

Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt

31st Dec 2008 – 7th Jan 2009



Eurasian Black Vulture, Na'ama Bay sewage ponds, 6 Jan 2009



General

The main purpose of this trip was to photograph birds and to get some sun and relaxation away from the cold North. I booked a last minute flight with Solresor and booked a hotel for the first three nights, through MrJet. I used taxis to get around and this worked fairly well. If you find a reliable driver it is advisable to take his phone number and use him on a regular basis. When carrying heavy photo gear you have to sacrifice some other useful equipment, like a spotting scope. This inevitably takes a toll on the trip list by not being able to spot distant birds. However, my priority was to take pictures.

The Partner Sunset Hotel was quite good for my purposes. I never tried the food there, as I was out before breakfast was served and in the evenings I had dinner in nearby restaurants. The Sandy Hotel is a nice and reasonable priced hotel, located next to the Old Market in old Sharm.

Day by Day

Wednesday 31 December

Departed Sweden at 08:10 and landed in Sharm el Sheikh 13:50 local time (+ 1 hour). Visa procedure was very rapidly carried out at the travel agents desk. It was not possible to exchange money at the airport, so I had to stop at a currency exchange office on the way to my hotel. After checking in at Partner Sunset Hotel, I went out for a walk and had dinner at Café Picasso. In the evening there was a New Year's Eve party at the hotel.

Partner Sunset Hotel

GPS: 27.868811N, 34.304630E

Late afternoon

Western Cattle Egret (<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>)	3
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	3
Rock Dove (<i>Columba livia</i>)	1
Eurasian Collared-dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)	1
Laughing Dove (<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>)	10
White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>)	45



Towel art - View from Na'ama Bay sewage ponds - Old Market - Ras Um Sid

Thursday 1 January

The party continued most of the night, making it impossible to sleep. I got up early and headed for the sewage ponds, NW Na'ama Bay. The taxi driver said he knew where they were, no problem. Of course he didn't so we spent some time getting there. A way to describe their location to a taxi driver would be - between the electrical power plant and Omar Riding Club. This area is also popular for quad biking, with endless, frustrating noisy caravans, mostly in mornings and evenings.

Na'ama Bay sewage ponds

GPS: 27.936372N, 34.299183E

07:50-15:30

Common Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	40
Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	10
Northern Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)	15
Great White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>)	1
Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	1
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	2
Black Stork (<i>Ciconia nigra</i>)	3
White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)	500+
Eurasian Black Vulture (<i>Aegypius monachus</i>)	1 2 nd calendar year
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>)	1
Lesser Spotted Eagle (<i>Aquila pomarina</i>)	1 distant, 2 nd calendar year
Eastern Imperial Eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>)	
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	1
Barbary Falcon (<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>)	1 ♂
Common Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	30
Spur-winged Lapwing (<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>)	10
Common Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)	4
Common Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)	5
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)	1
Wood Sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>)	1
Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)	2
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)	2
Spotted Sandgrouse (<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>)	9
Rock Dove (<i>Columba livia</i>)	Common
Laughing Dove (<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>)	3
Bar-tailed Lark (<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>)	3
White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>)	5
Red-throated Pipit (<i>Anthus servinus</i>)	3
Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)	20
Buff-bellied Pipit (<i>Anthus rubescens japonicus</i>)	1-2
Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)	3
European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)	1
Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>)	Common
Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	House
Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	2



Great White Pelican - Black Stork - White Stork - Eastern Imperial Eagle - Bar-tailed Lark -
Red-throated Pipit - Water Pipit - Buff-bellied Pipit

Friday 2 January

I got up a bit earlier and took a taxi to the sewage ponds and spent half the day trying to cover most of the area. In the afternoon I visited the Maritim Jolie Ville golf course.

