

**ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO EGYPT**  
*Birds & History*

**13 – 24 November 2009**



**Leader: Roger Lawrence**

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### A Personal Diary

#### **Friday 13 November**

It was just four of us that met at Heathrow's vast new Terminal 5 building on a wet, wild and windy late autumn afternoon. Formalities were quick and easy thanks to the array of electronic check-in machines and the many fast bag drop points and we were soon in the huge Departure Hall and getting some late lunch. After being transported by train, we boarded our plane on time only to be told that someone had to be removed and their luggage located and off-loaded. Consequently take off was delayed by almost an hour and it would be past midnight before we arrived in Cairo.

#### **Saturday 14 November**

We landed 50 minutes late but immigration control and the purchase of visas, for those members of the group who had not obtained them in advance, was swift. Our meeter-and-greeter, Mohammed was waiting for us and quickly got us out of the terminal and introduced us to Abdulla, who would accompany us throughout our tour, and our Cairo minibus driver, Hossam. We loaded the luggage and set off for our hotel. We did not get far. The traffic outside the airport was in gridlock. Horns blasted, men hung out of car windows waving the red, white and black national flags and whistled and shouted. It was 1.00am, what was going on? We soon found our answer. Later Egypt was to play an important World Cup qualifying soccer match against Algeria here in Cairo. The rival team were staying overnight in an airport hotel and the intention of the crowd was to prevent them from getting any sleep – not very sporting!

Consequently by the time we had got through the traffic and checked-in to our large and comfortable hotel on Zamalek Island in the Nile it was 02.15 and breakfast was at 07.00. Our tour was to start with some birding on the island.

Despite a very short night we all appeared on time for breakfast but unfortunately Abdulla and Hossam were held up in heavy traffic. However it was a short drive to The Gezira Sporting Club that occupies a third of the island and was laid out for horse racing and polo by the British Army at the beginning of the last century. Here we were to meet another member of the ground agents' team, Mindy Baha El Din, an American who has lived in Cairo for 20 years and is married to probably Egypt's top birder. As we were late she had already had a look around this green haven in the centre of this vast city of over 18 million people and said there was "just the usual stuff". This turned out to be more than 10 Eurasian Hoopoes prodding about in the grass all quite unconcerned by our presence, trees and shrubs full of Chiffchaffs, Common Bulbuls, Hooded Crows, Laughing Doves, a lone Western Cattle Egret and White Wagtails strutting about on the lawns. Overhead noisy Rose-ringed and one or two Alexandrine Parakeets flew about and we saw our first Swallows of the Egyptian race *savignii* that have brick-red underparts. This is a possible candidate for a future 'split' as the endemic Egyptian Swallow since it is slightly smaller than 'our' bird and is resident all year round.

After an hour or so here we said farewell to Mindy and drove through the heavy Cairo traffic to the fabulous Museum of Egyptian Antiquities where we met our cultural guide Mariam who had already purchased our entry tickets so we avoided the crowds. To try to see all of the 136,000 exhibits would take several months so Mariam's encyclopaedic knowledge was invaluable. She skilfully led us through the throng, starting with artefacts relating to the First Kingdom. I have to say that the exhibits, although superb, were rather disorganised and not labelled very clearly but the fact that they dated back to 3,100 BC was breathtaking. A new museum is under construction at Giza close to the pyramids and is due to be completed in 2015. The skill with which the statuary was carved was extremely impressive. On we went sampling the highlight of the Middle and New Kingdoms. A special room is devoted to Tutankhamen, the boy king who ruled for only nine years. Birds figured prominently in many of the frescos, one in particular showing waterbirds, and

clearly depicting three species of goose, Red-breasted, Greater White-fronted and Bean. Ibises, vultures and even Squacco Herons were all quite obvious.

We ate lunch on board a ship, The Nile City, which is permanently moored on the Nile and is really a floating restaurant. As we boarded our first Squacco Herons stood on the riverside mud and we paused to watch a White-throated Kingfisher perching watchfully on the mooring rope of another ship. There were several Lesser Pied Kingfishers, the commonest and most abundant kingfisher in Egypt and, once we were seated outside on deck, three Whiskered Terns flew past, one still in full breeding plumage.

After a very meaty lunch we drove to Saqqara where the Egyptian royalty of the Old Kingdom were buried. The very early step pyramid, pre-dating the Great Pyramids of Giza, and the funerary complex covers seven kilometres of the desert making this the largest archaeological site in Egypt. King Zoser's (or Djoser) step pyramid, built in the 27<sup>th</sup> century BC, started the age of pyramid building. Once a roosting place for the Pharaoh Eagle Owl but sadly no longer, the best birds that the site could now offer us were Hooded Crows and Crested Larks. After a visit to the new Imhotep Museum, completed since my visit two years ago, we drove back through a city full of people tense and excited at the prospect of 'the big match' being played later this evening. We followed the large and very dirty Maryottaya Canal but despite the rubbish and filth strewn on its banks, it was full of Little Egrets and Squacco Herons with more than 20 Lesser Pied Kingfishers perched on any available overhead wires.

We were the only diners in the hotel restaurant as kick-off time approached, and the waiters did not seem to be concentrating on their allotted tasks. At 19.32 there was great excitement outside – Egypt had scored the first of their two goals. Sadly for them they required three goals clear to qualify. There would have to be a replay.

### **Sunday 15 November**

Although we had eaten breakfast by 07.00 and Abdulla had arrived, Hossam and our minibus were stuck in traffic and did not reach our hotel until 07.30.

We headed southwest for 120 km or so. It was very slow going at first but, once clear of the Cairo logjams, we sped along through the desert towards our first birding destination of the day. At a police checkpoint we were assigned a police escort. Security in Egypt is taken quite seriously, and even the hotels have x-ray machines to check bags, and sniffer dogs to check the vehicles.

Lake Qarun is in the Fayoum Depression. This huge salt lake is shallow, averaging no more than five metres deep and its surface is 43 metres below sea level. Hossam pulled in to a roadside vehicle repair shack and proceeded to pump up our front nearside tyre using their airline. Our bus had a slow puncture but Hassam wanted to get us to our birding spot before changing the wheel.

We walked down a causeway to get close to the water where there were several waders and a very large flock of gulls. Once our scopes were set up birds came thick and fast – Greater Ringed Plovers, Spotted Redshanks, a Marsh Sandpiper, a Temminck's and several Little Stints but best of all in halophytic vegetation on the other side of the causeway, two White-tailed Lapwings, not a common species in Egypt. It was sharp-eyed Beth who first spotted them, the first of many nice birds that she would find for us during the tour. Most of the gulls were Slender-billed, some still retaining their pink-flushed breasts of breeding plumage. There were fewer Black-headed Gulls among them.

