawk and Honey Buzzard migration; both of these are amongst the most spectacular events in the birding world.

First off both of these species performed highly with flocks of Levants through both the mountains and the Eilat Bird Park as well as coming in off the sea at North Beach whilst the Honey's steadily built up to a couple of big days where clouds of birds passed through the mountains.

Away from these main draw species migration was sporadic with the Eilat area being on the quiet side for arrivals whilst further up the valley the wadi's were often very birdy. The Salt Pans saw good diversity of waders and terns towards the end of April but dropped away during early May.

Birding at the famous Yotvata Fields was disappointing due to the north circular field now being covered in Solar Panels and the melon and onion fields were not being irrigated.

Overall migration was yes slower and less obvious than I have encountered previously here at this time of year but I was never bored and I spent time exploring Eilat's lesser known town parks, one new one became a firm favourite and resulted in multiple Collared Flycatchers, Wood Warblers and Golden Oriole.

Will I return at this later season again, absolutely yes.



The Eilat Mountains looking towards the Gulf of Aqaba – May 2023

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Resources:

Publications

A Guide to the Birding Hot-Spots of Northern Israel and **A Guide to the Birding Hot-Spots of Southern Israel** by Hadoram Shirihi, James P. Smith, Guy M. Kirwan and Dan Alon

The two guides above are now aging as detailed sites are rapidly changing though some is still valid for at least the time being.



Where to watch birds Eilat & Southern Arava by Noam Weiss, Itai Shanni & Re'a Shaish

A small booklet that has been produced by some of the most active birders in the Eilat area. This can be obtained at the Bird Park / IBRCE. It's a small and lightweight booklet but will provide some basic tips on some, but not all, birding areas in the region.

Collins Bird Guide by Killian Mullarney, Lars Svensson, Dan Zetterstrom and Peter J. Grant.

This field guide is a quality guide and one that will likely prove to be a first-time visitors main reference. In country I used the App rather than the paper copy though I do prefer leafing through actual pages at leisure. If you only take one field guide to Israel, take this one.

Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East by Porter and Aspinall

Back in 2012 I used the hardback version but since then I have used the updated paper back copy which has much improved maps. The illustrations are decent enough though perhaps it could do with an increase in plumage variations, such as juveniles, whilst the text is also an improvement. It is a great book for any trip to the Middle East but still plays second fiddle to the Collins Guide. From 2014 onwards I have also used the App version for my smartphone to allow for easier use in the field thus reducing the paperback to being a reference material, if needed, back in the car and/or accommodation.

Flight Identification of Raptors of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East

This stunning book, whilst an absolute must have, is far too heavy to take to Israel, which is a shame, but it has been used extensively as a reference on return to the UK when trying to sort out some of the more complex Aquila eagle species plumages. A must have book irrespective of you visit Israel or not.

Lonely Planet – Israel & the Palestinian Territories

Provides information on places to stay and eat as well as general touristy information. It was used for making visits to the ruins in Beit She'an and at Masada in 2012 as well as taking time out from birding to go to the Aquarium in Eilat. Not used much these with so much available on the internet.

World Mapping Project 1:250,000 Road Map The only road map used, worked well in conjunction with the site guides above.

Websites

The main sources of bird information are the **Israel Birding Portal** <http://www.birds.org.il/en/index.aspx> and the Eilat & Arava Birders Facebook pages: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/407221649395067>

A main source for Trip Reports is the **Cloudbirders** <http://www.cloudbirders.com/> portal whilst other sources, such as **Surfbirds** <https://www.surfbirds.com/Trip%20Reports/trindex.php> may have a few additional reports not found on Cloudbirders.

Travelling:

Flights, arriving in and leaving Israel

Getting to Israel from the UK is usually relatively straight forward with several airlines serving direct flights to Tel Aviv, these being British Airways, EasyJet and El Al. I prefer British Airways over the others. Unlike March 2022 Covid testing was no longer needed pre-departure or on arrival which made transit through Ben Gurion Airport a much more normal affair, meaning still long queues for passport control and baggage claim.

The British Airways flight was meant to be during the evening set to arrive at around 11:30pm but due to a delayed departure from Heathrow I didn't arrive until half past midnight and didn't get away from the airport to well into the early hours due to the usual queues associated with entering and exiting Israel.

The flight was £580 for economy and I included the car as this does save around a £100 off booking it separately however despite this the car cost was still very expensive, nearly the same cost of the flight itself, and that's for a tiny car. The inflated car rental prices are a result of Covid where rental companies shed most of their fleet and are as yet to return to a pre-Covid pricing.

The new 'Ramon' Airport just north of Eilat is now accepting some flights from Europe but as of time of writing I don't think any UK direct flights are yet included. You can fly to Tel Aviv and get a connecting local flight to Eilat but there may be long wait times between flights and driving down may still be quicker and cheaper.

The airport in Eilat town itself is now closed and the runway no longer used, in fact new roads now cross it.

The flight time from the UK Heathrow to Tel Aviv this year only took 4hours 15mins.

For UK Citizens there is no entry Visa is required.

On arriving in the country things have changed a little bit, for the better over recent years. There are now auto Passport readers that you can use, though there are no signs, at least in English, to say this. It was quick as there are a lot of them on arrival. You get a ticket which allows you through to passport control. Passport Control itself was again a massive time waste with two flights arriving at the same time with again only three to four passport desks/booths open to non-Israeli passport holders. Still the usual hour or more to get through. My bag was also one of the last to reach the baggage conveyer so by the time I reached the Car

Rental desk it had already taken nearly two hours. Car Rental desk was also exceptionally slow and another hour wait due to people in front of me.

Leaving Israel has improved through customs but the security side of things still takes an age. Do still allow '**LOTS**' of time to get through Israeli security. It is likely you'll have to go through four queues:

Queue 1. For the initial security check before you can even reach the flight check in desk.

Queue 2. For the flight check in desk.

Queue 3. Passport Control; this was often the most-lengthy part of the entry to the departure halls but now there are automatic passport readers so one will get through a lot quicker.

Queue 4. Security where, depending on the mood of the staff and the length of queues, can vary from quick to the so long you start to take root. If you have a lot of camera gear in your hand luggage don't be surprised to be asked to turf it all out so they can swab everything, this has happened to me on more than handful of occasions.

In Country

CAR Rental and driving: Expensive. I booked the car with the British Airways flight to save around £100 on booking it separately. The car was a Hyundai Accent, which was bigger than the car that I actually booked so a small upgrade. It was decent enough, had these vehicles previous, and done fairly well on fuel consumption.

For UK visitors, at least, an International Driving Licence is not required, just your usual standard photo licence.

Note that when filling up with petrol you will have to pay before you pump, known as Pre-Pay. You need to pay at the till the amount you want to pump so getting to know the cars tank capacity will be useful, i.e. how much it takes to fill from half full to full. If you pay an amount and it is not enough to fill-up then you'll have to go back in and pay more to restart the process. If you overpay you'll then have to go back inside and get a refund on the difference. It's a bit of a phaff but it seems to be based on the USA's pay before you pump process.

In Israel you will generally find that they will add an immobiliser to rental cars, at least that is what I have found with Budget in the past but not trip with Avis. If you do get a car with an immobiliser then you will have to keep tapping in a security code on the dash to get it started. The immobiliser usually kicks in after the car is switched off for about 2 minutes. The cars beeps when immobiliser is activated. This car also had an added annoyance of a lane checker. What this does is make you leap out of seat if you go slightly over one of the lines in the road. I found out how to switch it off, centre button on the console on the windscreen attachment, press and hold. I had to do this each time I turned the engine on.

ROADS: Main roads in Israel are mostly well maintained, some of the minor roads may be potholed and dirt tracks should be driven with care. Road signs are in Hebrew, Arabic and English but are often right on top of the junction you may be looking which can result in a few drive by's. Once you get used to the sites however you'll be prepared for them but it can be frustrating the first time around. For driving directly to Eilat from Tel Aviv take Route 40 south and takes around, without stops, 5 hours to drive; several birding stops on the way can be made however so expect it to be a day drive, unless your flight arrives in the evening and in which case it's a largely overnight drive.

For estimating travelling distances I used these websites:

http://distancecalculator.globefeed.com/Israel_Distance_Calculator.asp and <http://www.distancefrom.com>

However as a guide I have placed road distances between sites here:

Tel Aviv to Eilat	332km / 206miles
Eilat to Yotvata:	48km / 30miles
Eilat to Nizzana:	195km / 112miles
Eilat to Hazeva:	149km / 92.5miles
Nizzana to Tel Aviv:	169km / 100miles

Places of interest are marked with '**Brown**' signs and usually well marked.

Driving is on the right side of the road and observe speed limits, especially along Route 90 near Eilat as I have often seen mobile speed traps by the Police as well as unmarked Police cars pulling drivers over.

Traffic lights will flash green just before turning to amber and then almost instantly to red so once they start flashing start slowing down. Many junctions, most notably around Tel Aviv, where traffic lights are positioned you will notice pink coloured '**Red Light**' camera's which will go off should you jump the lights and there are Speeding cameras along the main highways. I've not actually seen any of these speed cameras in or around Eilat but that doesn't mean they won't one day get installed so stay alert.

The rules around pedestrian crossings. These crossing are nearly always located right on top of a junction or entrance/exit at a roundabout and the rules for people using them seem to change every time I visit with this year drivers giving way to people, obviously, already crossing but also waiting to cross. Waiting to cross is actually not all that accurate as you may find that they don't actually stop and wait but instead just walk out with the expectation that drivers will brake hard and not run them down. Most of the time Stop, Look, Listen doesn't exist, more of Don't Look, Don't Care, Just Walk. Always note the current conditions and act accordingly.

On top of pedestrians at junctions the other hazard whilst driving is Other Drivers. One thing that becomes apparent is that most Israeli drivers don't know that they have indicators on their cars. You will have to do a bit of mind reading if you come to a roundabout to determine which direction another driver will likely take. Will they turn left or go straight over, it's mystery. There is also a lot of aggressive driving with lots of overtaking at speed, especially on the highways with nutters passing you on blind bends where you will get a car horn yelled at you for not slowing down to let them in despite it's their fault they nearly had a head on with an oncoming truck, twat.....you get the drift.

Notes:

1. When leaving the airport look for signs for Highway 1 towards Jerusalem as this will take you to either Route 40 North and South (toll free) or to Highway 6 (toll charges). If you use Route 40 this will eventually join Highway 6 south of where toll charges start. Note there are a lot of traffic lights/junctions and speed cameras. Highway 6 is a Toll Road and cost for its use will appear on your Credit Card Bill a few weeks after your return the car to the rental drop off.

2. Heading south to Eilat from Yotvata on the R90 you will not be able to turn left to visit the Salt Pans/Flamingo Pools, KM19 Sewage Ponds, North Fields or North Date Palms due to a barrier along the central reservation. You will have to drive to and through the Security Check Point and turn around. Best to do this by keep in the right lane and then looping back around after the checkpoint, there is a vehicle lane for doing this, take care of cars passing directly through the checkpoint so you don't get sideswiped. If heading north from Eilat you won't be able cross the highway to go directly to Amrams Pillars or the Hidden Valley, you will need to travel a long way up the road to be able to U-turn and come back down the road.

Note if you are driving south towards Eilat looking for the turn off for either the Hidden Valley or Amrams Pillars (on the right) and you do over-shoot the turn off's the central barrier will prevent you doing a simple u-turn and you will have to do what is described above.

3. At the checkpoint along Route 90 observe the rapidly reducing speed signs because you will hit a series of speed bumps if you do not.

4. At the Yotvata exit follow the **Brown** signs for Yotvata Park and not the white signs saying Yotvata as these are for the Kibbutz which you will not be able to enter. This is a new road, was under construction last year, and takes a few attempts to get right but it seems to work okay.

5. Parking in Eilat cost 5NIS for 1 hour, that's about 80pence. Permitted parking is indicated by Blue & White kurbs but do check if there are parking charges for the area you are parking in, most Blue & White Kurbs away from the main town area are free. Red & White are no parking at all. Make sure you get a parking ticket or you may end up with a parking fine on your windscreen, as I did at Central Park a few years ago.

6. Other Drivers. One thing that becomes apparent is that most Israeli drivers don't know that they have indicators on their cars. You will have to do a bit of mind reading if you come to a roundabout to determine which direction another driver will actually take. There is a lot of aggressive driving with lots of over taking at speed, even on blind bends where you will get a car horn yelled at you for not slowing down to let them in despite it being their fault they nearly had a head on with an oncoming truck, twat.....you get the drift.

The Environment:

Habitats (for the south of the country)

Israel is blessed with a good range of habitats front with arid deserts of the Arava Valley, Negev Desert, Eilat Mountains and Dead Sea, fertile farmlands in the Urim Plains, rolling grasslands, date palm plantations, Olive Groves, Acacia Thorn scrub, lakes and seacoasts. Birding across Israel can be very rewarding and visiting these diverse habitats in such a small country will increase the species list of any birding trip.

Weather

Generally, in late April and early May, the temperature is usually around 30-35 degrees however there were a few days where it was around 25degrees with 39degrees at the other end of the scale.

If you visit Nizanna you will be there for first light and it can be cool, generally between 10 and 15degrees for a good few hours after first light.

Accommodations:

Eilat

As to be expected there are plenty of places to stay at in Eilat which range from the luxurious to the budget and searching around websites such as www.booking.com will undoubtedly result in finding yourself something to fit your budget.

For this trip I stayed at a holiday apartment as this was cheaper than even the cheapest hotel option, if multiple birders travelling then cost sharing makes it even cheaper. My apartment was found and booked on www.booking.com and was located towards the west of town with free parking nearby along with a largish supermarket nearby and just a short walk to some decent places to find something to eat in the evening. It was easy to get to all of the birding locations around town. Going forward I will be looking at holiday apartments in Eilat rather than hotels.

Kibbutz Lotan – Arava Valley

Located in the northern Arava, about 10 minutes north of Yotvata and about 45minutes north of Eilat this Kibbutz has generally had a lot to offer the visiting birder however on-site birding seems to have decline in recent years. Given what you get in each room it's not cheap but it can be pleasantly quiet and away from the hustle and bustle of Eilat. This has traditionally been my preferred base as it allows easy access to more northerly birding sites in the Arava, such as KM82, Yahel, Yotvata and Ovda Valley. Rooms are very basic with poorly designed bathrooms, the shower curtain tends to hang outside of the shower area meaning the bathroom and nearby kitchen tends to get flooded in seconds unless you use your towel to block the bathroom door.

As in 2022 there wasn't anything available for the entire duration on my trip this year and I would have had to split accommodation with somewhere else so this was an initial non-starter again this year as well as an increasing in pricing which I feel is far too expensive for what you get at roughly £120 a night. If you prefer, as I do, to stay in a quiet location with good access to the north of the valley, don't mind basic rooms with minor quibbles and pay over the top then Lotan is still the best option. <http://kibbutzlotan.com/eco-tourism/?lang=en>

Websites

<http://www.birdwatching.org.il/accom212.asp>

http://www.zimmeril.com/site.asp?site_id=1509

Eating

Eilat

You can get excellent Falafels, Shawarma etc at the '**Shawarma Pilpel**', it was very popular with the locals. This is close to the Sderot HaTmarim and Sderot Hativat HaNegev road junctions roundabout where other local places to eat can be found. In general though you're not that far away from some eatery. Note pretty much everything is closed Friday night from around 6pm/dusk so I made sure I had something to eat back in the room as a backup.

There are a few mini supermarkets and larger stores dotted around as well, if needed, pharmacies. I have listed a few below that I visited but there are others around.

Supermarket: 308, Sderot Sheshet HaYamim 300, Eilat – **Google Maps Co-ordinates:** 29.54536, 34.93257.

Mah'saney HaShuk Supermarket: 13 Bareket Street, Eilat – **Google Maps Co-ordinates:** 29.55022, 94751

Super-Pharm, Eilat Sharm: 290 Sderot Sheshet HaYamim 300, Eilat - **Google Maps Co-ordinates:** 29.546459, 34.933824

Yotvata

Apart from the **must have** Ice Cream at the Service Station/Rest Stop, I can especially recommend the Pistachio, New York Cheesecake and Berry Sorbet, there is a good and varied selection of hot and cold foods available throughout the day plus lots of snacks and drinks available. It is a very good spot for a lunchtime break when up this end of the Arava Valley. The Ice cream here is about as good as you can possibly get. Note however it is closed Friday nights from around 6pm/dusk, sometimes earlier.