Na'ama Bay sewage ponds

GPS: 27.936372N, 34.299183E

06:45-11:30

White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)	700+
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>)	1
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	1
Laughing Dove (<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>)	1
Pale Crag Martin (<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>)	2
Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)	10
Buff-bellied Pipit (<i>Anthus rubescens japonicus</i>)	1
Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)	2
European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)	1
Hooded Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe monacha</i>)	1
Eastern Mourning Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>)	2
Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>)	2
River Warbler (<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>)?	1 Locustella with blotched breast
Common Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	3



Views from the sewage ponds and a not very healthy White Stork



Buff-bellied Pipit - Hooded Wheatear - Desert Wheatear

The second target of the day was the golf course of Maritim Jolie Ville Golf & Resort, a luxury hotel situated 6 km NE Na'ama Bay . This was formerly named Jolie Ville Mövenpick Golf & Resort. I wanted to get acquainted with the place and ask for permission to watch and photograph birds. This is a good site for bird watching, especially during migration. If you keep an eye open for golf balls and are careful not to get in the way of the golfers, then you are welcome to move around freely here.



Maritim Jolie Ville golf course

Maritim Jolie Ville golf course

GPS: 27.941144N, 34.365422E

12:30-15:30

Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)	7
Black-necked Grebe (<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>)	1
Booted Eagle (<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>)	1 light morph
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	3
Spur-winged Lapwing (<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>)	52
Common Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)	5
Little Stint (<i>Calidris minuta</i>)	1
Laughing Dove (<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>)	3
Pale Crag Martin (<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>)	4
Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)	2
European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)	2
Lesser Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia curruca</i>)	1
Sardinian Warbler (<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>)	2
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>)	2
Spanish Sparrow (<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>)	20



Common Kestrel - Laughing Dove - Bluethroat - Spanish Sparrow

Saturday 3 January

My plan for today was to continue to St. Catherine and stay there for two days. Early in the morning I checked out of the hotel and took a taxi to the bus station. This was not open yet so I decided to go by taxi to Dahab and then take the bus to St. Catherine from there. At the bus station in Dahab, I got the information that the bus to St. Catherine was cancelled. I could not understand why, but it seems like this bus service is most unreliable. I did not put more effort in trying to go to St. Catherine. There was nothing else to do than return, this time by bus. Back in Sharm I checked in at Sandy Hotel, in the old city. Most of the afternoon and early evening was spent at the sewage ponds. I awaited the appearance of the Lichtenstein's Sandgrouses, which occurred at 17:30, when a party of 20 without a sound came in to drink. They landed only 20 m away from me.

Na'ama Bay sewage ponds

GPS: 27.936372N, 34.299183E

13:30-18:00

Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)	5
Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>)	2
Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	1
Great White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>) Grey	1
Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	1
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	1
White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)	700+
Eurasian Black Vulture (<i>Aegypius monachus</i>)	1 2 nd calendar year
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>) Eastern	1
Imperial Eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>)	3 2 nd and 1 3 rd calendar year
Barbary Falcon (<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>)	1 ♂
Spur-winged Lapwing (<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>)	4
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)	5
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)	5
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse (<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>)	20
Pale Crag Martin (<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>)	30+
Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)	20
Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)	2



Eurasian Black Vulture - Eastern Imperial Eagles

Sunday 4 January

A full day at Maritim Jolie Ville golf course.

Maritim Jolie Ville golf course

GPS: 27.941144N, 34.365422E

08:30-14:30

Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	1
Great White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>)	1
Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	7
Black-crowned Night-heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>)	3
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>)	1
Long-legged Buzzard (<i>Buteo rufinus</i>)	1
Booted Eagle (<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>)	1 light morph
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	3
Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)	1
Common Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)	21
Kentish Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>)	2
Common Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)	5
Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)	4
Little Stint (<i>Calidris minuta</i>)	7
Laughing Dove (<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>)	4
Pale Crag Martin (<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>)	10
Bluethroat (<i>Luscinia svecica</i>)	2
European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)	1
Siberian Stonechat (<i>Saxicola maurus</i>)	1
Sardinian Warbler (<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>)	3
Common Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	2
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>)	1
Spanish Sparrow (<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>)	20



Black-crowned Night-heron - Siberian Stonechat

Monday 5 January

Today I had planned for a full day at Nabq National Park. I had arranged with a taxi driver, Nader, to pick me up and take me to Nabq. It was a bit more remote and deserted than I had expected, thus Nader had to stay with me. Unfortunately I could not spend more than three hours here because Nader had to be back in Sharm to hand the car over to another driver. On the way back through the park there were lots of Black Kites.