Pulling onto the verge at a marina we added Black-winged Stilt to our list. From the minibus that we used as a mobile hide, we sorted through the many Little Stints adding a few new waders before driving on to a huge area of fishponds where we added Dunlin and Curlew Sandpiper to our list. Sally spotted a Southern Grey Shrike on overhead wires. It flew down onto the road ahead of us then disappeared from our view. We also had good views of an Egyptian Mongoose emerging from a concrete pipe by the roadside.

Retracing our route, we headed back towards Cairo for our lunch leaving our armed police guard at the checkpoint. We ate in a popular tourist restaurant, Andrea's, not far from the Giza pyramids, our cultural destination for the afternoon. The meal was delicious. Several dips and freshly baked pitta bread were followed by half a spit roasted chicken and all the more appreciated was the locally brewed Sakkara beer,

since no alcoholic beverages were available in our hotel.

After a leisurely lunch we moved on to the Pyramids of Giza, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Dominated by the enigmatic Sphinx and the Great Pyramid of Cheops, the oldest and biggest of the group of pyramids, this site is a magnet for thousands of tourists from all around the globe. Mariam had accompanied us to Lake Qarun but was just a bystander while we birded. Here she came into her own. The adjacent Cheops Solar Boat Museum was fascinating. It contained the 43 metre long boat recovered from a pit in 1954 and built from cedarwood imported from Lebanon. It was originally held together with sycamore 'rivets' and rope made from halfa grass. The reconstruction of the boat from 1,200 pieces of amazingly preserved wood took 14 years and is very impressive. The exact purpose of these solar boats is still a matter for debate among archaeologists. It could be a funary craft to take the pharaoh through the Underworld or alternatively it might be a craft to take the sun god Amun Ra on his daily journey across the sky.

As the sun began to set we made our way back to our minibus for the drive back to our hotel through Cairo's dreadful traffic. Hossam however, knowing the city streets like the back of his hand, took many back doubles and got us back to Zamalek Island relatively quickly – a good driver here is worth his weight in Nubian gold!

Back at our hotel we had a delicious meal of sea bass, veal escalopes and followed by the best strawberry ice cream any of us had ever eaten.

### **Monday 16 November**

It was an early departure for the airport as our flight to Abu Simbel was scheduled for 07.00. Fortunately it was a swift drive with little traffic on the road. Although there were only five of us we were put on two separate flights but both flying at more or less the same time. We met up again at the airport at Aswan where we had to change planes but found that the flight onwards was delayed by an hour. We finally arrived at Abu Simbel at 11.30 but it was only a short drive to our lovely quiet hotel on the shore of Lake Nasser, quite a contrast to the noise and bustle of Cairo.

A Yellow-billed Kite was our first bird soaring above us as we got out of the minibus and turning in the bright sunshine to give good views of its bill and quite rufous tail. This species, now split from Black Kite, is an Egyptian resident while Black Kites are migrants here. A flock of a dozen Brown-necked Ravens circled in the sky above and, in the hotels extensive and pleasant gardens a Graceful Prinia showed well. Lesser Whitethroats 'tacked' everywhere and were far more confiding than this species is in the UK. They were even feeding on the ground. There were plenty of Chiffchaffs too, mainly migrants passing through.

After a very quick visit to our cottage style rooms we set off for a boat trip on Lake Nasser. The small craft was moored by a Nubian house (this southern part of Egypt is Nubia) and was just a couple of minutes drive away. The hundred metres or so from the bus to the boat took quite a while to walk as there were so many birds to look at. A fine male Desert Wheatear, three Bluethroats of the white spotted race *cyaneacula* of central and southern Europe, more Chiffchaffs and Lesser Whitethroats all fed low in tamarisk scrub or on the ground making viewing easy.

It was a warm, sunny and tranquil afternoon perfect for a boat cruise. We shared this part of the huge man-made lake with just a few fishermen out in small boats checking their nets. We were out for two and a half hours and had taken a huge packed lunch with us to save time. Slowly we glided along the shore from bay to bay, not a sound but for the splashing of the waves and were able to get close to the birds. Egyptian Geese, the 'real thing' and not the feral birds we see in the UK of course, a flock of about 60 Garganey, singles of Eurasian Wigeon and Northern Pintail, seven Eurasian Spoonbills, two Glossy Ibis, a White Stork, six Black-crowned Night-herons, several waders including two more White-tailed Lapwings plus three species of sandpiper, Ruff, Temminck's and Little Stints. There was constantly something different to look at. Near habitation Pale Crag Martins swooped about. Two Desert Wheatears chased about and there were two subspecies of Yellow Wagtail *feldegg* and *dombrowskii*, although the former, Black-headed Wagtail is now considered by many taxonomists to be a full species. The latter is a Romanian breeder. Possibly our best sighting was a pair of African Pied Wagtails, very smart black and white birds at the extreme northern edge of their range here. We also saw a small Nile Monitor on a beach as we cruised.

We got back to our rooms at 16.30 and had a short rest before leaving again for the Son et Lumière at the magical temple site. It had already been a long, but very exciting day.

The sound and light show was truly spectacular. Seating was arranged in front of the artificial rock face and the two temples, one the great Sun Temple built during the reign of Ramses II to impress the conquered Nubians and another dedicated to his favourite wife Nefertari in the heyday of the New Kingdom some 13 centuries BC. In the 1960's as the waters of Lake Nasser rose, the temple had to be raised some 210 metres back from and 61 metres above the valley floor then reassembled to avoid being lost forever. UNESCO organised the salvaging of these and other Nubian monuments this at a cost of US\$40 million between 1964 and 1968, an engineering feat on a par with the building of the pyramids.

As we walked from the site entrance to the temples a White-crowned Wheatear flew away from us and Pale Crag Martins circled the rock face as the sun went down.

The laser show was lasted just 20 minutes and although the commentary was in Japanese, headsets gave our commentary in English. The broadcast language is always in that of the majority of the audience. Only the constant flash of cameras spoiled the spectacle. We would have to wait until tomorrow morning to see these magnificent monuments in daylight.

The buffet meal back at the hotel offered almost anything one might wish to eat. There certainly seems little chance of retiring to bed hungry on this tour!

### **Tuesday 17 November**

As we had agreed before retiring to our rooms last evening, I was out on the terrace overlooking the lake at 06.00 and anyone who wished to join me could do so. Everyone did. Lesser Whitethroats and Chiffchaffs abounded, busily looking for insects to increase their body fat before moving onward to complete their migration. Forty minutes pre-breakfast birding on a cool but beautiful morning passed in no time and we saw some nice birds. Inadvertently we trespassed onto a local's 'patio' in front of his simple hut in order to see two Senegal Thick-knees (or Knock-knees as one of our number christened them!) and, in so doing woke him up. We quickly apologised and moved on.