Shizzafon Junction, Neot Semadar

There is a restaurant at the junction which is meant to be good but it's not much more than a snack shop where you can get one of a couple of limited sandwich options. Their biscuits were nice though. The garden is a good spot for some relaxing birding with a drink, there is a small pond and shaded areas for bush robins and, earlier in the season, Bluethroats.

Service/Petrol Stations

Numerous service stations are scattered around the country and the main areas visited, some better than others, where you can get sandwiches, drinks and snacks. I also bought some Pot Noodle type things just in case I was out really late and Yotvata was closed, this happened occasionally in past years.

- Eilat – My person favourite petrol station is the '**Alonit Petrol Station**', (the 'green' one), located at the Kibbutz Elot roundabout, on the right as heading south towards Eilat and a few hundred metres past the Bird Park / IBRCE turn off roundabout. It is conveniently placed and is well stocked with drink, snacks and son on, Other Eilat petrol stations can be found along the Sderot Sheshet HaYamim road, the north Eilat by-pass and before you would pull off for Holland Park. There are others along the main road into Eilat also.
 - The **Eilat Airport Petrol Station** is also a good one to visit, well stocked and further up the valley but note it is closed at weekends, Friday-Saturday.
 - The **Yotvata Petrol Station** – I needed to get petrol up this end of the valley but found that it was not only expensive but also only takes credit card payments only, no cash for fuel. Also note it is also likely closed Friday and Saturdays.
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Other information

Shabbat

Most shops, restaurants and other eating places will be closed from sundown on Friday night till sundown on Saturday night which should be taken into account when trying to find somewhere to eat away from Eilat. Most but not all petrol stations will generally be open however you will probably have to pay extra on petrol during this time.

Passover / Pesach

It is important to plan your trip well in advance if visiting around this time as vast majority of accommodation will be full and everywhere will be very very busy with lots of traffic, traffic jams, petrol station closures and prices a little higher than outside of this period but otherwise birding areas, other than North Beach, will be mostly unaffected. Outside of this time it is a little easier but again pre-booking accommodation would be advisable.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

"Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day", known locally in Israel as **Yom HaShoah** and is observed as Israel's commemoration and Memorial Day. It is generally held on the 27th April unless the 27th would be adjacent to Shabbat in which case the date is shifted by a day. As a result, I would recommend having some back-up supplies at your base of accommodation as pretty much everywhere will be closed.

Birding Areas:

1. The Judean Plans

Mt. Amasa

This site can be done on either the way from Tel Aviv Airport, which I tend to do as it's only about an hour and half drive. Mornings are obviously better but I have had some great late afternoon birding here. This site, located just to the Northwest of the town of Arad, is a personal favourite of mine and a great interim stop on the way south from Tel Aviv and is a good location for low scrub and rocky area species, such as Spectacled Warbler, Rock Thrushes, Blue Rock Thrushes, Rock Sparrows, Isabelline Wheatears, Long-billed Pipits and various Wheatears. A few hours in this open habitat can be rewarding.

The site can be split into two. The east and west sides of the highway.

The east side can used to be vehicle accessible but no longer so you will need to park and walk. From where you park off the side of the road, see below co-ordinates, you can walk towards the base of the hill to the north and around the 'Tel Creot' ruins you will find Blue Rock Thrush, Little Owl, various Wheatears and Chats whilst it can be good for raptors passing overhead. The low bushes on the small hillside to the east side of the highway holds nesting Spectacled Warblers as well as passage Ruppell's Warblers in March as well as display fighting Isabelline Wheatears. Corn Buntings are fairly noticeable here whilst the open hills can be good for, in season, Short-toed Eagles, Long-legged Buzzard, White Storks, Montagu's Harriers and Quails can be heard.

On the other side of the road there is a track that leads up the valley and this is excellent area to bird. It is a mix of low bushes and rocky scree which hold species such as Finsch's, Black-eared and Isabelline Wheatears, Black and Common Redstarts, Siberian Stonechats, Spectacled Warblers, Blue Rock Thrushes, Woodlarks, buntings and Little Owls and would be worthy of spending time there.

2023 visit: Given the time of year it was a little quiet up the valley but a few interesting birds were seen with singing Eastern Black-eared Wheatears, Long-billed Pipit and Desert Larks at the far end. Several Spectacled Warblers were noted in the scrub and Isabelline Wheatears near the road. The Liliith Owls were again in the same remnant wall half way along. On the Tel Creot ruins side things were even quieter with many species absent though the Liliith Owls were present, Barred Warbler in a bush and a passage of Pallid Swifts overhead.

Despite being quiet and hard to find the birds it was again a pleasure to bird here.

Google Maps co-ordinates for Access point: [31.344647](#), [35.120824](#)



Mt. Amasa – April 2023

2. The Negev and Sde Boker area's

Nizzana

It's roughly a 3.30-4hours drive from Eilat so allow this travel time to make sure you are at the Railway Boxcar 'hide' at KM7 from 5:30am. From here a scope is really needed to see McQueen's Bustard displaying. Despite well past the peak period for seeing this activity I still saw a male displaying to a nearby female. The surrounding area can be good for Cream-coloured Coursers and Desert Wheatears.

The sewage ponds, Co-ordinates to the entrance gate to the ponds is [30.891564, 34.436445](#), *Shirihai Southern site guide page 128*, has often be very good, depending on how much vegetation has been either cleared or left uncleared and has been one of the bests places to look for three species of sandgrouse. However, **these pools no longer exist**. In March 2022 I arrived to find heavy machinery and the pools completely gone. As I headed towards these pools this year I could see the machinery still present so I abandoned it again. It would seem likely this site will no longer be viable going forward for sandgrouse.

There is also the photo hide at Celia's Goat Cheese Farm in Ezuz. One can visit the farm to view the small pool that attracts desert species, most notably Crowned and Spotted Sandgrouse. The hide gives eye level photographic opportunities of several Desert species and it's something that I must one day do. Crowned Sandgrouse tend to appear from around 8:30am onwards. Visit <http://lonelybirder.com/en/item/gevinot-ezim-celias-goat-cheese-farm-2/> or <https://www.couchsurfing.com/people/azuz>. To book the hide contact Celia at cfriede5@gmail.com or by ringing 971-8-655-5889 or 54-465-5588. If in Israel, simply dial 08-655-5889 or 054-465-5588!

Shivta Junction Copse

At the junction of Highway 211 and the Shivta road is a sizeable roadside copse or grove. I stopped here on my last morning after visiting Nizanna to sort of the bags for the flight home and had a short walk around. It was actually pretty good with multiple warblers and flycatchers present, best of which was a singing Olive-tree Warbler. Also present were hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies. A worthwhile side stop if in the area. **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.942089, 34.596247](#)



McQueens Bustards Boxcar Viewpoint May 2023



Shivta Road Junction – roadside grove May 2023

Sde Boker Area

- **En Avdat National Park**

This National Park is primarily a gorge through the Negev Desert which has a water feature in terms of a natural spring. This spring results in a number of small pools and scattered bushes which can hold migrants. However I think this location is best due a pair of nesting Bonelli's Eagles, several pairs of nesting Griffon and Egyptian Vultures and Alpine Swifts and Crag and Pale Crag Martins. The area just below the booth where you need to pay to visit, around the top of the switch backs, often has one or two Mourning Wheatears present. As usual early morning is best and not just from a birding perspective as later in the morning it becomes a popular attraction for hordes of visitors.

- **Sde Boker Kibbutz and Fields**

This isn't a site I've done very often but the extensive grounds of the kibbutz are good for migrants and wintering species with good Stands of mature trees, football pitches and Olive Groves so diverse birding should be possible. Back along the kibbutz entrance road on the left-hand side, as you approach the Kibbutz, is a tarmac track that leads to what appears to be a small cemetery on a hill but more interestingly to some fields, which can be driven around carefully. These field can result in sandgrouse and Desert Finch.



En Avdat National Park – Late April 2016

To the south of the Petrol Station are the Kibbutz's Southern Fields and these can be driven around with care, more soft sand, in search of Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Desert Finch and Trumpeter Finch. There are a couple of small reservoirs here which I believe attract small numbers of the sandgrouse. Finding the access points to these fields from the main round is not easy as there doesn't appear to be an obvious agricultural access track so it may take a bit of trial and error to find one that works however there does appear to be an access at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.870743, 34.781828](#)

3. North of Shizzafon Junction to Mitzpe Ramon

Wadi Zihor

This wadi was once superb, nicely vegetated with Acacia scrub and excellent as a stop off to look for migrants however flash flooding in March 2023 was so severe that it nearly stripped the wadi bare of virtually all vegetation and is now no longer birdy. If travelling from the direction of Eilat the Wadi is on the left 2km from the Routes 40/13 Junction so if at Uvda Valley only about 20mins further up the road. **Google Maps co-ordinates** [30.280538, 35.000978](#)

HaMeishar Plains

This is an often a good winter and mid spring site which usually has Temminck's Larks and Desert Warblers but it can also be very quiet so a little luck and perseverance is needed. This site has lots of very low shrub, almost so low that one would think it birdless but these patches are the places to look for the aforementioned species. Access is best on Fridays and Saturdays, early morning, as this is a Military Firing Zone and on these days there is access to go birding. Park by the not so obvious monument at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.407857, 34.945019](#) and bird the low scrub and plains here for about 200-300metres out.

Nearby and back down the road a turning on the right, as if heading back in the direction of Eilat, will take you another similar habitat zone at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.405868, 34.936074](#). Again weekends (Friday/Saturday) are best as you are otherwise likely to encounter a visit by the Army.

2023: Not visited this year.



HaMeishar Plains – May 2019



The Monument, HaMeishar Plains – May 2019

Wadi Nekarot and Yeleg Spring

This wadi, located at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.567564, 34.905590](#), often has lingering Sinai Rosefinch into mid-March as well as Trumpeter Finch and early passage sylvia's, with perhaps wintering Desert Warbler. Bird the area to the east of the bridge for around 100-300metres. Yeleg Spring **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.557894, 34.911238](#) just to the south can also be good for Sinai Rosefinch in season (winter and early spring) as well as a few other desert specialties

4. Eilat and Lower Arava Valley

Ofira Park

A personal favourite park in 2012 due to the volume of migrants here but subsequent visits have been less successful, probably due to its over development and 'tidying' up of the park, ie removal of migrant cover / scrub, and increased numbers of homeless people, which was especially noticeable in March 2022. From speaking to visiting birds in 2023 this situation doesn't seem to have changed.

Early morning is best when the watered lawns can be dripping with Cretzschmars Buntings, Red-throated Pipits, Spanish Sparrows and Yellow Wagtails of numerous forms. Around the park the trees and remaining scrub can hold a diverse list of species with Masked and Woodchat Shrikes, Quails, Pied and Black-eared Wheatears, Common and Eastern Redstarts, Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, various Sylvia Warblers including Ruppell's and so on. Great mornings have been spent here.

2023 Not visited.

Central / IMAX Park

The other side of the airport near the IMAX this park has largely taken over from the once better of the two Ofira Park. It is a typical park of open lawns, flowerbeds, trees and scrubby habitat on the northern side which makes it so attractive to migrants and each visit has shown different species to be present. Common species can be found, such as Wrynecks, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler and so on by the larger trees at the far end of the park looked like they could hold a good flycatcher; indeed Collared and Semicollared Flycatchers have been seen during my previous trips. A not to be ignored site in the middle of Eilat. Parking can be found at

Google Maps co-ordinates for park: [29.553095, 34.951808](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for free parking access point: [29.555769, 34.950192](#)

2023 visit: A quiet visit compared to previous trips but still a few migrants were seen with flycatchers and several warblers thus again making it a worthwhile visit. I again parked further up the park where it is free, right next to the park it's a pay and display.

Canada Park

This park is probably best visited early morning as it can be popular with the public, there is an infant's school on the southern side so be mindful of walking in that area with Bins and Cameras. The park has plenty of trees and bushy areas and is best approach from the west end. On the northern side at the top of the park is a bottlebrush lined path and across the park from here, by the kindergarten is a scrubby area that held most of the migrants. The park goes downhill and worth working the entire length. There are Scops Owls in here which can be heard at night apparently.

To reach the park take the Eilat bypass north and it's the last turning on the left before you reach Route 12 Eilat Mountains Turnoff / Roundabout or first on the right if coming from the Eilat Mountains direction. It's the turning that has what looks like an outdoor gym. Canada Park / Gardens can be found immediately past this. Park where there are no red/white kerb markings. There are several access points on both sides of the park but best to come in at the main entrance at the top or from the north side.

2023 visit: visited several times where there was usually a Collared, Pied or Spotted Flycatcher, or two, present as well as a collection of migrant warblers and shrikes. This is a favourite park of mine in Eilat and one of the best for in town birding. Top entrance can be found at **Google Maps co-ordinates for Access point:** [29.557118, 34.931818](#)

Park Shahamon

This is a long park with tall flycatcher loving tree's and located at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [29.548415, 34.928814](#). The park is crossed by several roads with a wider portion at the lower end. Definitely worth visiting when there are migrants in town.

As it is a 'long park' I would walk in from one end and then reverse the walk. Given its size it could potentially take several hours to do it fully end to end.

Free roadside parking that I use is located at **Google Maps Co-ordinates:** [29.548565, 34.928841](#) on road Derech Harim.

2023 visit: Walked the entire length of the park which is divided into several sections due to roads crossing it. The lower section, closest to the Red Sea end differs markedly from the narrower upper sections in being more open parkland and with differing trees and is quite possibly a different named park. Top to bottom was a magnet for flycatchers with Pied and Collared as well as Spotted present. Whilst warblers and a few shrikes were also present. It would likely be very good during a fall.

Corner Park

This tiny park opposite the road up to the Eilat Mountains has proven its worth on recent years with nearly always something of interest here. There is a collection of warbler and flycatcher attracting trees and low bushes for robins, warblers and buntings. A worthwhile stop. It hasn't got an official name so currently called 'Corner Park' or Derech Harim Park. Free parking can be found next to the park. The park is located at **Google Maps Co-ordinates:** [29.553502, 34.930455](#)

2023 visit: A little underwhelming this year but black-and-white flycatchers were seen along with the occasional Eastern Olivaceous Warbler.

Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park

A small park with parking right next to it along Derech HaGai Road when heading south towards the red sea from the Eilat Mountains roundabout. This little patch of green has a few trees that were extremely attractive to flycatchers with multiple Collared and Pied being present and certainly warrants future visits. **Google Maps co-ordinates** [29.551626, 34.934460](#)

South West 'Dakar Street' Park

A corner park on the west side of Canada Park along the 'Dakar Street ring road'. Parking is along Dakar Street. Tall trees here can easily be seen and guiding the way into the park. As with most 'small' parks in Eilat there are children's play areas but the trees and bushes all look favourable for holding migrants. Worth an additional stop if visiting Canada Park. **Google Maps co-ordinates** [29.556273, 34.931618](#)

Dy Zahav Street Park

Barely qualifies as a park. I looked in here as it was very close to where I was staying and the handful of trees here still produced a few migrants, such as Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. I don't know the official name for it but as it is accessed from Dy Zahav Street so that's what I'll call it until I'm told otherwise. When looking at Google Maps Street View of the place it shows as bare sandy ground but clearly it has grown up since those images were taken. **Google Maps co-ordinates** [29.552494, 34.947918](#)

Ha-Arava Park (by Yellow Petrol)

A small patch of trees and low weedy shrubs just north of the 'Yellow Petrol' Station along Route 90 as you head out of Eilat. If going to stop here take the slip road in towards the petrol station but go past it and then turn right and park off the road. This small area held several Masked Shrikes and other migrants so is an indication that it could be good place to visit to search for migrants.

Google Maps co-ordinates [29.557247, 34.956561](#)

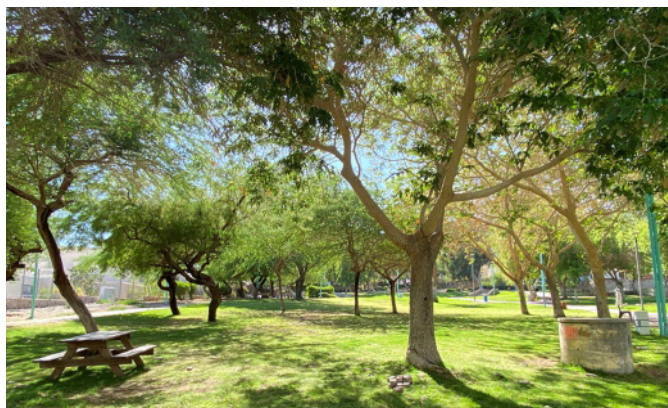
Eilat Cemetery

Located on the Northwest outskirts of Eilat along the Sderot Sheshet Hayamin Eilat bypass is a great place to look for flycatchers, redstarts and warblers. This small cemetery is quiet and tranquil with easy access from the main road, need to be travelling up from the south to turn off right and drive up the tree lined approach road. **Google Maps co-ordinates** [29.569294, 34.947657](#)

2023 visit: Very quiet but as with most of the town parks at this time there was at least one black-and-white flycatcher present.

