

Hotel Steigenberger, El Gouna, Egypt 6 March – 12 March 2009

My wife and I stayed at Steigenberger hotel during this period on a combined birding and vacation trip. Birding was done every day during the morning hours, 06:00 – 09:00 and during two days watching the raptor migration from the El Gouna entrance gate. Weather was sunny, 18 – 28 Celsius during the entire period. Winds were southeasterly 6 - 8 March and from Northwest or North 9 – 12 March.

Top of the week were 10 000 white storks during two days, which came in huge flocks of up to 2 500 birds, 90 black storks, 50 steppe eagles on the same day, Nile valley sun birds and an adult male Cretzschmar's bunting.

The first morning I met two German birders, who were almost sure they had seen a Senegal thick-knee that same morning close to the water in the south-west corner of the golf course. Despite several visits in that area I didn't see it. Actually, I didn't see any "thick-knee" at all during the whole week.

As the Egyptian pound more or less follows the USD, it is now quite expensive staying at the luxury hotels in El Gouna. A dinner for two, one beer and one water included, cost 400 Egyptian pounds, which equals SEK 700 or USD 80.

Raptor migration: 10:00- 14:00 on 9 March, strong NW wind and 09:30 – 13:00 on 10 March, strong N wind)

I started off just outside the entrance gate on 9 March, where there is something like an oasis, where you can find some shelter under the palm trees and behind some smaller rocks. It didn't take long before the security guys wondered what I was doing there. They were, however, very friendly and very enthusiastic when I let them watch a swarm of storks through my spotting-scope. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm coincided with the steppe eagle peak when some 20 eagles passed under a few hectic minutes around 11:00. I cannot completely rule out that some other eagle passed during these minutes. After a while they invited me to stay with them at the gate and that was very helpful as some of these guys were really sharp-eyed and pointed out a lot of birds which I probably had missed otherwise. One of them was constantly watching the sky and, maybe, an Egyptian birder was born this day! Next time, I will bring them a guide to Egyptian birds.

List of birds

Cattle Egret/Kohäger	Up to 5, golf course
Grey Heron/Gråhäger	Lagoon: 3
Western Reef heron/Revhäger	Lagoon: 1 second cy white morph
White stork/ Vit stork	4 000 migrating 9 March and 6 000 migrating 10 March. Seen from El Gouna Entrance gate. Came in huge flocks of up to 2 500 birds.
Black stork/Svart stork	90 migrating on 9 March
Osprey/ Fiskgjuse	Seen almost daily
Steppe eagle/stäppörn	50 migrating on 9 March and 1 migrating on 10 March
Black kite/Brun glada	5 migrating 9 March

Marsh Harrier/ Brun kärrhök	1 ad female, 12 March near Hurghada
Steppe buzzard/Stäppvråk	1 on 6 March, 25 migrating on 9 March and 3 migrating on 10 March
Kestrel/ Tornfalk	2 – 3 pairs
Quail/ Vaktel	1 at golf course 6 March
Common crane/trana	12 migrating 6 March, 250 migrating 9 March and 1 500 migrating 10 March
Kentish plover/Svartbent strandpip	Lagoon: 6 on 7 March
Greater sand plover/Ökenpipare	Lagoon: 6 on 7 March
Grey plover/Kustpipare	Lagoon: 7 on 7 March
Common ringed plover/Större strandpipare	Lagoon: 12 on 7 March
Dunlin/Kärrensnäppa	Lagoon: 3 on 7 March
Common redshank/Rödbena	Lagoon: 1 on 7 March
Common greenshank/Gluttsnäppa	Lagoon: 1 on 7 March
Spur-winged plover/Sporrvipa	4 resident at the golf course during the whole period
Curlew/Storspov	Daily at golf course or lagoon, up to 7
Common Sandpiper/Drillsnäppa	1, Steigenberger canals 8 March
Slender-billed gull/Långnäbbad mås	Lagoon: 4 on 7 March
Lesser blacked gull/Larus fuscus fuscus/ silltrut	17 flying north over Steigenberger 12 March
Caspian tern/ Skräntärna	Lagoon: 12 on 7 March
Eurasian collared dove/turkduva	2-3 seen occasionally
Laughing Dove/ Palmduva	Common
Kingfisher/Kungsfiskare	Steigenberger canals 10 March
Hoopoe/ Härfågel	Seen daily, 1-2
Short-toed lark/ Korttälärka	Seen daily, 150 on 12 March
Bimaculated lark/Asiatisk kalenderlärka	2 on 11 March and 5 on 12 March
Sand Martin/ Backsvala	Daily: 20-30 towards the end of the period
Swallow/ Ladusvala	Daily
Red-rumped swallow/Rostgumpssvala	Daily, 30-40 towards the end of the period
House Martin/ Hussvala	A few seen daily
Tawny pipit/ Fältpipilärka	Seen daily 5-15 at the golf course
Tree pipit/trädpipilärka	2 on 11 March
Red-throated pipit/ Rödstrupig pipilärka	Daily at the golf course, up to 25
Yellow Wagtail/ Gulärkla	Seen from 7 March, up to 15 feldegg and 2 flava at golf course.
Pied Wagtail/ Sädesärkla	Very common, 50-100 at golf course
Bluethroat/ Blåhake	Seen daily at Steigenberger, 1-3
Whinchat/Buskskvätta	1 female Steigenberger 7 March
Stonechat/Svarthakad buskskvätta	1-4 daily at Steigenberger and golf course,

	1 female probably Maura
Isabelline Wheatear/Isabellastenskvätta	Up to 15 at golf course
Northern Wheatear/ Stenskvätta	Up to 5 seen towards the end of the period
Desert Wheatear/Ökenstenskvätta	1 ad male and 1 female, 8 March
Sedge warbler/Sävsångare	2
Sardinian Warbler/Sammethätta	1-3 heard or seen almost daily
Ruppels Warbler/Svarthakad sångare	1 ad male. Almost daily, northeast of the club house in low bushes next to the lawn. Seen in the same low bushes in March 2008. Do they breed here?
Subalpine warbler/Rödstrupig sångare	1 ad male 11 and 12 March, trees 200 meter south of the area entrance
Lesser Whitethroat/ Ärtsångare	Very common
Chiffchaff/ Gransångare	Very common
Nile Valley Sunbird/Nilsolfågel	3 ad males and 1 second cy male (or late moulting bird?) at different places. One was resident during the whole period in the garden of house nr 65, close to the entrance gate. Another seen several days in the trees next to the water southeast of the restaurant/clubhouse.
Masked Shrike/ Masktörnskata	1 ad male, 10 March, in the bushes east of the restaurant/clubhouse.
Hooded crow/ Grå Kråka	Up to 15
Brown-necked raven/Ökenkorp	A few seen outside El Gouna, one at the El Gouna entrance gate 9 and 10 March
House sparrow/Gråsparv	5-10
Spanish sparrow/Spansk sparv	1 ad male on 11 March
Cretzschmar's bunting/rostsparv	1 ad male, golf course, east of the club house, 8 March

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