We had eaten breakfast, repacked our bags and were waiting by our bus with a new driver for the day at 07.00 but there was no sign of Abdulla. He had overslept but soon joined us and we were on our way back to the temples, this time to see them properly in daylight. It was just a three or four minute drive so we were there before 07.30.

Pale Crag Martins flew in front of the great Sun Temple. Some consider this to be a subspecies of Rock Martin (Clements et al) while other taxonomists think it is a full species. We also saw a single House Martin among the many *savignii* type Barn Swallows and there were one or two white-bellied swallows much more familiar to us in Britain.

We had a guide to explain the history of these two magnificent temples. The façade is dominated by four twenty metre high colossi of a seated Ramses 11 and are remarkably complete, although one was slightly damaged by the great earthquake of 27 BC. To move this monument it was cut into 1,041 blocks, each weighing up to 30 tons, and because the sandstone from which it was carved was brittle, resin had to be injected into it first. The orientation at the original site was such that the sun's rays would shine deep into the Holy of Holies on Ramses' birthday and on the anniversary of his coronation.

After entering this and the adjacent temple of his favourite queen Nefertari and having a little time to look for any resident birds we returned to our hotel to do any final packing. We then set off to join the convoy of vehicles due to drive north the 170 km to Aswan at 10.00 but not before Beth had found a fine White-crowned Wheatear in a gully by the coach park to show to Philip.

Birding en route was impossible as we drove through the desert as vehicles are not allowed to stop. We arrived at our destination in the city of Aswan in time for lunch aboard our cruise ship, the Nile Admiral moored along the Nile waterfront. This luxurious vessel was to be home for the next four nights. Our very comfortable and quite spacious cabins were on the upper deck and close to the sun deck where we would

spend a great deal of time birding during the slow cruise downstream to Luxor.

After yet another delicious buffet lunch we went out onto the sun deck for an hour's birding before a boat trip on the Nile. We were to remain moored here until tomorrow at lunchtime. As well as the ubiquitous Squacco Herons, Little Egrets, Grey Herons, Egyptian Geese and Lesser Pied Kingfishers there were White-winged, Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns, Black-tailed Godwits, a Marsh Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilts and even an Osprey flying past. Using our scopes it was easy to point out all these birds for everyone to study at their leisure.

At 15.00 we had our own small motor craft to take us close to the water birds on the banks and swimming on the river. The highlights of this excellent voyage were a flock of Ferruginous Pochard that we got very close to before they flew off, good views of a Mangrove Heron (or Striated or Green Heron according to which field guide one uses), a nice male Little Bittern, and a couple of Purple Herons. We had a close encounter with a female Western Marsh Harrier perched in a bush close to the water that took no notice of our intrusion into her territory and a Clamorous Reed Warbler, forever a 'Glamorous' Reed Warbler from now on after one of our number misheard me! There were also seven Senegal 'Knock-knees' on a rocky outcrop, again showing no real fear of our close approach.

We were back aboard our rather larger craft by 17.00 as the sun set. We had not wasted much of today's daylight! There was still time to relax and tidy up before we met in the bar to call the day's log.

### **Wednesday 18 November**

Just after 06.00 we assembled on the sun deck to start the day in the time-honoured way. Although we were still moored along Aswan's waterfront we were fortunate not to be stacked three or four deep as many other cruise ships close to us were. There were two small reedy islets with muddy margins opposite our mooring and these were packed with birds at first light. We noticed straight away that the Nile's level was higher than it had been last evening. Clearly more water was being released for irrigation from the High Dam. However, there was still enough muddy edge to hold waders and Purple Swamphens. These were the widely split green-backed form, African Purple Gallinule [*Porphyrio (porphyrio) madagascariensis*] looking very comical plodding in the mud with their huge bright pink legs and feet. There were three species of terns and a pair of Common Teal, the first we had seen. Our elevated position made for ideal views of the white rumps of the White-winged Terns as they swooped below us close to the ship.

After breakfast we left the ship with a small group of non-birding tourists and our cultural guide for the cruise, Maged. A large coach transported us for a quick look at the Aswan High Dam first crossing the Old Dam, built by the British between 1898 and 1902. When it was first constructed it was the biggest dam in the world being 50 metres high and two kilometres long and has 180 sluice gates, now redundant.

The High Dam is really impressive. In 1952 Colonel Nasser decided that the irrigation demands and hydro-electricity requirements of a fast growing Egyptian population required a new dam and greater storage capacity so he turned to the USSR for help. The construction, begun in 1960 and completed in 1971, was built six km further upstream. Lake Nasser is now in places 180 metres deep and has a surface area of 6,000 square kilometres. The benefits to Egypt are considerable with almost another 700,000 acres coming into irrigated cultivation while the hydro-electric power generated has increased the country's industrial capacity by 30%. It is the resident Nubians who have been the losers as their land was inundated and their homes submerged. Also the silt that the annual flood used to spread on the floodplain no longer comes so more and more artificial fertilizer is required. As we approached the tourists' viewing area, Maged interrupted his concise and excellent lesson on Egypt's fascinating history to point out a Nile Crocodile in the lake close by.

Next we drove to the 'new' island of Philae on which stands the Temple of Isis. This is another monument rescued from the rising waters of Lake Nasser and another of UNESCO's contributions to the nation and mankind. It was raised between 1972 and 1980. To reach the temple, constructed over a period of 800 years by Ptolemaic and Roman rulers of Egypt, a shuttle service of dozens of small motorboats operates. This is another magnificent temple with impressive façade or pylon and an inner hypostyle (pillared) hall. Before we boarded, Beth spotted two Green Bee-eaters on wires some distance away.

We returned to the Nile Admiral for lunch during which we set sail to cruise to our next mooring at Kom Ombo. Birding on the sun deck occupied the afternoon. Even though we were moving it was still easy to use our telescopes and we had a very gentle and pleasant time watching skeins of Great Cormorants and Western Cattle Egrets flying to roost plus all the now familiar water birds too. We even managed to identify a Little Bittern and a Mangrove Heron for we often sailed quite close to the shore and we saw our first Great Egret, not a common bird here.

It was almost dark by the time we arrived at Kom Ombo, 30 kilometres downstream from Aswan, where there were a huge number of cruise ships already moored and stacked up to five deep. We could see the vast riverside temple crowded with tourists long before we reached our mooring.