Looking at Google Maps satellite view will show numerous green places around Eilat town that will no doubt attract migrants and may be worthy of exploration.

Eilat Town Parks



Park Canada, Eilat – May 2023



Ofira Park – March 2012



Lower Park Shahmon, Eilat – May 2023



Upper Park Shahmon, Eilat – May 2023



Central / Imax Park, Eilat – May 2023



Cemetery, Eilat – May 2019



Dakar Street Park, Eilat – May 2023



Corner Park, Eilat – May 2023



Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park, Eilat – May 2023



Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park, Eilat – May 2023



Dy Zahav Park, Eilat – May 2023



Ha-Arava Park, Eilat – May 2023



Holland Park, entrance, Eilat – May 2023



IBRCE / Eilat Bird Park (above & below), Eilat – May 2023



Holland Park

Located on the north side of town there are a couple of ways to reach it.

If heading north from Eilat on R90 going north turn left at the 'Toronto Square' roundabout (as per Google Maps) and head up the hill towards the mountains on the Eilat bypass, go around two smaller roundabouts and Holland Park is located on the right shortly after the second roundabout. There is now a parking area for the park.

This park is an arid Wadi with Acacia and scrubland bushes and can be excellent for Sylvia warblers and other dry country species and is certainly best worked earlier in the morning and late afternoon/early evening when temperatures are comfortable. I've had stunning birding here over the years with many Ruppell's, Eastern Orphee and Subalpine Warblers, Wrynecks, Eastern Olivaceous and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers and Cretzschmars Buntings.

Look for the large 'Magic' Sylvia attracting bushes midway, on the right / north side, up the Wadi and the best one at the end of the wadi. These bushes, called 'Karira Caper (*Capparis decidua*) are identified as being rather spiky with small pollen rich yellow and pink flowers. These bushes have often been full loaded with Ruppell's Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats with smaller numbers of Eastern Orphee Warblers in March.

The top end warbler wonder bush is identified by the large boulder next to it with information about it and Ruppell's Warblers. Oddly despite probably being the best of the three obvious spiky warbler bushes in this side of the wadi I never seen any other birders watching it, only the ones closer to the road. It is worth the walk all the way up the wadi taking in the 'spur's on the sides as many of the birds preferred these areas.

From the parking area there is also the southern part of the wadi, left hand track, which run parallel for a while with the road but soon gets away from that and gets quieter. This is perhaps the best area to search for daytime Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse. If targeting this species be here early, ideally from first birdable light onwards.



Top of Holland Park Magic Bush – March 2022

Parking is located at **Google Maps co-ordinates for Access point:** [29.571508, 34.960986](#)

2023 visit: Several quiet visits we made. First was early morning where I managed to get the sandgrouse on the southern track left side track before they were flushed by a passing dog walker whilst a late afternoon visit at the end of April resulted in a very late male Ruppell's Warbler in one of the magic bushes. Lesser Whitethroats, Eastern Olivaceous Warblers and the odd Orphee Warbler were otherwise the highlights from scouring the scrub.

North Beach

If visiting in peak birding time in March this can still be a place where birders gather to see what moves up the Red Sea with species like Garganey in numbers, the odd Brown Booby and regular White-eyed Gulls, especially in the morning and evenings as they move back and forth to Jordan. Striated and Western Reef Herons can often be found in the mouth of the canal and occasionally Greater Sandplovers can found along the shoreline whilst the beach is perhaps one of the most regular sites in Eilat to see Pied Kingfisher. Later in the spring, April through May, skuas become more regular and White-cheeked Terns can found on the offshore Buoys whilst Sooty Shearwaters can be surprisingly regular but recently more pelagic species, such as Wilsons and Swinhoe's Petrels, have been found offshore during pelagics and it is conceivable that species these could be scoped from the beach.

However make sure you visit during the week and avoid here over Shabbat as it can be unbearably crowded as Israeli's will be making the most of their weekend. **Google Maps co-ordinates for viewing the sea and meeting other birders in morning and evenings:** [29.545638, 34.971889](#).

2023 visit: Only a couple of evening visits but highlights were a Brown Booby on one of the distant buoys, a large movement of more than a thousand Levant's Sparrowhawks coming in from the Sinai at dusk, several tern species, White-eyed Gulls and a Sooty Shearwater on the horizon.

South Beach

A regular site in the morning for the increasingly difficult to come by Striated Heron is the pontoon at **Dolphin Reef**. There is a car park for the centre but generally be here early to ensure seeing the birds. That being said in 2017 I saw one at around 1pm on one of the small structures along with a few roosting White-eyed, Armenian and Heuglin's Gulls whilst the area just inside the fence next to the Dolphin Reef centre had a few migrants with the best being a male Collared Flycatcher. The roundabout should also be given a quick look at as it is a water feature and had a Little Bittern in it for a week. Parking at **Google Maps co-ordinates for parking:** [29.526098, 34.935033](#)

Additionally the ground / bushes of the **Club Inn**, also known as **Bushes of Liebzi**, can hold migrants and had a Black Bush Robin and all three Black-and-white Flycatchers in March 2018 so proving anywhere can result in birds.

2023: Not visited.

Elot Date Palms

Located between the IRBCE / Bird Park and North Beach this shady area with wide tracks is not the birding hotspot it once was. This is perhaps due to lack of understory cover thus little habitat for passage migrants. However, if there is a good fall of warblers, chats and/or flycatchers it may still be worth a visit, as in March 2012 when Pied Wheatears, many Black-eared and Northern Wheatears, Eastern Redstarts, Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, Hoopoes, Wryneck, Semicollared Flycatchers and Woodchat Shrikes were all readily available. Best in the morning but cooler evenings are also good times to visit.

2023 visit: Only driven past along the canal route, a few gone to roost Levant Sparrowhawks and Steppe Buzzards were seen during the drive.

Eilat Bird Park - International Birding & Research Centre (IBRCE) and Salt pans



This can be reached from North Beach by following signs along the canal and past the southern Elot Date Palm plantation. If heading north from Eilat on Highway 90 turn right towards the Border Crossing at the last town roundabout, also clearly sign-posted to the **Birdwatching** reserve. At the Border crossing follow the road right and about 150metres or so go right onto a dusty track which will take you across the canal and to the Bird Park, parking is just left of the entrance gate.

This reserve is getting better every year and is best visited very early morning when secretive species such crakes and Little Bittern will be easier to find from the hides. It has a freshwater lake overlooked by several hides, salt pans, the canal, a newly created lake, that I have dubbed Noam Lake that will only better over time, and scrubland with trails from the northern end of the canal. There are hides also overlooking the Salt pans and a ringing station. The scrubland can be excellent for migrants and regularly holds passage warblers, redstarts and flycatchers whilst the hides along the edge of Anita Lake can hold Penduline Tits, Savi's Warblers, Little and Baillon's Crakes, Bluethroats and herons amongst a whole host of other species early in the season whilst Bush Robins, Barred Warblers, Golden Orioles and Olive-tree Warblers along with Levants Sparrowhawks and Honey Buzzards from mid-April onwards.

This is a must visit site in Eilat for birders.

2023 visit: Regular visits in morning and evenings but it was clear that few migrants were around the bushes. That being said persistence paid off with in finding an Upchers Warbler at the north end of the scrub doing is swishy tail thing. Birds seen in the hand were a very late male White-spotted Bluethroat, Great Reed Warbler, Garden Warbler and a superb male Levants Sparrowhawk.

Anita Lake was overall rather quiet but a few things dropped in whilst I was there, such as three Caspian Terns, three Spoonbills and several flocks of Wood Sandpipers. The Salt Pans were mostly devoid of waders with only distant Ruffs and Little Stints to draw attention away from the stilts. The Canal was best place for waders with good numbers of Wood Sandpipers present but even in my few short weeks in Eilat it was rapidly drying out.

KM19 Sewage Ponds and Acacia Scrub

Located near the large cowsheds only one pool has water in it and now has extensive reeds surrounding it that make viewing somewhat difficult in places. The surrounding fence has been pushed down in several places so access is possible, such as at the Northwest corner closest to the agricultural track. It's the northeast pool that has water in it and is where the Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse 'used' to come into drink at dusk but due to the now extension growth of reeds they no longer visit.

Historically to view the sandgrouse one would sit down at the corner by the obvious sluice with your back towards the border fence and not directly above the sluice itself and wait for the birds to fly in, it would be close to being nearly fully dark when the birds would arrive so you had to make sure you there half an hour to 40minutes early to avoid disturbance to both the birds and other birders, there's nothing more annoying to birders than to be waiting patiently only to have late comers arrive and prevent the birds from flying in.

Birding here at other times of day can result in a variety of wetland birds and always worth a visit though the reedbed around the edges are now making it difficult for wading birds, though seems there is periodic clearance of the reeds in very small patches however it doesn't take long for the reeds to grow back.

Wildfowl that can often be found here are Egyptian Geese, Ferruginous Duck, Pintail, Shoveler, Teal and Garganey whilst reed edges can result in crakes and reed favouring warblers. Where the sluice water runs into the lagoon there is a large gathering of writhing fish and this was the spot where I had some exceptional views of two Little Crakes in 2017 along with a showy Savi's Warbler and many Sedge Warblers though viewing this is also becoming increasingly difficult due to the reed growth.

2023 visit: Made a couple of visits but apart from the usual Little Egrets, Night, Grey, Purple and Squacco Herons, a few singing Reed warblers, a few Mallard, Coots and Moorhens and the occasional Booted Eagle or Osprey birding here was difficult due to the lack of suitable exposed areas for small birds.

On the other side of the track is a good patch of Acacia scrub which I spent time exploring and it is probably rarely looked at by birders despite its easy access. I had numerous Red-throated Pipits and a Masked Shrike here, which on the face of it is low return for the effort but there was very little in the way of migration happening in the southern Arava at the time. It would likely be worth future visits.

Google Maps co-ordinates for parking: [29.611165, 34.989550](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for sewage pond fence hole: [29.610605, 34.990074](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for the scrub: [29.612986, 34.987987](#)

KM19 Canal

Once an extremely productive 'occasionally' water filled area between the sewage ponds and the southern end of the Salt pans. The muddy fringes held several wader species and when water is present a regular site for Honey Buzzards to come down to drink, especially on extremely hot days. However it now seems to be mostly dry but the bushes are likely to hold migrants. Best approached from the southern end of the Salt Pans.

2023: Noted visited



Sewage Pond – May 2023



KM20 Salt Pans – March 2017

KM20 Salt Pans / Flamingo Pools

These large salt pans are the best 'wetland' site in the southern Arava and the raised embankments can be driven around and can produce some good birding. Each year the water levels vary and some regular corners can show various amount of muddy fringes where there can be concentration of waders, gulls, terns and wagtails but in general the majority of the pans can be productive. Obviously mornings and evenings are best. Mornings show what has arrived overnight whilst the evening can reveal migration in action as birds head north up the valley; I've witnessed flocks of Purple Herons, Glossy Ibises, Gull-billed Terns, pratincoles, eagles, buzzards and bee-eaters on the move.

For waders views can often be very close and some special encounters can be had of Caspian and White-tailed Plovers, Collared Pratincoles, Broad-billed Sandpipers and the odd rarity. Non-waders that show well include various wagtails, Red-throated and Water Pipits, even Eastern Bonelli's Warblers whilst views of drinking Honey Buzzards in early May can be amazing. The scrub behind the raised shade / Flamingo watch-point is also a good spot to bird early morning when migrants are in town. This site is one of the best in the southern Arava.

Ignore the private, No Entry signs as you enter the site as its is a freely accessible location.

2023 visit: There was a fairly good variety, but generally low numbers, of waders at the end of April however by early May the species mix was a lot less diverse. A few of each expected species were seen such as Collared Pratincole, Marsh, Curlew and Broad-billed Sandpipers and Red-necked Phalaropes whilst Wood Sandpipers fluctuated in numbers with well into forties and fifties present some days. Usual long-legged birds such as Ibis and herons passed through with this being the best place for wagtails, which are generally scarce at this time of year anyway. Personal highlight was finding a nice showy female Red-footed Falcon along the eastern embankment which went on to linger for a few days.

KM20 Date Palms

If travelling north from Eilat on the old tarmac road take a right just past the first date palms on the right. Park near the junction here and bird these palm groves. The plantations are private but the northern ones can be readily birded from the tracks whilst those to the south of the Saltpans track have been 'screened off' so you can't see in there.

On the left side of the track to the Saltpans by the junction are more date palms and by walking north along the west fence along the dirt track the fence disappears, either broken down, fallen into disrepair or removed, which means you can walk into the palm grove here. However still be mindful that they are private and you may be asked to leave by any workers present. This site has yielded Silverbill in the past. On the other side of the tarmac track, towards Route 40, is a small clump of scrub and can also be productive and should be checked whilst here.

Highway 90 roadside copses

There are several small isolated stands of trees and bushes along the roadside, northbound, that are worthy of investigation.

KM20 – By the Saltpans turn off co-ordinates [29.626956, 34.988333](#). In 2022 work was done on the Highway turn here and nearly all of the understory was removed. It is much degraded and as a result it is currently less attractive to migrants.

KM23 – By the Doum Palms turn off Co-ordinates [29.650319, 34.991150](#)

KM26 – Before the En Avrona turn off, by the two red and white masts. Co-ordinates [29.675664, 34.990676](#)

Eilat Mountains / Raptor Viewpoints

Raptor passage can be variable through the mountains and can often be dependent on wind direction and strength, especially so for the Honey Buzzard migration.

2023 visit: At the beginning of the trip the dominate species passing through was still Steppe Buzzard, outnumbering Honey Buzzard 5-1 however at the beginning of May Honey Buzzards were coming through in force and there were a couple of mornings where they just poured through, high, low, everywhere. In the mix with these on one particular day were Steppe Buzzards, Black Kites, Levant Sparrowhawks, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Oriental Honey Buzzard, several presumed hybrid HoneyxOriental Honey Buzzards, Booted Eagles, Egyptian Vulture, Eleonora's Falcon and most out of place a White Pelican. Stupendous.

Google Maps co-ordinates for upper viewpoint: [29.585429, 34.887784](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for middle viewpoint: [29.581613, 34.886914](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for middle roadside viewpoint: [29.576376, 34.886398](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for lower roadside viewpoint: [29.571788, 34.889066](#)

Mt. Yoash Raptor Viewpoint

The view from the top of Mt. Yoash across the mountains south across the Sinai is pretty impressive and when the wind is the right direction may thousands of raptors can be seen spiralling across the vast wildness. The track to the summit is in various states of repair from rough dirt track to patchy tarmac and with some wicked switch backs so getting up and down can be fun, or not depending on your point of view.

Se'ifim Plain

Despite being close to Eilat this location has only recently come onto birders radars in the past few years or so. It's about 10km or so past the Eilat Mountain raptor watch point along route 12 heading north along the Egyptian Border. Shortly after passing the sign on the right to Red Canyon there will be a sign, also on the right, to Se'ifim plain. Take the dirt track all the way to the end and either park under the solitary tree or drive along the track further north to where Hoopoe Larks are sometimes present.

This site is an odd one in that each years visits seem to have less and less birds present despite looking superb habitat. It is likely to be more productive in winter through to early to mid-March but does seem to have a pair or two of resident Mourning Wheatears. This area is extensive and best birded first thing in the morning.

2023 visit: Only visited once to look for the black and white wheatears and successfully found a singing male Mourning Wheatear. The only other species of note were several Trumpeter Finches.

Google Maps co-ordinates for the turn off for Se'ifim Plain: [29.693845, 34.858071](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for the Isolated Acacia Tree: [29.695245, 34.868072](#)



5. Arava Valley

Kibbutz Samar.