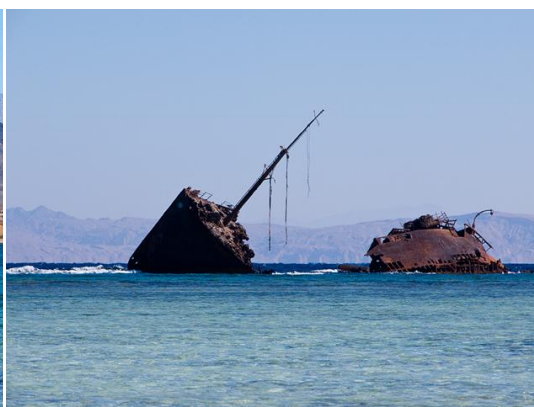
There is a 5\$ fee to enter the park.

Nabq National Park

GPS: 28.193949N, 34.431680E

09:30-12:30

Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	6
Western Reef Egret (<i>Egretta gularis</i>)	2
Eurasian Spoonbill (<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>)	6
Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	4
Black Kite (<i>Milvus migrans</i>)	150+
Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)	3
Kentish Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>)	1
Greater Sand Plover (<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>)	3
Eurasian Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)	1
Ruddy Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)	7
Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)	1
Sooty Gull (<i>Larus hemprichii</i>)	12
Caspian Tern (<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>)	3
Pied Kingfisher (<i>Ceryle rudis</i>)	1
Eastern Mourning Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>)	1
Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>)	1



Nabq National Park - the visitor centre and the Maria Schroeder wreck



Western Reef Egret - Osprey - Greater Sand Plover - Sooty Gulls - Caspian Terns - Pied Kingfisher

Tuesday 6 January

Another bad decision was to spend the early morning at Ras Um Sid, hoping for some early morning activity at the coast. Needless to say it was very calm, but I had a wonderful daybreak in company with several House Crows and a Common Kestrel.

Ras Um Sid

GPS: 27.848589N, 34.316439E

06:30-09:00

Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	1
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	2
Caspian Tern (<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>)	2
House Crow (<i>Corvus splendens</i>)	10
Common Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	1

After breakfast at the hotel, I decided to visit the sewage ponds a final time. Here I had wonderful views of two Black Vultures together and three Imperial Eagles. A Golden Eagle also turned up.

Na'ama Bay sewage ponds

GPS: 27.936372N, 34.299183E

11.00-16.30

Common Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	50
Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	10
Northern Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)	15
Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>)	1
Great White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>)	1
Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	common
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	3
White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)	1000+
Eurasian Black Vulture (<i>Aegypius monachus</i>)	2 2 nd calendar year
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>)	1
Eastern Imperial Eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>)	3 2 nd calendar year
Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	1 2 nd calendar year
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	1
Spur-winged Lapwing (<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>)	15
Common Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)	4
Common Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)	5
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)	1
Wood Sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>)	1
Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)	2
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)	2
Red-throated Pipit (<i>Anthus servinus</i>)	2
Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)	10
Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>)	2
Common Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	3
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	2



Eurasian Black Vulture & Golden Eagle - Eastern Imperial Eagles - Spur-winged Lapwing - Pale Crag Martins

Wednesday 7 January

Going home day. Nader picked me up at the hotel at noon and took me to the airport. Two Brown-necked Ravens were seen from the car, finalising my trip list to 75 species.

This was my first trip to Egypt. It whetted my appetite so much that I went back three months later, in April, when I visited the Cairo area and St. Catherine, at last. See that report.

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