We had to moor in one of these stacks of ships. To reach the shore we had to pass through the reception areas of four other ships. Maged always carried a rolled umbrella and called “umbrella group, umbrella group” to keep us all together with him. It was quite dark by the time we got ashore but the Ptolemaic temple of Haroeris and Sobek was fairly well lit so viewing was still possible at night. Unlike most Egyptian temples its façade is bisymmetrical with twin entrances, one side being dedicated to the falcon-headed god Haroeris, an elder version of the other falcon-headed god Horus, while the crocodile-headed god Sobek and his wife dominate the other side. The crowds were enormous but the cries of “umbrella group” ensured our cohesion as a group. We were also shown a Nileometer, a sort of well used to measure the Nile’s flood level in order to know when to open the irrigation system and, possibly just as important, to judge how much tax the recipient farmers would have to pay.

Once safely back aboard ship a cocktail party had been organised before dinner at 19.30 in the ship’s bar but most attention was focussed on a giant TV screen. The replay between Egypt and Algeria was being televised and was already in progress in neighbouring Sudan. Algeria won 1-0 so seeing the end of Egypt’s World Cup bid for another year. During dinner we cruised on down towards Edfu where we arrived at midnight and moored for the night.

#### **Thursday 19 November**

It was just light enough to begin birding at 05.50 and our group were all on deck ten minutes later. Once again our mooring was perfectly located opposite another group of reed-fringed islets. Great flocks of White-winged Terns flew past in tight-packed groups of 60 or 70 birds, purposefully winging their way to their daytime feeding areas. Egyptian and a few bog standard Swallows circled the moored boats, flying really close to us as we stood on the sun deck, and with them were lone House and Sand Martins. All three ‘usual’ terns plus a Black Tern, a couple of Western Marsh Harriers and even four Bluethroats hopping about on the mud could easily be scoped from this wonderful vantage point.

After breakfast there was time for a little more birding from the deck before our cultural group met and “Umbrella Man” took us into Edfu and to the Temple of Horus, the falcon-headed god. Although dating from the Ptolemaic era, this massive temple was built in the Pharaonic style. The temple was half buried in sand until it was excavated in the 1860’s and the Hypostyle Hall had been lived in by local people until that time. The construction spanned a long period, the Hypostyle Hall having been built during the reign of Ptolemy VII. Two huge granite Falcons stand at the entrance to the Pylon that was completed during the reign of Ptolemy IX.

We were back on board the Nile Admiral by 11.00 and spent the rest of the daylight hours cruising on down to Esna so birding from the sun deck was on the agenda for the rest of the day. We added Little Grebe, saw another Great Egret and encountered occasional rafts of ducks. Most were Northern Shoveler, but there were also Eurasian Wigeon, a huge raft of Tufted Ducks and Common Pochard and a scattering of Ferruginous Pochard. A single Great White Pelican on the water was close enough to see the bare pink skin around its eye just to ensure that it was not one of the other possible species.

At Esna we had to negotiate two barrages across the Nile, the first constructed in 1906. The other, built in the 1990’s and locally known as “the Electricity Bridge,” is used for hydroelectricity generation and was built by the Italians. Slowly and carefully we edged into one of two locks in the second barrage while vendors on the side threw scarves, table cloths etc. up to our fellow passengers to try to make a sale.

The Nile was probably eight to 10 metres lower downstream from the lock. We were soon on our way again sailing slowly towards Luxor (Thebes). On deck, as the sun set in a fiery sky, a few swifts passed over but there was not enough light to be sure whether they were Common or Pallid. We arrived and moored in Luxor in the dark while we were at dinner. It was 'Egyptian Night' on board and many passengers, including yours truly, had dressed up, all very jolly.

During our cruise downstream this afternoon we had seen three Black-winged Kites, at least a dozen Western Marsh Harriers, a Mangrove Heron and even a Eurasian Hoopoe on floating vegetation at the lock in Esna while we waited to go through.

### **Friday 20 November**

Our luck continued. We were, yet again, moored close to a reed-fringed islet and not were hemmed in by other vessels along the waterfront. Although only on deck for 40 minutes we still managed to add a new species to our list – a Red-rumped Swallow. Philip spotted a Eurasian Hoopoe in the gardens adjacent to our mooring before we went below for breakfast. Today would be mainly focussed on Egyptian history with no specific birding.

Our cultural group went off with Maged at 07.00 to reach one of the greatest archaeological sites in the world before it got too crowded – the Valley of the Kings. We crossed the Nile to the west bank. It was only 20 minutes drive but there were already crowds making their way to the entrance. Vehicles are not allowed into the valley itself and we were transported by 'train' to the main entrance. This arid valley cutting into the Theban Hills is dominated at its head by an impressive pyramid-shaped peak. This New Kingdom site in which 63 tombs have already been found represents the guaranteed entry for the dead pharaohs to eternal life after death. As we waited in the queue a dozen Brown-necked Ravens flew around the peaks and a fine Long-legged Buzzard drifted into view clearly showing its unbarred pink tail as it turned in the strong sunlight. There were also Green Bee-eaters on some overhead wires.

Our ticket entitled us to visit just three tombs and at any one time only about ten are available to visit, so we had to make a choice. With the now familiar call, our 'umbrella man' started us all off together by directing us into the tomb of Ramses IV. However, since lecturing is not permitted inside the tombs, he remained outside. In a long crocodile we all descended along the passageway cut into the mountainside, the walls of which were covered in frescos. These were originally coloured but the ravages of time and, nowadays the carbon dioxide and perspiration of tourists (averaging 2.8g per person while in the tomb), have left little of the original paint although this tomb has more than most. As we saw in the museum in Cairo, birds figured prominently in the hieroglyphics on the walls several species being easy to identify.

The party now split up but we opted for one of the smaller but most colourful tombs, that of Ramses I, founder of the XIX Dynasty. This has one of the shortest, but very steep corridors leading to the burial chamber but its great virtue is that the painting is still in amazing condition with stunningly beautiful colours against a dark bluish background.

Our third choice was the tomb of Ramses III. In contrast to Ramses I who reigned for just a year, Ramses III was pharaoh for 31 years. The construction of the tombs always began after a pharaoh's coronation and had to be completed by the time his remains were mummified. The longer a pharaoh ruled the grander was his tomb. This explains why some tombs were never completed. Ten side chambers ran off the main corridor each depicting everyday events in the life of New Kingdom Egypt - fishing, baking, cooking etc. We felt that we had made a good choice.