This is a great kibbutz and is, I think, better than Lotan for birding, probably due to the amount of vegetated understory. When you go through the main gate keep right and at the roundabout park at the far end under the tree's, there is space for a number of cars. From here just wander. There is a lot of vegetation with great weedy areas, mature trees, football pitch and as a result the site hold lots of migrants. The Olive grove on the south side is also productive and worth a walk but south of this it becomes more of a junk yard but after that there are cowsheds.

2023 visit: A couple of visits resulted in the breeding Black Scrub Robins on the southern side of the 'houses' and another was also seen well on the western side of the main circular path. Migrants were thin on the ground but there were Collared and Pied Flycatchers, several warbler species and small groups of Eurasian and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters passing overhead. Despite its overall quiet birdlife on both visits, probably not best to visit in the early afternoon, it remains my favourite birding kibbutz.

Google Maps co-ordinates for the Olive Grove: [29.831589, 35.022997](https://www.google.com/maps/place/29.831589,35.022997)



Be'er Ora: Rubbish Tip Road

North of Eilat turn off Highway 90 towards Be'er Ora and shortly before reaching the kibbutz entrance gate turn right onto a minor tarmac track. This track runs for several km's before turning sharply left. After the obvious left bend, in 2022, I located Hooded Wheatears along with numerous White-crowned Black Wheatears. There is acacia on the right and plains opens up on the left which looks interesting for desert species and should be worthy of future exploration. The acacia trees and scrub can hold sylvia warblers, such as Ruppell's Warblers in March 2022, whilst the more open areas should be good for larks and Tawny Pipits.

2023 visit: Only visited once as intended on walking the plains and wadi but it looked especially dry and bird free so a U-turn was made and effectively no birding here was made this time around.

Yotvata

Before coming out here this year I was fully aware that this awesome birding site was not what it once was. In recent years the crops at the southern circular field, which had been so extremely attractive to large numbers of wagtails, pipits, larks and hirundines and associated raptors, has become a less than bird attracting Olive Grove/Plantation. The North Circular field has now also finally succumbed and is now has hundreds of solar panels built on it and will be fenced off.

And whilst the Melon and Onion fields to the immediate north are still there the total lack of any irrigation this year resulted in lifeless fields with no crops or only remnants of what was once there. March 2022 was superb with so many birds present, it was disappointing and also heartbreaking to find virtually nothing worth putting in the notepad. Hopefully next year crops will be back and irrigation resumed but its not looking hopeful.

The sewage pools to the south of Yotvata Centre continues to impress and is 'always' worth a visit, even if just in passing. Reed fringed pools, exposed sludge, excellent position for attracting migrants and easy viewing. Whats not to enjoy. It doesn't even smell like a sewage pond, well mostly.



Yotvata Sewage Ponds – May 2023



Yotvata Sewage Ponds- May 2023

2023 visit: Extremely disappointing around the fields with very little of note. Saving grace are the nearby sewage pools where, unlike 2022, seem to easily accessible with workers at the plant not telling visiting birders to get out of the site.

It was home to a lingering White-tailed Lapwing which had a habit of disappearing for extended periods whilst the main pool had quite a lot of water. The small pools as I walked in held variety of smaller waders, mostly Wood Sandpipers but also a couple of Temminck's Stints, as well as Squacco Herons and Glossy Ibis. At the rear of the main pools is the reed fringed 'lake' which was attractive to species such as the White-tailed Lapwing and various herons plus singing Reed Warblers. Other birders had Little Bittern and Little Crake here but I had neither.

One evening there was a superb passage of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters with well over a hundred passing through heading north which was an absolute joy to watch.

Quetura / Ktura Sewage Ponds

To visit you will best approach from Grofit Kibbutz as the dirt tracks are more difficult to get onto from the main highway, impossible to do so if heading south due to the new central barrier. When you turn off for Grofit take the old agricultural road that runs parallel to the highway heading north and this will take you to the pools. Much of it is tarmac but there are some sections which are dirt and there are some large potholes so be careful.

There are a series of pools here, often at different states of water levels but it would seem that since the new treatment 'plant' went in the pools themselves are not what they once were. Still worth a look however as, as long they continue to exist, are a water source in an area that there is very little water.



2023 visit: Most of the small pools were dry and the larger one was fast going that way with a much-degraded feel to it. Only a few waders were present on the edges of what water was present, mostly Wood Sandpipers. However the wires nearby did hold a fine flock of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters for a couple of days so all was not lost but, as with the Yotvata fields, it has a feel that the writing is on the wall for the site as a birding location. **Google Maps co-ordinates for the pools:** [29.963979](#), [35.065192](#)

Kibbutz Lotan

It's a green oasis in the northern Arava that has a variety of habitats from the Organic Garden, the main kibbutz living area, the area around the Football pitch and swimming pool whilst the sewage ponds seemed to have dried out complete a few years ago which is a shame as it was once extremely good for pipits, wagtails, Bluethroats, and smaller waders. It is always worth checking at the visitor centre around the current situation of the pools and the nature reserve. Lotan has become fairly reliable in recent years though for Black Bush Robin and the Organic Garden area is perhaps the best place to search.

Just to the north of Lotan are the **Lotan Fields**. Take the right off Route 90 at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.005796](#), [35.086355](#) and take the tarmac track towards the Jordan border. There are some tanks, probably for irrigation at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.000299](#), [35.107376](#) which could be a good place to park up and walk around the fields. The area looks good for Lark, Pipits, Wagtails and could possibly hold Caspian Plover. Careful beyond these tanks as it rapidly becomes soft sand and a car may get stuck. Also could be a good place to reach out to the sand dunes along the border to search for Hoopoe Lark.

2023: Not visited.

KM76

Just north of Yahel on the east side of the highway look for the turn off near the mast. Depending on whether there have been rains recently will dictate whether there is a need for a visit here or not. If no rains then it can be very quiet on the birding front but if it has rained a month or so earlier in the region then it can green up which attracts lots of birds. In March 2023 it had been very good however by late April its attractiveness towards migrants had diminished and my visits had limited success. Note the rains in March 2023 have managed to wash away some of the edges to the tarmac road. It was still just about passable without finding yourself grounded.

2023: My several visits resulted in a limited species range but did include Eurasian and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, Red-throated Pipits, a pair of Southern Grey Shrikes with three young and a gathering of Steppe Buzzards. Past its peak by the time I arrived.

Google Maps co-ordinates for the 'road': [30.099532](#), [35.141140](#)

Wadi Ye'elon / Wadi Yahel

This is a firm favourite wadi which has often produced some good days, especially in the early morning but also in the later afternoon. There are some excellent Sylvia bushes along the length of the Wadi and in March can be full of commoner species but also good numbers of Ruppell's, Eastern Orphee and Subalpine. In mid-March 2017 I found a mal flock of Syrian Serin here which lingered for around a week or so and were much twitched by visiting birders. Late April and into May the species mix changes and you will start getting birds that don't occur earlier in the season with wadi being extremely good for Olive-tree, Eastern Olivaceous, Barred and Wood Warblers. Golden Orioles can be regular and species such as Blackcap and Lesser Whitethroat abundant to downright everywhere. I certainly recommend walking the entire length of this excellent wadi.

From Highway 90 heading north turn left into Kibbutz Yahel and then turn right immediately before the kibbutz Gates and then left onto the dirt track behind the 'service centre building'.



Upper reaches of Wadi Yahel / Ye'elon – May 2023

Continue on the dirt track keeping the kibbutz fence to your left and park by the Acacia trees by the black and white arrowed sign and explored along the Wadi from here. The Wadi goes a long way but is extremely productive. Take plenty of water. There is also an isolated garden, known as the cemetery, which also has birds due to the taller tree's here.

2023 visit: As usual I made several visits here, all the way to the far end of the wadi and whilst some birding was slow there were some excellent birds to be found with multiple Olive-tree and Barred Warblers, an Acacia full of Wood Warblers, a male Collared Flycatcher up on the cliffs towards the far end, a couple of Golden Orioles, resident Blackstarts, flyover Bee-eaters, small numbers of Honey Buzzards and Levants Sparrowhawks. Very enjoyable birding.

Google Maps co-ordinates to track around building: [30.082548, 35.130981](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates to parking area for exploring Wadi: [30.086643, 35.129938](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates for where the wadi splits: [30.088318, 35.112686](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates to upper Wadi: [30.092928, 35.108598](#)

Yahel Plains

This location was visited in March 2022 due to some recent rains that have greened up the plains. A very fine Turkestan Shrike was found here that year and overall the site was excellent. However as with many of the locations in the Arava similar to this it is dependant on rains to make it green which attracts insects which attract the birds. No rains, as in 2023, then extremely quiet birding.

If heading north along highway 90 about half a mile before the Yahel Kibbutz turnoff are a couple of large obvious water tanks on the left side of the road. I parked along the dirt service track here. The bushes alongside the highway by the water tanks can hold Caspian Stonechat, Masked Shrike, Quail, Ruppell's Warblers and numerous other species, there is a small leak in one of the pipes which makes for a damp patch and allows the vegetation to grow quite verdantly.

What I will now refer to as the Yahel Plains are on the other side of the highway. Crossing carefully you will very quickly come cross a dirt track that can be used by off roaders. Heading back north along this into scrub is where the Turkestan Shrike had been found in 2022. Just to the east of the scrub it opens out towards the Jordanian border and has a different set of species, more larks, pipits, wagtails, buntings etc that the scrub which had warblers and shrikes. Collectively these are the Yahel Plains and are extensive.



2023: Not visited.

Google Maps co-ordinates to birding area: [30.063346, 35.124531](#)

Google Maps co-ordinates to Water Tanks parking: [30.066326, 35.125141](#)

KM82

This well vegetated Wadi north of Lotan on Highway 90 at KM82 has proven reliable for migrants over the years and given its



isolated location it's no wonder. I've visited the site several times now and never found it dull with some great highlights; such as finding a stunning Olive-tree Warbler, Mountain Bunting, Black Scrub Robin, Black-headed Bunting and Cyprus Warbler alongside the commoner migrants whilst the plains to the south towards the hills are excellent for rarer larks such as Temminck's and Thick-billed which favour vegetation which extremely scant.

Obviously these visits have varied from March, late April and May but it is worth visiting all times.

Wadi KM82 – May 2023

Parking is at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.143899, 35.132571](#) down the embankment away from the main road (care in the sand) and walk out along the Wadi. Also note that this is a Military Firing Zone so if visiting outside of Friday and Saturday probably best to stay within the main vegetated wadi only.

2023 visit: Several visits were made where I found 'pockets' of birdlife. Birds were scattered along the wadi, sometimes 100metres or so of nothing and then a flurry, with Black-headed Bunting vying for attention with Olive-tree and Barred Warblers, or a Red-backed Shrike, or a Golden Oriole. On a couple of visits I did make extended walks along it's length but still never reach a point where vegetation just ran out. A top site.



Eilat and Aqaba from Lower Eilat Mountains – March 2017

6. Upper Arava Valley

Note the Upper Arava Valley areas were not visited in 2019 with below compiled from previous trip reports

KM94 (Wadi Hemda)

A site I have been aware of but not visited until 2023. It is an extensive low vegetation wadi to the west of R90 which earlier in the season was very productive. Whilst my dawn visit was low on diversity of species it was still very enjoyable with Hoopoe Larks putting on a 'run around my feet' display. Temmincks Larks were also seen amongst the commoner species present.

Parking on east side of Route 90 just before the metal barrier 'bridge' at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.248239, 35.134869](#)
Cross highway and bird out along the wadi. Officially this is a firing zone but as I understand it you can go quite a way away from the road even on a weekday, as I did.

Hazeva

It's just over an hour drive from Eilat to the access point at KM152. As you approach KM152 you will pass a double set of barriers, one on either side of the road, pull off the highway to the right immediately after this and before the KM152 marker post. There is a gap in the fence with a square yellow sign to the right indicating the start of the track. Follow this out where you can park at the wadi, this was marked 'loosely' by a square of rocks opposite a sign.

2023 Not visited.

Track access is at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.743722, 35.227332](#).

Parking is at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.742940, 35.249510](#)

7. West of the Upper Arava (highway 12 & 40)

Neot Semadar

In 2012 this was a personal favourite Kibbutz which was simply heaving with birds however the kibbutz has new gates and doesn't seem as accommodating to visiting birders so no visit was made within the boundary. This site really could be the under-estimated birding destination in the area if access was made possible.

Birding is however possible at the old fields outside of the kibbutz fence at **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.046912, 35.033986](#). These fields are still productive even if they are not much more than grass now than crops. In early spring good for buntings and eastern type Stonechats.

Neot Semadar Sewage Works

About half mile to the east of Neot Semadar Kibbutz are the sewage ponds. This is a great little place where you can walk around the treatment pools, settling beds and thickets. The pools, same as any of the others in the valley, vary in water levels but generally have a few waders and wagtails present whilst the southern border where there are shrubs and bamboo plus a large Acacia hold most of the passerine migrants. The Acacia lined northern fence-line is also a great spot and best birding from outside of the sewage ponds. Here in late April 2016, I found a White-throated Robin, a Black Bush Robin, Rufous Bush Robin, Thrush Nightingale and Common Redstart for a sweeping 'robin/chat' combo. Don't ignore the vegetated wadi outside of the pools fence to the east as this can be extremely productive. The past couple of years the gate has been locked but there is a gap in the fence that birders clearly use.

Google Maps co-ordinates: [30.043854](#), [35.042388](#)

2023 visit: The access gate was again locked this year though the hole in the fence from March 2022 is still there, behind the bushes just left of the gate. The pools and scrub held the usual suspects with nothing unusual however it was the bushes outside of the pools and the wadi on the far side that was the most productive with warblers of several species seen along with black-and-white flycatchers whilst others had Black-headed Bunting. This is a good place to find singing Rufous Bush Robins. When visiting this year I needed to park closer to the road and walk as part of the direct track from there to the pools entrance was in poor condition and I was never going to get past.

Shizzafon Junction Rest Stop

Located right at the junction of Routes 40 and 12 this obvious site is a place one can get a sandwich, not much else, and a drink and watch Bluethroats and Redstarts in the back garden. A small oasis this spot has turned up a few rarities over the years with a wintering Hume's Warbler there in 2017.

Ovda Valley Road

Turn left off highway 12 after about 1.5KMs from Shizzafon Junction onto the Shaharut road. About a mile along the road you will see three black hills on the right side of the road, this is the lark area. Park off road near to where the pylons come closest to the road along here and walk out from here. The best spots are generally south of the black hills. The area the other side of the Black Hills back towards R12 however can often be good as well for larks so walking the entire area may be needed and can often be extremely rewarding. This is a prime location for Thick-billed, Temminck's Horned, Bar-tailed and Hoopoe Larks as well as several sandgrouse species and a host of wheatears.

2023 visit: Only visited once as this late in the season it is often quiet. That being said with a little effort Short-toed Larks and Tawny Pipits were seen well along with a couple of the commoner wheatear and lark species.

Further along the Uvda Valley Road, about 1km from the Army base, take the dust track to the **Shaharut Cliffs Nature Reserve** **Google Maps co-ordinates for approximate turn off** [29.960075](#), [34.972865](#). There are stretches of sand along the track but a bit of acceleration will see you through but I found, as in 2022, that one section was too rocky to risk the low clearance car so parked where I could and walked up the wadi. The more vegetated far end of the wadi can hold Trumpeter Finch whilst the cliffs/hills on the north side opposite the obvious acacia that will see as you head up the wadi hold Mourning Wheatear. There were other species here also, such as White-crowned Black Wheatears and other migrants so time it right it would be a good place as any for birding.

Google Maps co-ordinates for the Mourning Wheatears in 2013 [29.961476](#), [34.996171](#)



Neot Semadar Sewage Ponds – May 2019



Ovda Valley – March 2017

Route 20 Acacia Groves

Along Route 20 there are a number of obvious acacia groves. These are worth a short walk around as they can often hold migrants given that there is little vegetation along this side of the mountains and these sites act as magnets for birds. Sayarim and Abda Groves are the larger and better ones and held some fine species with Common and Thrush Nightingales, Redstarts, Golden Orioles, Eastern Olivaceous, Barred, Olive-tree and Wood Warblers, Spotted, Collared and Pied Flycatchers whilst other birders had a Red-breasted Flycatcher, and so on. Some great birding in such small areas.

Sayarim Grove between KM47 and KM48 (there is a bird sign at this grove) **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [29.897562](#), [34.857233](#)

Abda Grove at KM64 - **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.009988](#), [34.961845](#)

Ovda Road Junction Grove at KM66 - **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.020049](#), [34.975501](#)

Grove at KM67 - **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.028274](#), [34.983368](#)

Grove at KM70 – **Google Maps co-ordinates:** [30.048015](#), [35.002450](#)

Route / Highway 12 Acacia Groves



Route 12, KM47-KM48: Sayarim Grove



Route 12, KM64, Abda Grove



Route 12, KM66 Ovda Road Junction Grove



Route 12, KM67



Route 12, KM70

Day to Day itinerary, highlights and daily account:

Day 1: Saturday 22-April

Mt. Amasa / Yotvata Sewage Works / Yotvata North Fields / KM20 Salt Pans

- Day's highlights:
- 1. The walk up the Mt. Amasa valley with birds singing, flocks of Pallid Swifts passing overhead and bumping into Yoav Perlman.
- 2. The wagtails at the entrance to the KM20 Salt Pans.
- 3. The stunning show by the Collared Pratincoles at the Salt Pans.

Day 2: Sunday 23-April

Holland Park / Eilat Mountains / IBRCE / KM20 Salt Pans / KM19 Sewage Pool / North Beach

- Day's highlights:
- 1. The super Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse in Holland Park at 5:30 in the morning.
- 2. First experience of the trip of raptor migration through the mountains with 5000+ Steppe Buzzards, 2000+ Honey Buzzards, 2500+ Levants Sparrowhawks, 300 Black Kites and a Lesser Spotted Eagle as well at around 40 or so Black Storks.
- 3. The buzzard migration over the Bird Park that also held Egyptian Vulture and Booted Eagles.
- 4. The enjoyably close four Broad-billed Sandpipers at the Salt Pans.
- 5. The time spent trying to get photos of the Bee-eaters at KM19 Sewage Pond.
- 6. The incoming flocks of Levant's Sparrowhawks at North Beach at dusk.

Day 3: Monday 24-April

IBRCE / KM20 Salt Pans / Kibbutz Samar / Yotvata Sewage Works / Canada Park

- Day's highlights
- 1. Repeating my efforts from a few years ago at the north end of the Bird Park where around 2600+ Levants Sparrowhawks passed right overhead.
- 2. The now five Broad-billed Sandpipers at the KM20 Salt Pans.
- 3. The very fine Whiskered Tern at the KM20 Salt Pans.
- 4. The adult and juvenile Black Scrub Robin at Kibbutz Samar.
- 5. The White-tailed Lapwing at Yotvata Sewage Ponds after thinking it had gone.
- 6. The male Collared Flycatcher in Canada Park

Day 4: Tuesday 25-April

KM94 Wadi Hemda / KM76 / Wadi Ye'elon / Yotvata Sewage Pools / Holland Park / KM20 Salt Pans

- Day's highlights
- 1. My best views ever of Hoopoe Lark at KM94, point blank range.
- 2. The posing Southern Grey Shrike at KM94 in the early rays of sunlight.
- 3. The male Collared Flycatcher in the upper reaches of Wadi Ye'elon.
- 4. The Acacia full of Wood Warblers in Wadi Ye'elon.
- 5. The impressive flock of 70+ Glossy Ibis at KM20 Salt Pans.

Day 5: Wednesday 26-April

Eilat Mountains / Se'ifim Plains / Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park / Canada Park / Southwest 'Dakar Street' Park / Shahamon Park / Dy Zahav Street Park / KM20 Sat Pans / North Beach

- Day's highlights
- 1. Singing male Mourning Wheatear at Se'ifim Plains.
- 2. Discovering the small Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park and its male and female Collared Flycatchers.
- 3. Investing time in exploring the town's parks
- 4. The very showy Temminck's Stints at KM20 Salt Pans.
- 5. Then very fine male 'superciliaris' Wagtail at KM20 Salt Pans.
- 6. The jaw dropping flock of an estimated extended flock of 5000+ Levant's Sparrowhawks that passed over the Bird Park late afternoon.

Day 6: Thursday 27-April

Eilat Mountains / R12 Sayarim Grove / Uvda Valley Junction Grove / Neot Semadar Sewage Pools / KM82 Wadi / KM20 Salt Pans / IBRCE

- Day's highlights
- 1. A very good and low flock of around 300 Levant's Sparrowhawks through the mountains.
- 2. Time spent birding the upper valley sites.

Day 7: Friday 28-April

Mt. Karken / Central Nizanna Desert (Restricted Access) / KM20 Salt Pans

- Day's highlights
- 1. The survey done with Noam Wiess in the restricted firing zone areas of the central Negev, around Mt.Karken.
- 2. The Whiskered and White-winged Black Tern duo at KM20 Salt Pans late afternoon.

Day 8: Saturday 29-April

Eilat Mountains / Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park / Central Park / Ha-Arava Park / IBRCE / KM19 Sewage Pool / KM20 Salt Pans / Holland Park

- Day's highlights
- 1. The lingering performing male Collared Flycatcher in Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park
- 2. The late in season male Ruppell's Warbler in Holland Park

Day 9: Sunday 30-April

Eilat Mountains / Kibbutz Samar / Yotvata Sewage Pools / Southwest 'Dakar Street' Park / Canada Park / Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park

- Day's highlights
- 1. The instructive female Collared Flycatcher at Kibbutz Samar.
- 2. The town parks various flycatchers and warblers.

Day 10: Monday 01-May

Uvda Valley / Neot Semadar Sewage Pools / Wadi Ye'elon / Yahel Cemetery / KM76 / Neot Semadar Sewage Pools / Yotvata Sewage Pools

- Day's highlights
- 1. Birding Wadi Ye'elon.
- 2. The White-tailed Lapwing again at Yotvata Sewage Pool.
- 3. The amazing 173 Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters that flew through Yotvata Sewage Pools at dusk.

Day 11: Tuesday 02-May

Eilat Mountains / KM20 Salt Pans / R12 Roadside Groves at Sayarim / Abda / Ovda Junction / KM67 & KM70 / Yotvata Sewage Pools

- Day's highlights
- 1. Big Honey Buzzard day in the mountains with an amazing 45,000-50,000+ seen. One the best birding experiences that included a kettle right above my head of several hundred strong.
- 2. The supporting cast through the mountains of Egyptian Vulture, a White Pelican looking lost with the Honey Buzzards, a Booted Eagle, a Marsh Harrier, 700-100 Levants Sparrowhawks, 20 Bee-eaters, 200+ Black Kites, 400+ Steppe Buzzards, an Osprey, an Oriental Honey Buzzard, 73 Black Storks and an Eleonora's Falcon.
- 3. Male Citrine Wagtail at the entrance to the KM20 Salt Pans.
- 4. Finding my first Israeli Red-footed Falcon at KM20 Salt Pans that put on a performance.
- 5. The migrant rush through all of the Route / Highway 12 Acacia Groves.
- 6. Again the White-tailed Lapwing at Yotvata Sewage Pools.

Day 12: Wednesday 03-May

Eilat Mountains / KM20 Salt Pans / Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park / IBRCE / North Beach

- Day's highlights
- 1. Another Amazing Honey Buzzard day through the mountains with around 30,000+ passing through.
- 2. Still 40+ Levants Sparrowhawks in the mountains.
- 3. An impressive 100+ Turtle Doves in the field next to the Eilat Bird Park that also had an out of place Collared Pratincole.

Day 13: Thursday 04-May

KM82 Wadi / Ktura Sewage Pools / R12 Abda Grove / R12 Sayarim Grove / Sharahut Cliffs

- Day's highlights
- 1. Finding a pair of Black-headed Buntings in KM82 wadi when there was also a good number of scattered migrants that included Olive-tree Warbler, Barred Warbler and Golden Oriole.
- 2. The entertaining flock of 16 Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters at Ktura Sewage Ponds.

Day 14: Friday 05-May

Wadi Ye'elon / KM82 Wadi / KM20 Salt Pans / IBRCE / KM19 Sewage Pool

- Day's highlights
- 1. Slower but still enjoyable birding walk along Wadi Ye'elon.
- 2. Peak weeks temperature at 39degrees, toasty.
- 3. Barbary Falcon at KM20 Salt Pans.

Day 15: Saturday 06-May

IBRCE / KM20 Salt Pans / En Avrona / Holland Park

- Day's highlights
- 1. Staking out and scoring with excellent views of the Oriental Honey Buzzard at the Bird Park.
- 2. Nailing an Upchers Warbler at the Bird Park; doing its swishy tail thing.

Day 16: Sunday 07-May

Nizanna / Shivta Road Junction Grove

- Day's highlights
- 1. Wrapping up the trip with Cream-coloured Coursers and a displaying male McQueens Bustard, no a nearby female, at Nizanna.
- 2. The Shivta Road Grove that saw me out with an Olive-tree Warbler and hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies.

Species Accounts for the 182 Species seen – following (roughly) the order of *Bird of the Middle East* by Porter and Aspinall

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--|
| 1 | Chukar | One was seen with several heard at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr whilst three were at Mt. Karken (restricted area) and three at Nizanna on 07-May. |
| 2 | Sand Partridge | A tiny chick was seen at Mt. Amasa at Tel Creot with several calling birds noted on 22-Apr. The species was then heard more often than seen at several desert wadi areas in the southern Arava with Holland Park and Wadi Ye'elon being notable for multiple sightings. Three were also in the main viewpoint parking area in the Eilat Mountains on 26-Apr. |
| 3 | Egyptian Goose | Resident pair at Yotvata with a large family of goslings. |
| 4 | Shoveler | Small numbers, 8+, at the KM20 Salt Pans from 22-Apr to early May but a notable increase on 27-Apr when 56 were counted. At least 10+ were off North Beach in the evening of 23-Apr |
| 5 | Mallard | Resident birds at the Eilat Bird Park, not seen anywhere else |
| 6 | Pintail | Only recorded at the KM20 Salt Pans with five regularly between 22-Apr and 28-Apr and then noted as present thereafter. |
| 7 | Garganey | Five drakes in with the Shovelers at KM20 Salt Pans on 27-Apr |
| 8 | Teal | Five were at the KM20 Salt Pans on 22-Apr and then no others here until 10+ on 27-Apr. The only others seen were 15+ off North Beach in evening of 23-Apr |
| 9 | Little Grebe | Resident at the Yotvata Sewage Pools with up to ten throughout |
| 10 | Brown Booby | One was semi resident off North Beach at the end of April and early May with my sightings of this distant bird, sat on Buoys, on 23-Apr and 26-Apr |
| 11 | Sooty Shearwater | One very distant off North Beach on 03-May |
| 12 | Greater Flamingo | Resident flock, around 150-200 birds, continued at the KM20 Salt Pan. Much small numbers, below double figures, on the salt pans of the Eilat Bird Park |
| 13 | White Pelican | One passed through the Eilat Mountains on 02-May with a flock of Honey Buzzards, which looked totally out of place |

- | | | |
|----|--------------|--|
| 14 | Black Stork | Respectable passage through the Eilat Mountains on several mornings with 70 on 23-Apr and 73 on 02-May. Elsewhere nine went over the Eilat Bird park on 23-Apr with one in the nearby canal, and then on the nearby field, on 03-May. Two were at the KM20 Salt Pans on 28-Apr whilst one went over here on 02-May. Nine went over the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 01-May |
| 15 | White Stork | This species is much reduced as a migrant later in the spring with only two sightings. Three at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr and 14 over KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr |
| 16 | Glossy Ibis | <p>Good passage this spring. Many small numbers at various wetland sites but most notables detailed below:</p> <p>KM20 Salt Pans - 57 on 22-Apr, 70+ on 25-Apr down to 27 on 26-Apr, 21 on 28-Apr down to 15+ on 29-Apr. 22+ on 22-May and 20+ on 06-May</p> <p>Yotvata Sewage Pools - 2 on 24 and 25-Apr, 21 on 30-Apr and 01-May</p> <p>Neot Semadar Sewage Pools - 7 on 27 Apr</p> |
| 17 | Spoonbill | Two flew north over the Date Palms Service Road on 27-Apr and three done several circuits of the Eilat Bird Park on 03-May |
| 18 | Nighth Heron | <p>3-4 semi resident at the Eilat Bird Park throughout with a peak of seven on 24-Apr</p> <p>A respectable 40+ were at the KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr however visits thereafter generally resulted in smaller numbers with subsequent peak of 20+ over at dusk on 05-May</p> <p>KM20 Salt Pans had 11 on 03-May whilst Yotvata Sewage Pools had one on 30-Apr and a flock of 12 over on 01-May.</p> <p>An odd location sighting was of one at Central Park on 30-Apr</p> |
| 19 | Cattle Egret | <p>65 were present around the KM20 Salt Pans and nearby Northern Fields (southern end of the pans) on 23-Apr with 10+ on 05-May and 25 on 06-May</p> <p>Apart from one at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 27-Apr 1-3 were seen on several dates at the Yotvata Sewage Pools 27-Apr to 02-May</p> |
| 20 | Little Egret | <p>KM20 Salt Pans had 13 on 22-Apr down to 12 on 23-Apr with 20 then on 25-Apr</p> <p>1-2 on several dates throughout at the Eilat Bird Park</p> <p>KM19 Sewage Pool had 15+ on 23 Apr</p> |
| 21 | Grey Heron | Recorded from several wetland areas in the south in one's and two's however there were five at KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr, nine at the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr and 21 at the KM20 Salt Pans on 03-May |
| 22 | Purple Heron | Two were at KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr and 29-Apr, singles at the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr and 05-May and at the Yotvata Sewage Pools 24-Apr |

23	Squacco Heron	Yotvata Sewage Pools logged nine on 22-Apr with seven there on 24-Apr and then 2-4 until 06-May. Three were at the KM20 Salt Pans on 22-Apr and 23-Apr with an increase to nine there on 27-Apr. Eight were at the Eilat Bird park on 23-Apr and 24-Apr whilst five were seen on several visits to the KM19 Sewage Pool.
24	Striated Heron	At the Eilat Bird Park on one flew across Anita Lake in front of the hide early morning of 06-May
25	Osprey	One was at the KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr and one passed through the Eilat Mountains on 02-May
26	Steppe Buzzard	Many scattered small numbers throughout the Arava. Outnumbered Honey Buzzard during the beginning of the fourth week of April. Eilat Mountains saw 5000+ pass through on 23-Apr with the continuing passage being seen later same day over the Eilat Bird Park where a further 4000+ were noted going north. Thereafter numbers were reduced with largest subsequent migration being 400+ on 02-May and 100+ on 03-May when they were outmatched by Honey Buzzards.
27	Honey Buzzard	Always one of the biggest events of birding in southern Israel this year's spectacular did not disappoint. I've had bigger number days in past years but this year having spiralling flocks of several hundred literally just above my head is hard to beat. Eilat Mountains: 2000+ on 23-Apr, 600+ on 26-Apr, 500+ on 27-Apr, 250+ on 29-Apr (all very high) and 340+ (all very high again). The with wind in the north, perhaps just west of north 45,000+ on 04-May and 30,000+ 05-May with many tens of thousands low down through and over the mountains. Elsewhere numbers were very low with 43+ through Wadi Ye'elon on 05-May being the largest non mountains passage. None were seen coming down to drink this year but a week after I left Israel with numbers still pouring through, many were seen on the ground at the various watering holes.
28	Oriental Honey Buzzard	In the Eilat Mountains a female passed through with a small flock of Honey Buzzards on 02-May. At the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May I staked out the north end of the reserve along the canal and waited for the resident birds to leave the date palms. Two came out just after 8am. The first, a tatty bird, flew straight towards the Botanical Garden whilst the second, about 10minutes later, put on a show circling low overhead.
	Oriental Honey Buzzard or Hybrid	A male that went through the Eilat Mountains on 30-Apr was rather high and images cannot determine whether it is a hybrid or pure Oriental Honey Buzzard
29	Black Kite	100+ at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr Eilat Mountains saw steady passage with 300+ on 23-Apr, 200+ on 02-May with 10-30 on three other dates between 26-Apr and 03-May Elsewhere numbers were low but the Eilat Bird Park saw several hundred go over late morning of 23-Apr.
30	Egyptian Vulture	Adults were seen along Route 90 near Sapir on 22-Apr, at the Eilat Bird Park on 23-Apr and in the Eilat Mountains on 02-May