Once our group had reassembled we were shuttled down to our bus and drove into another arid valley where we were to visit the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, the only female pharaoh, who ruled between 1503 and 1482 BC. She is always depicted as a man with a pharaonic beard and manly physique. The backdrop to this antiquity was a huge natural amphitheatre, one could hardly imagine a more impressive site. Either another, or possibly the same, Long-legged Buzzard appeared above the escarpment.

The temple, called by the queen Djeser Djeseru or 'Splendour of Splendours', was built on three ascending terraces with magnificent colonnades. An avenue of myrrh trees imported from Punt (modern Somalia) once led up to the temple and some stumps can still be seen, surviving after 3,500 years thanks to the dry climate.

Our next stop was not so popular with the Ornitholidays group, as we spent sometime at an alabaster workshop while our fellow culture-vultures made their purchases. We returned to our ship for lunch via the Colossi of Memnon. Two great 18 metre tall seated statues are all that remains of what once must have been a huge temple still being excavated, much having been destroyed by the 27 BC earthquake.

After lunch we went ashore again. Our first of two more locations was the vast temple complex of Karnak on the east bank in Luxor city itself. Here three huge temple enclosures cover an area of 250 hectares or, as the Rough Guide states, "big enough to accommodate ten great cathedrals".

We visited just one of them – the Temple of Amun. To reach the entrance one passes the remains of an ancient dock then along an avenue of sphinxes. Even the backs of the monuments are intricately carved as one is then confronted by a seemingly endless series of huge columns in the Hypostyle Hall. Once left to our own devices we left the throng and wandered around the rectangular Sacred Lake. Here Beth drew our attention to a bird perched high on the walls. It was our first and only Blue Rock Thrush. There were also Green Bee-eaters, closer than we had seen them before.

Although the sun was beginning to set we moved on a short distance to the Luxor Temple, floodlit by the time we arrived there, our last monument of a very long archaeology-filled day. Excellent as Maged was, it was getting difficult to concentrate fully on all the information he was giving us and, by the time we got back to the Nile Admiral, we felt that we were in need of a rest. Tonight a belly dancer and Nubian Dancers performed on board after dinner.

### **Saturday 21 November**

For the last time we gathered on the sun deck before breakfast but saw nothing new. There were, however far more Western Cattle Egret and Glossy Ibis flying from their overnight roosts. Common Bulbuls called from the trees in the riverside gardens and fearless Hooded Crows sat on the rails and backs of chairs close to us on deck.

We met Abdulla at 07.00 having packed and settled our bar bills and said farewell to the friendly waiters. With our luggage packed into a small minibus we set off for King's Island, once called Crocodile Island, just a few minute's drive away. On my visit here two years ago there were a few farming families still on the island as well as the large Maritime Hotel, but now they have been bought out and have left their fields for the hotel to grow vegetables to supply their kitchens.

We left our bags at the hotel and started birding. Almost immediately we found a mimosa tree full of tiny flitting Nile Valley Sunbirds sipping nectar from the flowers, constantly flicking their wings. At this time of the year they are in eclipse plumage but the males, although they have moulted their long tail feathers, show a black gular stripe so they are still quite distinctive. As we walked around the perimeter of the island we had close views of Zitting Cisticolas (Fan-tailed Warblers) perched in the reeds, several Black-winged Kites, Crested Larks, and a large concentration of Egyptian Swallows, plus a few more familiar white-bellied bird and 20 or so Red-rumped Swallows all feeding low over the reeds. At one point a couple of Brown Rats doubled our trip's mammal list. A couple of confiding Eurasian Hoopoes picked around in the dusty soil as we made our way into the hotel gardens and sat in the shade on comfortable sofas on a terrace to await our barbeque. As we sat watching the sunbirds and many Chiffchaffs, two larger *Sylvia* warblers close to us demanded more careful scrutiny. They were Eastern Orphean Warblers, a bit like very large Lesser Whitethroats. The buffet lunch, with delicious 'home-grown' salads and the barbequed fish and chicken was excellent.

We later saw a Eurasian Turtle Dove among the many Laughing Doves as we retraced our route to the hotel's reception area. There was a Clamorous Reed Warbler and a nice Black-headed Wagtail too. Our bus arrived and we departed for Luxor Airport at 15.30 for our return flight to Cairo

At Cairo Airport Hossam awaited for us and it took less than 10 minutes to reach our new hotel. Having passed through security we were soon checked-in and arranged to be ready to leave for more birding in the morning at 07.00. Abdulla still had a 90 minute journey to get to his home.

## **Sunday 22 November**

The cacophony of sound produced by several hundred if not thousands of roosting House Sparrows as we went for breakfast at 06.15 was almost deafening. Mindy was accompanying us today and came to the restaurant as we ate. Abdulla arrived bang on time and we were off promptly.

We headed southeast out of the city and, after a few hold-ups we made good time. After an hour we turned off the main road and immediately began birding. Sally and Beth both spotted wheatears as we drove along. One was White-crowned and the other a Mourning Wheatear, a new bird and both were fine males. We also had good views of a Desert Lark very pale in colour and blending perfectly into the desert surface a little further along, so the day had got off to a good start.

We were making for Wadi Hagul (a wadi is a dry, intermittent river valley but contains some scrubby vegetation). Whenever we saw birds we stopped by the roadside. Almost every small tree held migrants, mainly Chiffchaffs and Lesser Whitethroats but we did see a fine male Siberian Stonechat showing a huge white collar and very large, prominent white, unstreaked rump. Mindy was delighted with this sighting as it is a scarce bird. There were several more Mourning Wheatears, a Southern Grey Shrike and a Sardinian Warbler, a common winter migrant here, but we failed to find the Hooded Wheatear or Bar-tailed Desert Lark that Philip wanted to see. True to form, it was Beth who spotted a Short-toed Eagle, a late migrant, as we were getting back into the minibus at one of our several stops. It was Beth too, who noticed the 'long-tailed bird' hopping about and pecking at animal dung at a checkpoint. It was a very close Greater Hoopoe Lark, a difficult bird to find at this time of the year. Despite the police wanting us to move on, we all had wonderful views of this very smart bird.

Lunch had been booked in Suez and by now time was against further stops so we drove straight to The Red Sea Hotel overlooking the Suez Canal. The restaurant on the sixth floor offered great views of both the shipping passing through the canal and the birds and we set up our scopes right next to our table. The waiters seemed quite used to this bizarre behaviour and opened the windows for us. Luckily there were only a couple of other diners.