31	Short-toed Eagle	Three at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr were the only ones of the trip
32	Marsh Harrier	Usually 1-3 present around the Eilat Bird Park and KM19 Sewage Pond on each visit whilst individuals were seen away from here in the Eilat Mountains on 23-Apr, with four there on 27-Apr, and at Se'ifim Plain on 26-Apr
33	Pallid Harrier	A female was on the eastern side of Route 90 at KM94 at dawn of 25-Apr
34	Hen Harrier	Immature male at KM94 on 24-Apr
35	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Singles were at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr, the Eilat Mountains 23-Apr when passed through with a flock of Levant's Sparrowhawks and at the Eilat Bird Park on 03-May
36	Levants Sparrowhawk	<p>A more protracted migration this year which commenced on 23-Apr and continued in numbers well after I had left Israel on 07-May. There were many single figures seen along the length of the Arava Valley however notable counts are detailed below:</p> <p>Eilat Mountains had 2500+ on 23-Apr, 40+ 26-Apr, 300 on 27-Apr, 70+ on 30-Apr, 70-100 on 02-May and 40+ on 03-May</p> <p>Dusk arrivals over North Beach on 23-Apr totalled an estimated 1026 birds in flocks of 5, 21, 200 and 800</p> <p>Eilat Bird Park - 2600+ went north from the date palm roosts on 24-Apr, many of which were most likely those that arrived over North Beach the previous evening. A hugely impressive estimated extended flock of 5000+ passed overhead</p>
37	Barbary Falcon	One briefly at the KM20 Salt Pans on 05-May
38	Peregrine	One over Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr
39	Red-footed Falcon	Female on the eastern side of the KM20 Salt Pans on 02-May and 03-May
40	Hobby	Singles through the Eilat Mountains on 29-Apr and at Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 01-May
41	Eleonora's Falcon	One through the Eilat Mountains on 02-May
42	Lesser Kestrel	Two at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr
43	Common Kestrel	Three Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot 22-Apr; singles at Yotvata Fields on 22-Apr, KM19 23-Apr and in the Eilat Mountains on 27-Apr with four at KM76 on 25-Apr

44	Booted Eagle	<p>Some of the sightings perhaps related to the same lingering individuals at locations such as the Bird Park and Yotvata Eilat Bird Park had Pale and Dark morphs on 23-Apr and the same Pale Morph on 24-Apr. The were then Pale and Dark morphs here on 03-May to 06-May</p> <p>Yotvata Sewage Pools had a pale morph on 24-Apr and 25-Apr with a dark morph on 30-Apr</p> <p>There were both dark and pale morphs in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and a dark morph there on 01-May</p> <p>A pale morph passed through the Eilat Mountains on 02-May</p> <p>A dark morph was circling around the En Avrona spring on 06-May</p>
45	Lesser Spotted Eagle	Singles were at Mt. Amasa at 22-Apr and over the lower Eilat Mountains on 23-Apr
46	Steppe Eagle	The only one seen went through the Eilat Mountains on 03-May
47	McQueens Bustard	A male seen displaying to a female at Nizzana on 07-May
48	Coot	Only seen at the KM19 Sewage Pool though no specific counts were made
49	Moorhen	Recorded at Yotvata Sewage Pools, KM19 Sewage Pool and at the Eilat Bird Park
50	Cream-coloured Courser	Two were scoped from the Nizzana box car viewpoint on 07-May
51	Black-winged Stilt	Commonly seen at the KM20 Salt Pans where the low three figures were likely present throughout, at the Eilat Bird Park and at the Yotvata Sewage Pools
52	Avocet	A singleton set up residency at the KM20 Salt Pans 22-Apr to 05-May
53	White-tailed Lapwing	An adult that was found a few days before I arrived in Israel was eventually seen at Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr, 01-May and 02-May where it was extremely flighty and often elusive
54	Spur-winged Lapwing	Common and widespread around the various wetland habitats to the point that no attempt was made to record numbers
55	Grey Plover	Only recorded at the KM20 Salt Pans with 1-2 on four dates between 22-Apr and 26-Apr with an increase here to eight on 28-Apr

56	Kentish Plover	Resident and breeding at KM20 Salt Pans with usually around 5-7 seen per visit
57	Little Ringed Plover	One at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 22-Apr was the only one of the trip
58	Ringed Plover	Present in varying but generally small numbers at the KM20 Salt Pans throughout
59	Collared Pratincole	Apart from one sat in the field near the Eilat Bird Park on 03-May all others seen were at the KM20 Salt Pans: two on 23-Apr, four on 23-Apr, six on 25-Apr and singles on 27-Apr and 02-May
	Pratincole so.	Six pratincoles that were seen flying north from the KM20 Salt Pans on 28-Apr looked likely to have been Black-winged Pratincoles but no conclusive identification was made
60	Common Snipe	One flushed at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr was the only one of the trip
61	Redshank	Present at the KM20 Salt Pans in very small numbers, generally 1-4 throughout
62	Greenshank	Fairly common at the KM20 Salt Pans, varying in numbers but 18 on 22-Apr representative of those seen here on my regular visits
63	Marsh Sandpiper	Only seen this year at KM20 Salt Pans where 1-2 lingering birds were seen between 22-Apr and 25-Apr with, unusually, seen after these dates
64	Green Sandpiper	Singles at the KM20 Salt Pans on 22-Apr and 23-Apr with three there on 25-Apr
65	Wood Sandpiper	Commonest Tringa seen. 11 at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 22-Apr with single figures thereafter 30+ at the KM20 Salt Pans on 22-Apr then increased to 45 on 25-Apr and then a trip peak of 138 on 26-Apr before dropping back to 45 on 28-Apr and then 31 on 02-May Three at the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr increased to a flock of 53 on 26-Apr Elsewhere 1-2 were seen at the sewage pools of Neot Semadar and Ktura
66	Common Sandpiper	1-4 were seen at several sites but none were noted after the end of April
67	Broad-billed Sandpiper	All sightings were at the KM20 Salt Pans with some likely turnover of some birds: One on 29-Apr and 03-May, two on 22-Apr, three on 25-Apr, four on 23-Apr and 05-May and trip peak of five on 24-Apr

68	Curlew Sandpiper	<p>All sightings were at the KM20 Salt Pans with some likely turnover of birds:</p> <p>Three on 22-Apr to 24-Apr then increased to seven on 25-Apr, then eight on 26-Apr and peak of nine on 28-Apr before final singles on 03-May and 05-May</p>
69	Dunlin	Present at the KM20 Salt Pans where 2-5 were noted on several dates throughout the trip
70	Little Stint	<p>Numbers at the KM20 Salt Pans again down from a few years ago but still fairly impressive numbers:</p> <p>60+ on 22-Apr increased to 150+ on 23-Apr and then remained 70-120 until early May when 170+ were present on 03-May. There was then a mass departure leaving only 20+ or so birds</p> <p>Seven at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 01-May were notable</p>
71	Temmincks Stint	One at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 22-Apr was followed by three showy birds at the KM20 Salt Pans on 26-Apr with the final bird there on 05-May
72	Red-necked Phalarope	Only seen at the KM20 Salt Pans with five there on 23-Apr, 12 on 25-Apr, two on 26-Apr and then one on 05-May
73	Ruff	Present at both Yotvata Sewage Pools and the KM20 Salt Pans but not overly common this year but still seen each visit.
74	White-eyed Gull	Only seen of North Beach late afternoon/evenings with 2 on 23-Apr and 26-Apr
75	Slender-billed Gull	Common at the KM20 Salt Pans, the Canal and North Beach
76	Baltic Gull	<p>What was presumably the same four that were seen at North Beach on 23-Apr were seen at the KM20 Salt Pans on 24-Apr and 26-Apr.</p> <p>Further large gulls at North Beach at end of May were probably Baltic Gulls.</p> <p>There were 15+ at KM20 Salt Pans on 02-May with around 10+ again the following day</p>
77	Heuglin's Gull	Only ones that I was happy with were of five over the Eilat Bird Park on 23-Apr
	Larus sp.	Seven unidentified large gulls flew over the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May
78	Little Tern	Three were at the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr and three were off north Beach in the evening of 26-Apr. One flew through the KM19 Sewage Pool on 06-May

79	Sandwich Tern	Three off North Beach on 23-Apr were the only ones of the trip
80	Caspian Tern	One flew through the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr with another there on 05-May and two new birds on 06-May. One off North Beach in the evening of 26-Apr was the only other of the trip
81	Common Tern	Only seen off North Beach with 25 there on 23-Apr, nine on 26-Apr and 30+ on 03-May
82	Gull-billed Tern	KM20 Salt Pans was the best place to see this tern with two there on 22-Apr, maximum of 12 on 23-Apr and then one on 25-Apr. North Beach had three on 23-Apr being the only other sighting.
83	Whiskered Tern	One showed well at the KM20 Salt Pans on 24-Apr whilst another accompanied a White-winged Tern on 28-Apr when two others flew straight through there the same day
84	White-winged Black Tern	Only recorded at KM20 Salt Pans with singles on 22-Apr, 23-Apr and 28-Apr with three on 25-Apr. No big movement this year.
85	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	A pair showed very well for a short time along the left track at Holland Park at around 5:30am on 23-Apr before they were flushed by a dog walker.
86	Spotted Sandgrouse	Only heard at KM94 early morning of 25-Apr whilst 18 flew over the wadi at KM82 on 04-May
87	Laughing Dove	Common and widespread
88	Collared Dove	Very common and widespread; everywhere
89	Turtle Dove	A reasonable showing of this species this year. Following one at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr 1-2 were then seen on several days at a number of locations in the south but 20+ at the Yotvata Fields on 22-Apr and 15 at the Eilat Bird Park were eclipsed by the 100+ in the fields by the Eilat Bird Park on 03-May. Nearly all had gone the next day.
90	Namaqua Dove	Seen more often than in March 2022. 1-2 were seen on a number of visits to Yotvata Sewage Pools, Neot Semadar Sewage Pools, Wadi Ye'elon, Holland Park and the Eilat Bird Park with site peak count being four at Holland Park on 06-May
91	Ring-necked Parakeet	Common around the Eilat Parks with increasing numbers around the Eilat Bird Park where roving flocks of 20 or more were seen

92	Cuckoo	One in the wadi at KM82 on 04-May was the only one of the trip and a rather late individual
93	Great Spotted Cuckoo	One flew past at Nizzana on 07-May
94	Lilith Owl	Singles were up the valley at Mt. Amasa with another one or two around the ruins of Tel Creot on 22-Apr
95	Alpine Swift	One flew over Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot with a large flock of mixed Common and Pallid Swifts on 22-Apr whilst five passed through the Eilat Mountains on 30-Apr
96	Common Swift	A swift flock that passed over Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr had a bare minimum of 40+. Probably a lot more but they were outnumbered by Pallid Swifts
97	Pallid Swift	An impressive passage through Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr reached 3000+ before I was distracted by other birds, constant stream of swifts meant there was probably more than double this figure. In the southern Arava there were scattered 1-3 at various locations however 1000+ went through the Eilat Bird Park on 27-Apr, ten over the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 01-May and 20+ over the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May
	Swift sp.	70+ unidentified swifts passed through the Eilat Mountains on 30-Apr
98	Hoopoe	Remarkably uncommon this year with only one seen, albeit in flight only, at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 01-May
99	Pied Kingfisher	Presumably the birds that are present most visits at the Eilat Bird Park, peak of three on 05-May, were responsible for the one off of North Beach on 23-Apr
100	Eurasian Bee-eater	After not seeing any in spring 2022 it was excellent to see and hear so many again this year, often very well. Most locations recorded between 2-10 birds however 25 were at the KM20 Salt Pans in the evening of 23-Apr, with 25+ there on 28-Apr and 30+ on 29-Apr. 30+ were over the Eilat Bird Park on 29-Apr and 17 there on 06-May. 20+ were at Kibbutz Samar on 30-Apr, often with a couple of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, whilst Wadi Ye'elon had 27 on 01-May. 20 passed through the Eilat Mountains on 02-May and final 14 were at Nizanna on 07-May. Some hundreds in total were seen.
101	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	Two flew through the KM20 Salt Pans on 23-Apr and two were at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr. Five were on wires along the road at KM76 and three lingered with the Bee-eater flock at Kibbutz Samar on 30-Apr. 16 at Ktura Sewage Pools put on a protracted performance on and around the overhead wires during the heat of the day on 04-May. However special mention goes to the passage that went through the Yotvata Sewage Pools in the evening of 01-May when a total of 173 migrated north. spectacular.

102	Little Green Bee-eater	1-3 of the resident Bee-eater species were seen in most of the expected locations being recorded between 23-Apr and 06-May. Prime places for this species were Holland Park, the Eilat Bird Park and in Wadi Ye'elon
103	Roller	One was seen from the car along Route 90 at KM148 on 22-Apr. One flew through the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr and the last was of a distant bird at Nizanna on 07-May
104	Masked Shrike	Singles were seen widely between 22-Apr and 05-May at Mt. Amasa, KM19 Sewage Pool, the Eilat Bird Park, the KM82 wadi, Neot Semadar Sewage Pools and in Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park. 2-3 were seen per visit at Canada Park, Shahamon Park and Ha-Arava Park. 5-8 were in Wadi Ye'elon on three visits between 25-Apr and 05-May whilst the wadi at KM82 held peak of ten on 04-May
105	Red-backed Shrike	Two females in the wadi at KM82 on 04-May
106	Southern Grey Shrike	One at Tel Creot on 22-Apr was followed by singles at KM94 on 25-Apr and KM82 Wadi on 27-Apr where there were a pair with juveniles present on 04-May and 05-May. A pair at KM76 had three juveniles in bushes on 25-Apr and 01-May whilst two adults were seen at the north end of the KM20 Salt Pans on 03-May. The last of the trip were at Nizanna on 07-May where there were three.
107	Arabian Babbler	Three were in the Route 12 Abda Acacia Grove on 27-Apr whilst one was at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 01-May and two in the KM82 Wadi on 04-May and in the KM64 Acacia Grove on Route 12 on 04-May. None seen in Holland Park this year.
108	Brown-necked Raven	Commonly seen, especially from the car whilst driving. No counts specifically made
109	Hooded Crow	Several were at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr whilst what is probably the same bird from March 2022 was still in Central Park on 29-Apr
110	House Crow	Common around Eilat and the town parks
111	Jackdaw	One at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr was the sole record
112	Jay	One at the Shivta Road Junction on 07-May
113	Yellow-vented Bulbul	Commonly seen and heard
114	Crested Lark	Common and widespread min drier habitats
115	Short-toed Lark	Five in the Ovda Valley on 01-May

116	Bar-tailed Lark	Four at KM94 on 25-Apr and one at KM76 on 01-May
117	Desert Lark	Following two singing birds at the top of the valley at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr 1-2 were seen at the Eilat Mountains main viewpoint on each visit between 23-Apr and 03-May. Three were at the Ovda Valley on 01-May whilst two were at both Sharahut Cliffs and Nizanna on 04-May and 07-May respectively.
118	Hoopoe Lark	Three were seen very well at KM94 on 25-Apr
119	Temminck's Lark	A distant and brief singleton seen at KM94 on 25-Apr
120	Swallow	Generally common and widespread around the Eilat Bird Park, KM19 Sewage Pool and Yotvata Sewage Pools, where mixed a flock of swallows and martins here on 01-May numbered around 400+ birds.
121	Red-rumped Swallow	Three at Mt. Amasa passed through with swifts on 22-Apr whilst in the Arava one was at Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr and 6+ were at the Eilat Bird Park on 03-May
122	House Martin	One at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr and two at the Eilat Bird Park on 23-Apr were the only ones specifically noted but mixed flocks of hirundines did at least have some House Martins.
123	Sand Martin	Singles seen at various wetland areas in the southern Arava but there were ten at the KM20 Salt Pans on 22-Apr with 40+ passing through there on 24-Apr. As what was obviously a wider passage of birds on 24-Apr 45+ were also seen passing through the Eilat Bird Park
124	Pale Crag Martin	Widespread in small numbers with no specific counts made at the various locations where they we encountered.
	Hirundines	Mixed flock of swallows and martins were at the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr with around 50+ and a small passage was noted through the Eilat Mountains on 30-Apr
125	Citrine Wagtail	A fine male was at the KM20 Salt Pans on 02-May
126	Yellow Wagtails	Most 'Yellow' Wagtails were seen at the KM20 Salt Pans and consisted of multiple Blue-headed, Grey-headed, Ashy-headed and hybrid Wagtails such as superciliaris and drombowski. Small numbers were seen migrating over the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr with 18+ noted and several at the Yotvata Sewage Pools. By all accounts wagtails had been in short supply this spring
127	Black-headed Wagtail	Several were seen during visits to the KM20 Salt Pans; such as the three on 26-Apr