House Crows, their ancestors stowaways on ships travelling from India, were numerous and a couple of Hoopoes flew past but it was the gulls upon which we focussed our attention. Although distant, through our telescopes the large gulls on a small island on the waterway were clearly of at least two species and they were all yellow-legged and luckily all appeared to be adults. The slightly small Armenian Gulls, with very rounded heads and a black sub-terminal bar across their yellow bills were quite easy to identify while the larger Caspian Gulls with sloping foreheads were also reasonably easy to identify. The 'Herring Gull Complex' is notoriously difficult. There was also a 'Baltic' Gull, the nominate race of Lesser Black-back, its mantle being the same black colour as its flight feathers and showing no contrast, was another new bird. Three, and later five, large terns with orange/yellow bills were all Lesser Crested Terns. There were smaller gulls too – Black-headed and Slender-bill. There was also a single Curlew. We had to drag ourselves away from the windows to have our lunch.

In the afternoon we stopped at 'the bay' on the Gulf of Suez quite close to the Red Sea Hotel. It was high tide and a collection of waders on a muddy spit included a Lesser and two Greater Sand Plovers among the several Dunlin, Kentish and Common Ringed Plovers. A Black-necked Grebe close inshore and two distant Great Crested Grebes completed a good day's birding for, although we made one stop in the desert on the way back to Cairo, we added nothing new. We were a little anxious for a while whilst walking in this wadi because we could see a soldier purposefully striding towards us, but he continued to the main road, presumably to hitch a lift into town.

The traffic as we approached Cairo was the worse yet, but thanks to Hossam's skilful driving and knowledge of the back roads we were back in our hotel in plenty of time for a bit of relaxation before dinner.

## **Monday 23 November**

Beth stayed at the hotel today and the rest of us left the hotel at 06.30 to drive out onto the Nile delta for our last day's birding. At this hour the traffic was flowing fairly well but we met thick fog on the city outskirts and consequently the drive was a bit slower than usual. We were to visit three different sets of fishponds, the first close to a Shell filling station. Fortunately the fog was lifting as we arrived and birds were beginning to

become active. Eight Senegal Thick-knees flew off as we left the minibus and we soon encountered our first Little Bittern of the day. Clamorous Reed Warbler and Zitting Cisticola showed well as did the only Spanish Sparrow of the trip. White-throated, Common and Lesser Pied Kingfishers were all seen well and there were Bluethroats everywhere. Many Western Cattle Egrets followed a plough and across the field there were huge mud dovecotes 20 feet tall covered in feral pigeons.

Just down the road we stopped where we overlooked more ponds where Common Snipe and a Sedge Warbler plus many Black-winged Stilts and many egrets were feeding. This was a fish hatchery. A walk along the dividing bunds afforded good views of Zitting Cisticola, four more Little Bitterns several more Bluethroats and many Whiskered Terns but the real highlight was a beautiful female Greater Painted Snipe (the female is more colourful than the male). We had met a group of birders from Scotland, the only other birdwatchers we had seen and they told us where to find this much sought-after species.

Moving on and through the large village of Abbasa, where a fire engine and crew escorted us to the next group of ponds, we saw a Southern Grey Shrike, Green Bee-eaters and our only Eurasian Collared Doves of the tour. The last time I had come to the delta we had an armed guard of some 20 soldiers! On the way we paused to watch a large group of Ruff, probably over 100 birds and with them were Wood and Green Sandpipers and a Greenshank.

We drove back into Cairo where Mariam was waiting for us. The intention was to visit the Citadel and Mosque of Mohammed the Great but the journey back was so slow because of the heavy traffic that we were too late and it was closed. We had a late lunch in a restaurant in the Khan-El-Khalilili Bazaar nearby and by the time we had finished no one was too bothered at having missed our last bit of culture. We thanked Mariam and drove back to our airport hotel and met Beth who by now was feeling much better. We went to our rooms to pack for the morning's departure and met again at 19.30 to call the log.

### **Tuesday 24 November**

After an early breakfast it took just a few minutes to drive to Terminal 2 at the International Airport where we arrived at just after 06.30. We thanked Abdulla for all he had done for us, and Hossam for his good driving in a city where traffic gridlocks were commonplace. Abdulla made sure that a porter got us swiftly to check-in and our BA flight took off on time, and despite completing the holding circuit above southeast London four times, we landed on time at midday too. Our luggage retrieved from the carousel, we said our goodbyes and started the last legs of our journeys home.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to many people the tour was very successful. In Cairo, both at the start and end of the holiday, Hossam's safe and skilful driving and his knowledge of the city streets and back doubles saved us a lot of time. Our cultural guides, Mariam in Cairo and Maged on the cruise, were excellent and their knowledge of Ancient Egypt, so clearly imparted, was invaluable. The crew on the Nile Admiral were attentive and very friendly. Mindy gave up her time to show us many of the birds but it is to Abdulla that I owe my greatest debt of gratitude. He ensured that the logistics ran smoothly right up to the check-in for our return flight. Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank you, our clients, for your amazing punctuality, enthusiasm and good humour. I do hope that we will travel together again soon.

Roger Lawrence  
Ornitholidays  
29 Straight Mile  
Romsey  
Hampshire SO51 9BB  
Tel: 01794 519445  
email: [info@ornitholidays.co.uk](mailto:info@ornitholidays.co.uk)

December 2009

## Itinerary and Weather

- 13 November Early evening flight from Heathrow to Cairo.
- 14 November Arrival in Cairo after midnight. Transfer to hotel on Zamalek Island.  
Birding in Sporting Club of Gezira.  
Egyptian Museum of Antiquities followed by lunch on Nile City.  
pm Imhotep Museum & Step Pyramid of Saqqara  
Pleasantly warm & sunny. 23°C.
- 15 November am Lake Qarun  
Lunch in Cairo  
pm Pyramids of Giza, Cheops Solar Boat Museum & Sphinx  
Sunny & warm. 22°C.
- 16 November am fly to Abu Simbel  
pm boat cruise on Lake Nasser  
Evening Sound & Light Show.  
Warm & sunny again 24°C.
- 17 November pre-breakfast birding in hotel grounds  
Abu Simbel Temple then convoy to Aswan.  
Join Nile Admiral pm. Boat cruise on the Nile.  
Bright & sunny but breezy. 25°C.
- 18 November Birding on deck followed by visit to Aswan High Dam.  
Philae Temple.  
pm cruise to Kom Ombo & temple visit. Sail on to Edfu.  
Hot & sunny. 26°C.
- 19 November Temple of Horus am  
Cruise downstream to Esna. Through locks and on to Luxor.  
Hot & sunny. 26°C.
- 20 November Valley of the Kings & Hatshepsut's Temple & Colossi of Memnon.  
pm Karnak Temple complex & Luxor Temple  
Hot & sunny. 30°C.
- 21 November Leave Nile Admiral. King's Island for birding.  
pm Fly from Luxor to Cairo.  
Fine & sunny. Some cloud. 27°C.
- 22 November Wadi Hagul & Suez.  
pm birding on the Gulf of Suez  
Warm & sunny but occasionally a cool breeze. 26°C.
- 23 November Fish ponds near Bilbeis. Abbasa village.  
Cairo for late lunch in El Khalili Bazaar.  
Back to hotel  
Fog at first, then hot & sunny. 28°C.
- 24 November Fly Cairo to London arriving midday

## CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>No of days recorded</b>                                       | <b>Locations</b>  | <b>Abundance Scale</b>  |
| 1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days. Max 11 days. | C = Cairo & Lake Qarun<br>A = Abu Simbel & Lake Nasser<br>N = Nile cruise and temple sites<br>S = Nile Delta and Suez | maximum for any one day<br>1 = 1 - 4<br>2 = 5 - 9<br>3 = 10 - 100<br>4 = 100 - 1000<br>5 = > 1000 |

| BIRDS                          | No of days recorded | Locations | Abundance Scale | Scientific Name                               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Little Grebe                   | 2                   | N S       | 1               | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>                 |
| Great Crested Grebe            | 1                   | S         | 1               | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>                     |
| Black-necked Grebe             | 1                   | S         | 1               | <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>                   |
| Great White Pelican            | 1                   | N         | 1               | <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>                  |
| Great Cormorant                | 6                   | A N S     | 4               | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>                    |
| Grey Heron                     | 8                   | C A N S   | 3               | <i>Ardea cinerea</i>                          |
| Purple Heron                   | 6                   | A N       | 1               | <i>Ardea purpurea</i>                         |
| Great Egret                    | 2                   | N         | 1               | <i>Ardea alba</i>                             |
| Little Egret                   | 10                  | C A N S   | 4               | <i>Egretta garzetta</i>                       |
| Squacco Heron                  | 9                   | C A N S   | 4               | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>                      |
| Cattle Egret                   | 9                   | C A N S   | 4               | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>                          |
| Mangrove (Striated) Heron      | 3                   | N         | 1               | <i>Butorides striatus</i>                     |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron      | 5                   | A N S     | 3               | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>                  |
| Little Bittern                 | 3                   | N S       | 2               | <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>                     |
| White Stork                    | 1                   | A         | 1               | <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>                        |
| Glossy Ibis                    | 7                   | A N S     | 4               | <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>                   |
| Eurasian Spoonbill             | 1                   | A         | 2               | <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>                    |
| Egyptian Goose                 | 6                   | A N       | 3               | <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>                  |
| Eurasian Wigeon                | 3                   | A N       | 3               | <i>Anas penelope</i>                          |
| Common Teal                    | 2                   | N         | 3               | <i>Anas crecca</i>                            |
| Northern Pintail               | 3                   | A N       | 2               | <i>Anas acuta</i>                             |
| Garganey                       | 1                   | A         | 3               | <i>Anas querquedula</i>                       |
| Northern Shoveler              | 3                   | C N       | 4               | <i>Anas clypeata</i>                          |
| Common Pochard                 | 1                   | N         | 2               | <i>Aythya ferina</i>                          |
| Ferruginous Pochard            | 2                   | N         | 3               | <i>Aythya nyroca</i>                          |
| Tufted Duck                    | 2                   | A N       | 4               | <i>Aythya fuligula</i>                        |
| Osprey                         | 2                   | N         | 1               | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>                      |
| Black-winged (shouldered) Kite | 4                   | N         | 2               | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>                       |
| Black Kite                     | 1                   | S         | 1               | <i>Milvus migrans</i>                         |
| Yellow-billed Kite             | 2                   | A         | 1               | <i>Milvus aegyptius</i>                       |
| Short-toed Eagle               | 1                   |           | 1               | <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>                     |
| Western Marsh-Harrier          | 6                   | A N       | 3               | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>                     |
| Eurasian Sparrowhawk           | 1                   | N         | 1               | <i>Accipiter nisus</i>                        |
| Eurasian Buzzard               | 1                   | A         | 1               | <i>Buteo buteo</i>                            |
| Long-legged Buzzard            | 1                   | N         | 1               | <i>Buteo rufinus</i>                          |
| Eurasian Kestrel               | 7                   | C A N S   | 1               | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>                      |
| African Purple Gallinule       | 5                   | N         | 3               | <i>Porphyrio (porphyrio) madagascariensis</i> |
| Common Moorhen                 | 7                   | C N S     | 3               | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>                    |
| Eurasian Coot                  | 5                   | C N S     | 3               | <i>Fulica atra</i>                            |
| Greater Painted-snipe          | 1                   | S         | 1               | <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>                |
| Black-winged Stilt             | 8                   | C A N S   | 3               | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>                  |
| Senegal Thick-knee             | 4                   | A N S     | 2               | <i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>                  |
| Spur-winged Lapwing            | 8                   | C A N S   | 3               | <i>Vanellus spinosus</i>                      |
| White-tailed Lapwing           | 2                   | C A       | 1               | <i>Vanellus leucurus</i>                      |
| Common Ringed Plover           | 7                   | C A N S   | 3               | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>                   |