128	White Wagtail	Singles at the KM20 Salt Pans on 29-Apr and the Yotvata Sewage Pools on 01-May were surprisingly the only ones seen during the trip
129	Tree Pipit	Singles in Canada Park on 24-Apr and in Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park on 26-Apr were followed by three at Mt. Karken (restricted) on 28-Apr and at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 04-May
130	Red-throated Pipit	Small numbers were found along the edges of the KM20 Salt Pans between 22-Apr and 02-May, usually 1-3 birds only per visit. Seven were at the KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr, 11 in the short grass at KM76 on 01-May and 18 flew through Yotvata Sewage Pools in the evening of 01-May.
131	Tawny Pipit	Two in the Ovda Valley on 01-May
132	Long-billed Pipit	One singing at the top of the valley at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
133	Bluethroat	Male 'White-spotted' was trapped and ringed at the Eilat Bird Park on late date for the race of 24-Apr
134	Black Bush Robin	Kibbutz Samar continues to hold breeding pairs. An adult with a juvenile was seen on the southern side of the kibbutz around the taller tree's whilst another was found on the west side which was not covered in rings. All birds seen on 24-Apr and 30-Apr.
135	Rufous Bush Robin	Fairly widespread but perhaps not quite as plentiful or as showy as in previous years. Usually 1-2 were seen at each location, presumably pairs, with Yotvata Sewage Pools, the scrub adjacent to the KM20 Salt Pans, the scrub around the outside of the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools, the Eilat Bird Park, KM82 Wadi and the roadside Acacia Groves along highway 12 all logging birds.
136	Nightingale	Two, presumably a pair, were in the Ovda Road Junction Acacia Grove along Highway 12 on 27-Apr
137	Thrush Nightingale	One was seen briefly at Kibbutz Samar on 24-Apr, with another at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 01-May. The most productive locations were the Acacia Groves along Highway 12 with two at KM64 on 02-May and 04-May and one at KM66
138	Redstart	One briefly at Kibbutz Samar on 24-Apr with one in the Ovda Road junction Acacia Grove along Highway 12 on 27-Apr. Further birds along Highway 12 were noted at KM64 and KM66 on 02-May and at KM64 on 04-May. Yahel Cemetery had two on 01-May and the wadi at KM82 had one on 04-May. All were of the nominate race.
139	Blackstart	Surprisingly lower than expected numbers in the drier wadi's but still easy enough to find in Holland Park, Wadi Ye'elon and KM82, with trip peak count of seven at Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr
140	Northern Wheatear	Two were at KM94 on 25-Apr with at Ovda Valley on 01-May

141	Black-eared Wheatear	Four stunners were along the valley at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr with a songster at the top
145	Isabelline Wheatear	Remarkably only one was seen at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
146	Desert Wheatear	A singing male was at Mt. Karken (restricted) on 28-Apr and two distant birds were at Nizanna on 07-May
147	Mourning Wheatear	A fine singing male was at Se'ifim Plains on 26-Apr with juveniles and two separate adults at Mt. Karken (restricted) on 28-Apr
148	White-crowned Black Wheatear	Only found this year in the Eilat Mountains with a pair regularly seen around the main viewpoint with additional individuals scattered along highway 12.
149	Common Myna	Three were at Nizzana on 07-May and 2+ were in the Shivta Road Grove the same day
150	Tristram's Starling	Two in Holland Park 23-Apr, two at Kibbutz Samar on 24-Apr with five there on 30-Apr, one in Park Shahamon on 26-Apr and a pair in the Eilat Mountains on 03-May
151	Golden Oriole	A male was in the wadi at KM82 on 27-Apr, 04-May and 05-May whilst two were in Wadi Ye'elon on 01-May and two at the KM20 Salt Pans on 02-May. Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park had a male on 03-May and a female type was in the Acacia Grove at KM47 along highway 12 on 04-May
152	Graceful Warbler	Common and widespread, especially noticeable around the Eilat Bird Park
153	Scrub Warbler	Two were in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and 05-May whilst a family party of four were on Se'ifim Plains on 26-Apr
154	Reed Warbler	Yotvata Sewage Pools held at least three singing males on 22-Apr and 24-Apr whilst three were heard at the KM19 Sewage Pool on 23-Apr. An out of place individual was in an Acacia Grove along Highway 12 on 27-Apr
155	Great Reed Warbler	One was seen in the hand at the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May
156	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	1-2 were noted at most sites visited, town parks, wadi's, isolated Acacia Groves etc, from 22-Apr to 05-May with peak counts of seven at Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and 05-May with 11 there on 01-May and peak trip count of 16 in the wadi at KM82
157	Olive-tree Warbler	Typically elusive songsters. Two were in Wadi Ye'elon on 01-May with another there on 05-May, one in the wadi at KM82 on 04-May and a final bird at the Shivta Road junction Grove on 07-May

158	Upchers Warbler	After a few suspected birds seen in Wadi Ye'elon finally nailed one at the north end of the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May where it was seen doing it's 'swishy' tail thing
159	Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	Two in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr with one there on 01-May
160	Willow Warbler	One was in the Southeast 'Dakar Street' Park on 26-Apr and another was in the Acacia Grove at KM47 along Highway 12 on 02-May
161	Wood Warbler	Excellent showing of this superb species this year. Most encounters were of 1-2 birds but they were from numerous locations between 24-Apr and 02-May, thereafter it seems passage had come to an end: this fine phyllosc was seen in Canada, South West 'Dakar Street', Mish'ol HaGil'adim Parks and at the Eilat Bird Park as well as in drier habitats where there were Acacia's such as Wadi Ye'elon, Neot Semadar Sewage Pools and in the Acacia Groves along Highway 12. A fun day was had when just one Acacia in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr held seven birds. A conservative total of 26 was logged.
162	Barred Warbler	Following the first at Tel Creot on 22-Apr singles were seen at Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and on 01-May, Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 04-May, in Abda Grove along highway 12 on 27-Apr, at Sharhut Cliffs on 04-May and at the KM82 wadi on 04-May when three were seen
163	Blackcap	Commonest warbler encountered, especially in the Acacia Wadi's north of Eilat, though some of the town parks were pretty busy also. Wadi Ye'elon held 150+ on 25-Apr and around 200+ on 01-May. The wadi at KM82 had 30+ on 27-Apr but had increased to 250+ on 04-May but a clear departure overnight saw only 12 next day. 15-30+ were seen in the Highway 12 Acacia Groves, at Kibbutz Samar, Neot Semadar Sewage Pools and in Central Park in Eilat
164	Garden Warbler	Scarce with singles at the Eilat Bird Park on 24-Apr and 06-May, Wadi Ye'elon 25-Apr and Central Park 29-Apr whilst two were in the wadi at KM82 on 04-May
165	Common Whitethroat	Singles at Wadi Ye'elon on 01-May and at the Acacia Grove at KM67 along Highway 12 on 04-May
166	Spectacled Warbler	Two were at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
167	Ruppell's Warbler	I came across a male in one of the magic bushes in Holland Park early evening of 29-Apr, which is remarkably late for a migrant in southern Israel
168	Lesser Whitethroat	Fairly common and widespread but not as common as in previous years with peak being 30+ in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr
169	Eastern Orphee Warbler	One at Yotvata Sewage Pools on 24-Apr, four along Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and a final bird at the KM82 wadi on 27-Apr

170	Collared Flycatcher	One of highlights of the trip were the multiple Collared Flycatcher sightings. Canada Park had a single male on 24-Apr, a male was in the upper Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr, two males and female were in Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park on 26-Apr with a fine male lingering till 30-Apr. Females were in Corner Park on 26-Apr, two females in Shahamon Park on 26-Apr, a female at Kibbutz Samar on 30-Apr and female at the Acacia Grove at KM70 along Highway 12 on 02-May
171	Pied Flycatcher	Complementing the Collared Flycatchers were the Pieds but unlike Collared all bar one immature male all were females. The first female was a Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr with Park Shahamon logging a 2cy male and a female on 26-Apr. Females were then logged in Central Park, Mish'ol HaGil'adim Park, two there on 30-Apr, Neot Semadar Sewage Pool, nearly all of the Highway roadside Acacia Groves and at Kibbutz Samar.
172	Spotted Flycatcher	Seen widely from 24-Apr to 07-May but not in any large numbers with 1-2 seen at multiple locations with four at the Shivta Road Junction on 07-May being the peak single sight count.
173	Palestine Sunbird	Two males were at Kibbutz Samar on 24-Apr with total of one of these still there on 30-Apr. A male was present at the Neot Semadar Sewage Pools on 01-May. The species was oddly absent from Holland Park this spring.
174	Indian Silverbill	Presumably the same two were seen in Holland Park on 23-Apr and 29-Apr whilst ten were around the north end of the Eilat Bird Park on 06-May
175	Trumpeter Finch	Three were seen on the Se'ifim Plains whilst stalking the Mourning Wheatear there on 26-Apr. Four were at Mt. Karken (restricted) on 28-Apr
176	Black-headed Bunting	Found a superb pair in the wadi at KM82 on 04-May
177	Ortolan Bunting	Three showed well close to the road at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr but thereafter only singles were seen at KM94 on 25-Apr, in Wadi Ye'elon on 25-Apr and in the wadi at KM82 on 27-Apr and 04-May
178	Corn Bunting	One was heard singing at Mt. Amasa when I got out of the car on 22-Apr
179	Pale Rock Sparrow	Mt. Amasa had one high up the scree on 22-Apr
181	Rock Sparrow	At least three were along the valley at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
182	Spanish Sparrow	One of the surprises of the trip was the near total absence of Spanish Sparrows with only a single singing male in residence at the Uvda road Junction Acacia Grove on 27-Apr and 02-May

Non-Avian

Cape Hare	Resident in Holland Park with between 3-6 seen. Additionally, one was seen at the wadi at KM82 on 04-May
Fox	A few were seen at the Uvda Valley, in Holland Park and at Nizanna
Jackal	One at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
Dorcas Gazelle	Eight were at KM94 on 25-Apr with singles then at Se'ifim Plains on 26-Apr, the Uvda Valley on 01-May and KM82 wadi on 04-May whilst 15 were at Nizanna on 07-May
Mountain Gazelle	At least seven on the hillsides at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
Egyptian Hedgehog	One was seen trundling around during a short-lived spotlighting session at the Yotvata Fields on 01-May
Egyptian Mastador	Two were noted at the KM82 wadi on 27-Apr
Field Horned Viper	A fine individual was in Wadi Sagi near Mt. Karken (restricted) on 28-Apr
Desert Tortoise	A very cute baby was nearly trodden on at Tel Creot on 22-Apr. Was moved so no further danger of as mishap happening
Crimson Speckled	Quite a few of these moths were seen from the desert wadi's such as Wadi Ye'elon
Striped Hawk Moth	Several stunning caterpillars of this species were found in the wadi at KM84 04-May and 05-May
Unidentified Blue Butterflies	Eight were along one striped of grass in a low wadi at KM94 on 25-Apr
Dark-grass Blue	One of a few small butterflies that was photographed on 26-Apr
Jerusalem Fritillary	at least ten were at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr

Little Tiger Butterfly	Once I got my eye in on these again they were quite widespread around the north end of the Eilat Bird Park
Levantine Marbled White (<i>Melanargia gulanthea titea</i>)	Common Mt. Amasa with a minimum of 20+ there on 22-Apr
Painted Lady	Following 20+ at Mt. Amasa / Tel Creot on 22-Apr this migrant species was seen in many southern Arava locations, generally in small numbers. On 07-May at the Shivta Road Junction near Nizanna several hundred were present in the Grove there
Plain Tiger Butterfly	A few were seen but not always recorded but there were individuals noted at Kibbutz Samar, Wadi Ye'elon and in Central Park
Small Skipper	Two were at Mt. Amasa on 22-Apr
Blue-spotted Arab	Very common butterfly around Holland Park and the Eilat Bird Park
Red-veined Dropwing	5+ were at the disused shopping centre in the pool behind the buildings at Yahel
Black Pennant	A cracking dragonfly that I managed to track down in cooling conditions early evening at Holland Park on 06-May
Long-faced Grasshopper (<i>Truxalis Grandis</i>)	One of these bizarre grasshoppers found on 22-Apr at Mt. Amasa
Desert Mantis	One found on the outskirts of Ktura Sewage Pools on 04-May

MAPS

Only for area's covered in this trip report.

- **Mt. Amasa**

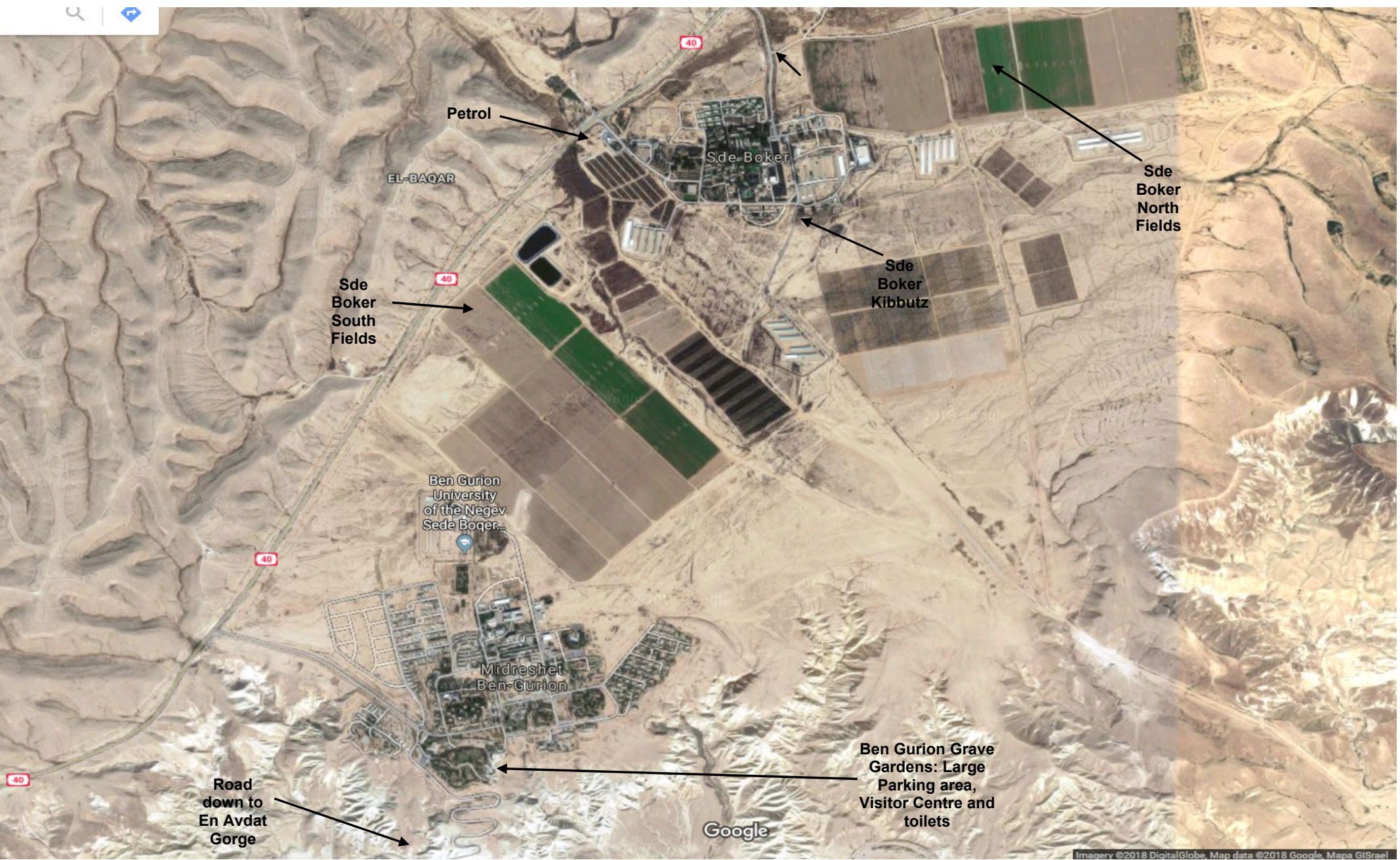


Negev

- Nizanna and Kmelin Sewage Ponds (*sewage ponds no longer in existence: May-2023*)