|                                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |                                   |                            |
|-----------------------------------|----|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Snowy (Kentish) Plover            | 2  | C |   |   | S | 3 | <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>    |                            |
| Lesser Sand (Mongolian) Plover    | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>        |                            |
| Greater Sand Plover               | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>   |                            |
| Common Snipe                      | 4  |   | A | N | S | 1 | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>        |                            |
| Black-tailed Godwit               | 3  |   |   |   | N | 3 | <i>Limosa limosa</i>              |                            |
| Eurasian Curlew                   | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Numenius arquata</i>           |                            |
| Spotted Redshank                  | 3  | C |   |   | N | 2 | <i>Tringa erythropus</i>          |                            |
| Common Redshank                   | 3  | C |   |   | N | S | 2                                 | <i>Tringa totanus</i>      |
| Marsh Sandpiper                   | 5  | C | A | N |   | 1 | <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>         |                            |
| Common Greenshank                 | 7  | C | A | N | S | 2 | <i>Tringa nebularia</i>           |                            |
| Green Sandpiper                   | 4  |   | A | N | S | 1 | <i>Tringa ochropus</i>            |                            |
| Wood Sandpiper                    | 6  | C | A | N | S | 2 | <i>Tringa glareola</i>            |                            |
| Common Sandpiper                  | 7  | C | A | N | S | 1 | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>         |                            |
| Little Stint                      | 4  | C | A | N |   | 3 | <i>Calidris minuta</i>            |                            |
| Temminck's Stint                  | 3  | C | A |   | S | 1 | <i>Calidris temminckii</i>        |                            |
| Curlew Sandpiper                  | 1  | C |   |   |   | 1 | <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>        |                            |
| Dunlin                            | 2  | C |   |   | S | 2 | <i>Calidris alpina</i>            |                            |
| Ruff                              | 8  | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>         |                            |
| Lesser Black-backed (Baltic) Gull | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>        |                            |
| Armenian Gull                     | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Larus armenicus</i>            |                            |
| Caspian (Yellow-legged) Gull      | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Larus cachinnans</i>           |                            |
| Black-headed Gull                 | 6  | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Larus ridibundus</i>           |                            |
| Slender-billed Gull               | 2  | C |   |   | S | 4 | <i>Larus genei</i>                |                            |
| Gull-billed Tern                  | 4  |   | A | N |   | 3 | <i>Sterna nilotica</i>            |                            |
| Lesser Crested Tern               | 1  |   |   |   | S | 2 | <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>         |                            |
| Whiskered Tern                    | 8  | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>        |                            |
| Black Tern                        | 1  |   |   |   | N | 1 | <i>Chlidonias niger</i>           |                            |
| White-winged Tern                 | 5  |   |   |   | N | 4 | <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>     |                            |
| Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)          | 10 | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Columba livia</i>              |                            |
| Eurasian Turtle-Dove              | 1  |   |   |   | N | 1 | <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>        |                            |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove            | 1  |   |   |   | S | 2 | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>      |                            |
| Laughing Dove                     | 10 | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>  |                            |
| Alexandrine Parakeet              | 1  | C |   |   |   | 1 | <i>Psittacula eupatria</i>        |                            |
| Rose-ringed Parakeet              | 1  | C |   |   |   | 2 | <i>Psittacula krameri</i>         |                            |
| Pallid Swift                      | 3  |   |   |   | N | 3 | <i>Apus pallidus</i>              |                            |
| Common Kingfisher                 | 3  |   |   |   | N | S | 1                                 | <i>Alcedo atthis</i>       |
| White-throated Kingfisher         | 2  | C |   |   | S | 2 | <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>         |                            |
| Pied Kingfisher                   | 9  | C |   |   | N | S | 3                                 | <i>Ceryle rudis</i>        |
| Green Bee-eater                   | 4  |   |   |   | N | S | 2                                 | <i>Merops orientalis</i>   |
| Eurasian Hoopoe                   | 8  | C | A | N | S | 3 | <i>Upupa epops</i>                |                            |
| Desert Lark                       | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Ammomanes deserti</i>          |                            |
| Greater Hoopoe-Lark               | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>          |                            |
| Crested Lark                      | 5  | C | A | N | S | 1 | <i>Galerida cristata</i>          |                            |
| Bank Swallow (Sand Martin)        | 1  |   |   |   | N | 1 | <i>Riparia riparia</i>            |                            |
| Pale Crag (Rock) Martin           | 5  |   | A | N |   | 3 | <i>Hirundo fuligula obsoleta</i>  |                            |
| Common House Martin               | 1  |   |   |   | N | 1 | <i>Delichon urbica</i>            |                            |
| Barn Swallow                      | 10 | C | A | N | S | 4 | <i>Hirundo rustica/savignii</i>   |                            |
| Red-rumped Swallow                | 2  |   |   |   | N | 3 | <i>Hirundo daurica</i>            |                            |
| White Wagtail                     | 10 | C | A | N | S | 3 | <i>Motacilla alba</i>             |                            |
| African Pied Wagtail              | 1  |   | A |   |   | 1 | <i>Motacilla aguimp</i>           |                            |
| Yellow Wagtail                    | 2  |   | A | N |   | 1 | <i>Motacilla flava</i>            |                            |
| Black-headed Wagtail              | 3  |   | A | N |   | 1 | <i>Motacilla feldegg</i>          |                            |
| Water Pipit                       | 1  | C |   |   |   | 1 | <i>Anthus spinoletta</i>          |                            |
| Common Bulbul                     | 4  | C |   |   | N | S | 3                                 | <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> |
| Blue Rock-Thrush                  | 1  |   |   |   | N | 1 | <i>Monticola solitarius</i>       |                            |
| Zitting Cisticola                 | 2  |   |   |   | N | S | 2                                 | <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>  |
| Graceful Prinia                   | 4  |   | A | N | S | 2 | <i>Prinia gracilis</i>            |                            |
| Sedge Warbler                     | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> |                            |

|                         |    |   |   |   |   |   |                                |
|-------------------------|----|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Clamorous Reed-Warbler  | 4  |   |   | N | S | 1 | <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i> |
| Common Chiffchaff       | 8  | C | A | N | S | 3 | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>  |
| Eastern Orphean Warbler | 1  |   |   | N |   | 1 | <i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>    |
| Lesser Whitethroat      | 3  |   | A | N |   | 3 | <i>Sylvia curruca</i>          |
| Sardinian Warbler       | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>    |
| Bluethroat              | 4  |   | A | N | S | 3 | <i>Luscinia svecica</i>        |
| European Stonechat      | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Saxicola rubicola</i>       |
| Siberian Stonechat      | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Saxicola maura</i>          |
| White-crowned Wheatear  | 4  |   | A | N | S | 1 | <i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>      |
| Mourning Wheatear       | 1  |   |   |   | S | 2 | <i>Oenanthe lugens</i>         |
| Desert Wheatear         | 1  |   | A |   |   | 1 | <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>        |
| Nile Valley Sunbird     | 1  |   |   | N |   | 2 | <i>Hedydipna metallica</i>     |
| Southern Grey Shrike    | 3  | C |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Lanius meridionalis</i>     |
| House Crow              | 1  |   |   |   | S | 3 | <i>Corvus splendens</i>        |
| Hooded Crow             | 10 | C |   | N | S | 4 | <i>Corvus cornix</i>           |
| Brown-necked Raven      | 5  | C | A | N | S | 3 | <i>Corvus ruficollis</i>       |
| House Sparrow           | 11 | C | A | N | S | 5 | <i>Passer domesticus</i>       |
| Spanish Sparrow         | 1  |   |   |   | S | 1 | <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>   |

#### **MAMMALS**

Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes icneumon*)

Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

#### **REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*)

Nile Monitor (*Varanus niloticus*)

#### **BUTTERFLIES**

Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*)

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



**African Purple Gallinule**



**Spur-winged Lapwing**



**Senegal Thick-knees**



**White-crowned Wheatear**



**Temple at Abu Simbel**



**Hatshepsut's Temple**



**Colossi of Memnon**



**Sacred Lake, Luxor**

**Cover: Horus, the Falcon-headed God**

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