- Sde Boker and Ben Gurion's Memorial Gardens



- The Southern Arava



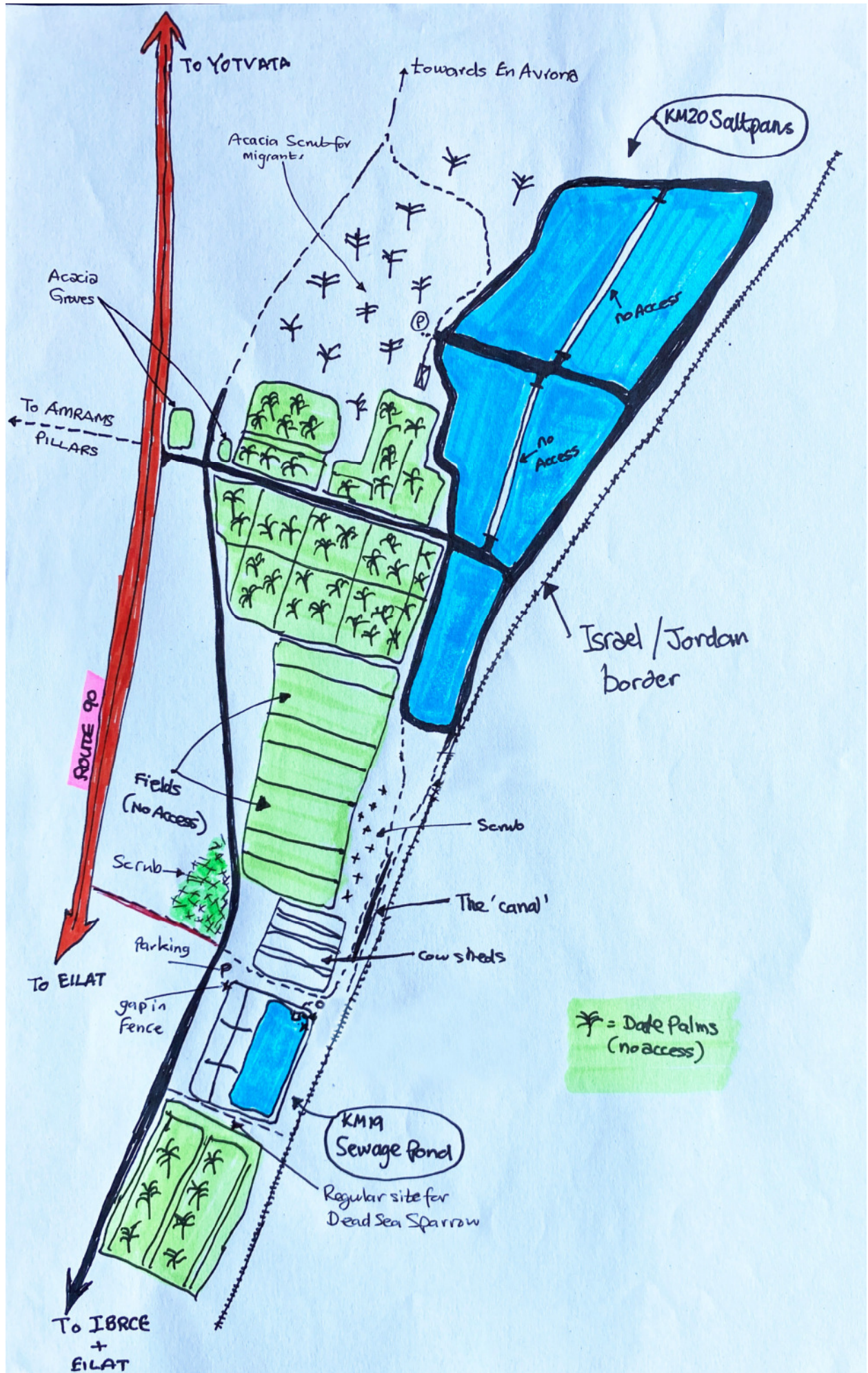
- Eilat Town, Parks, North Beach and Bird Park (IBRCE)



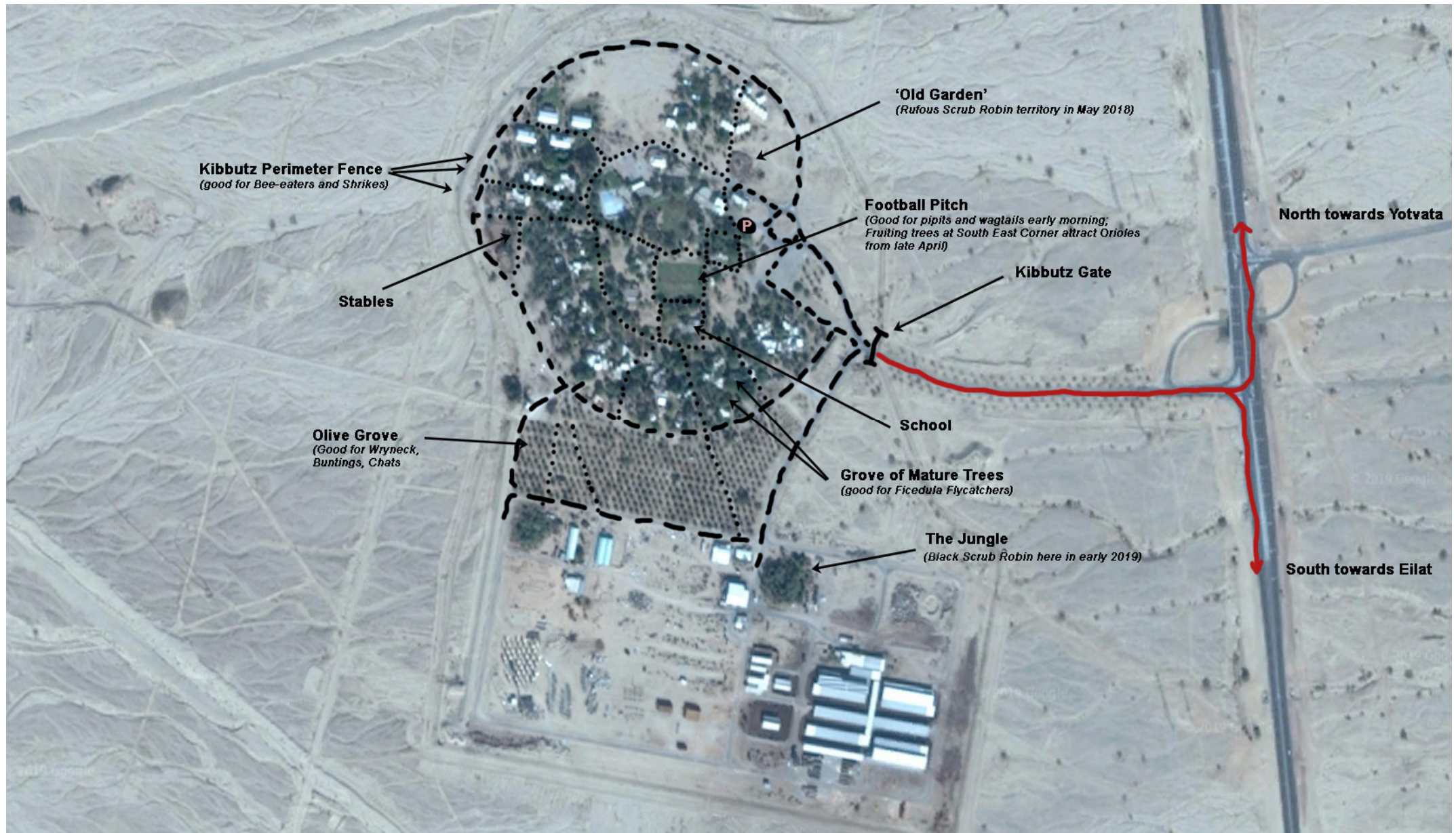
- Eilat South Beach



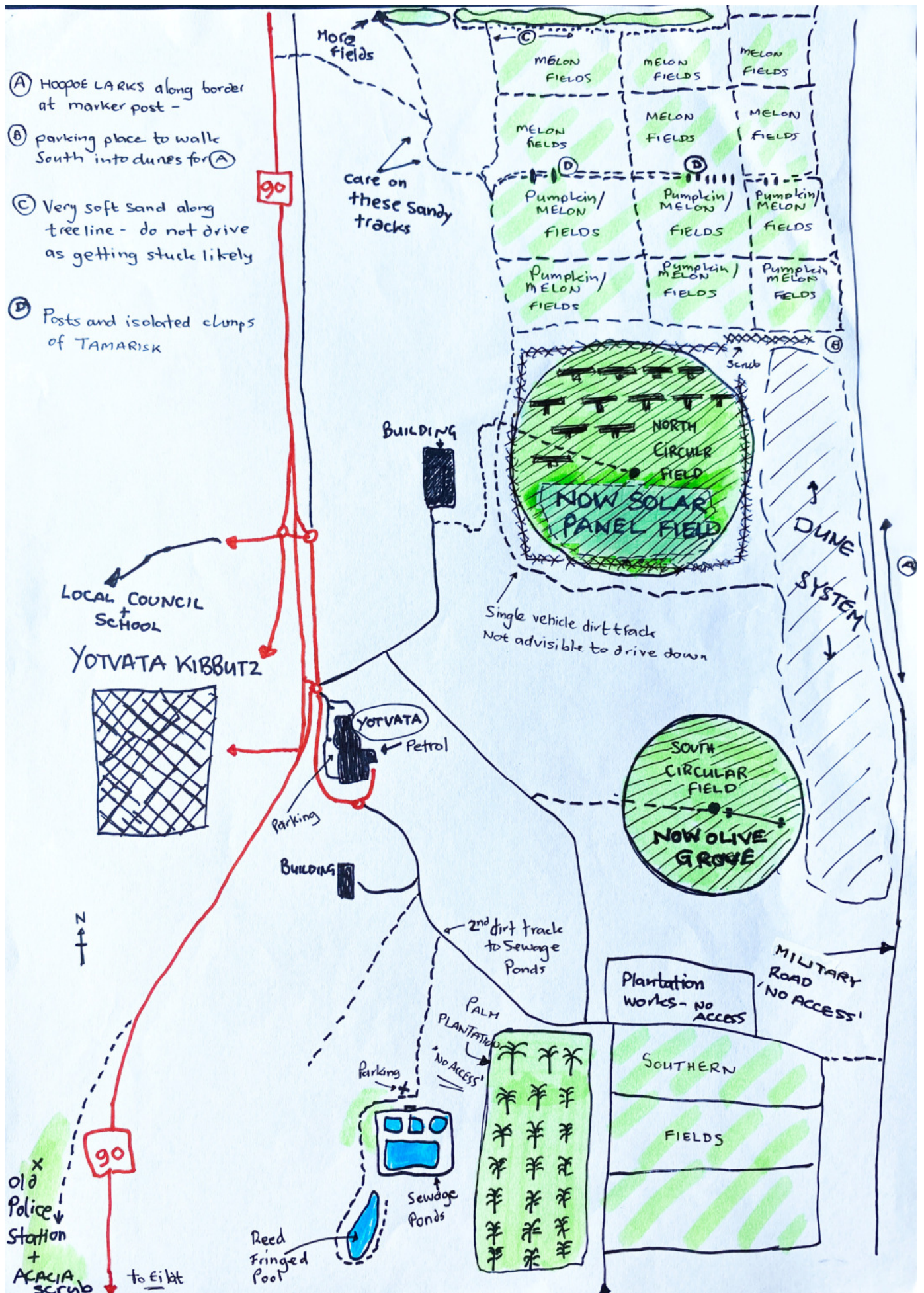
- KM19 Sewage Pond and KM20 Salt Pans



- Kibbutz Samar



- Yotvata



- Wadi Yahel / Ye'elon

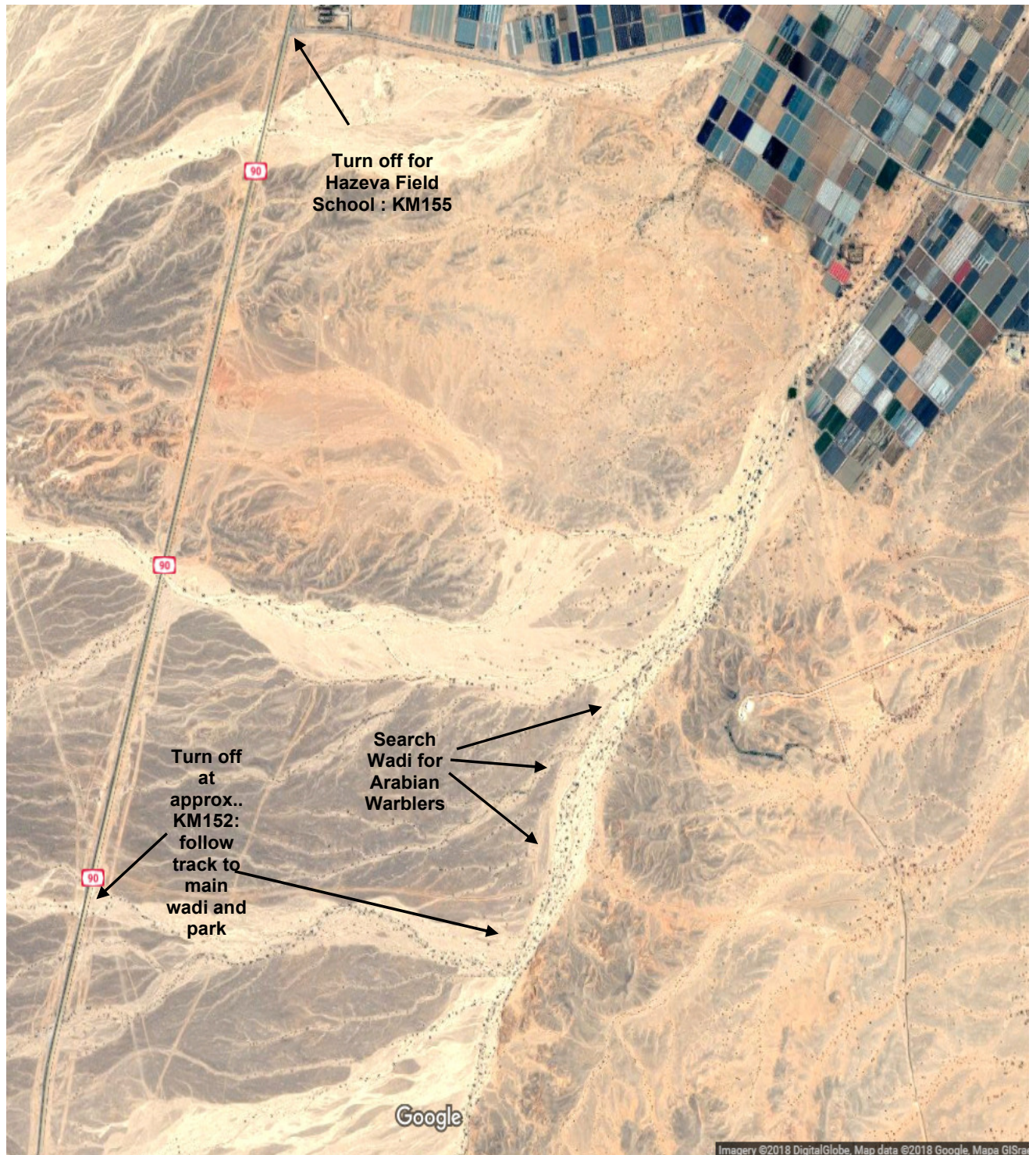


- Ovda Valley



The Northern Arava

- Hazeva



Bird and Wildlife photo's

A few select images from this year's trip



Oriental Honey Buzzard, Eilat Bird Park, May 2023



Levant's Sparrowhawk, Eilat Bird Park, April 2023



Red-footed Falcon, female, KM20 Salt Pans, May 2023



Broad-billed Sandpiper, KM20 Salt Pans, May 2023



Collared Pratincole, KM20 Salt Pans, April 2023



Honey Buzzard migration, Eilat Mountains, May 2023



Honey Buzzard migration, Eilat Mountains, May 2023



Black Scrub Robin, Kibbutz Samar, April 2023



Hoopoe Lark, KM94 / Hemda, April 2023



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Ktura Sewage Pools, May 2023



Namaqua Dove, Holland Park, May 2023



Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, Mt. Amasa, April 2023



Mourning Wheatear, Se'ifim Plains, May 2023



Black-headed Bunting, KM84 Wadi, May 2023



Collared Flycatcher, upper Wadi Ye'elon, April 2023



Field Horned Viper, Mt. Karken, April 2023



White-tailed Lapwing, Yotvata Sewage Pools, April 2023