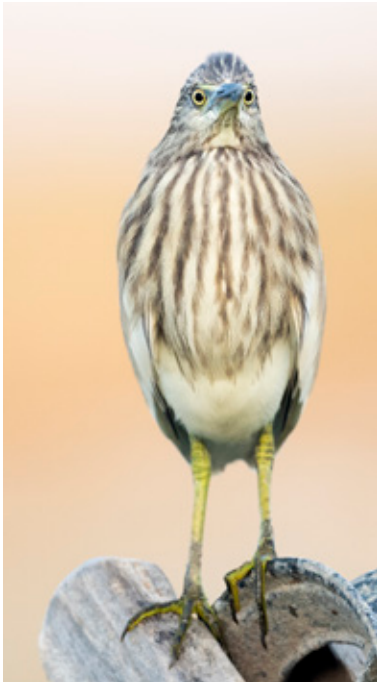
QESHM, IRAN

Ornithological trip report
9.-21. Dezember 2019
Leander Khil & Martin Suanjak



Title pictures: Gulls at Ramchah, Crab Plovers, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Indian Pond Heron, See-see Partridge, Hume's Warbler

Sites visited in 2019

1. Qeshm City
2. Ramchah
3. Mesen Lagoon
4. Dehkhoda
5. Hara mangroves
6. Qeshm Roof
7. Tonban
8. Dukuhak
9. Dulab
10. Sarbili Beach
11. Chahkooh Canyon
12. Salt Cave
13. Naz islands

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Purpose of this trip was taxonomic research on Lesser Whitethroats and taking part in an environmental education program carried out by the Qeshm Environmental Conservation Institute (QECI) and their partners. We want to thank the German Ornithologists' Society (DO-G) and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME) for supporting these projects. Birding was done inbetween and during the project times. All observations have been reported to ebird.org as well. After trips in 2014 and 2016, this was our second (MSU)/third (LKH) stay on Qeshm and we are eager to continue to explore this gorgeous island!

Ramchah
A huge outdoor fish-drying operation in the north-east of the island attracting thousands (10s of thousands?) of large gulls. Days could probably be spent there checking them. On our short visit, large rain puddles had collected along the road, where the gulls and some waders were resting at close distance.

Mesen Lagoon
A big freshwater lagoon at the edge of town where both large and small gull species collect to bath before flying off to roosting sites. Several interesting species of waders, waterfowl and gulls were found there on previous visits. This time, we just checked the lagoon while driving through.

Dehkhoda
A small town in the center of the island, close to to a very new jetty into the Hara mangrove forest. Some hills that can be climbed are very close (we called it „Dehkhoda Roof"), as are nice gardens with a lot of passerines. The highly recommendable Coludang homestay is in this town and served as our base in the second week of the trip.

Hara mangroves
One of the main tourist attractions of the island and the habitat that hosts most birds and bird species on Qeshm. Can be visited by boat i.e. from the very developed, touristy Soheili jetty, the slightly smaller Tabl jetty or the brand-new, still undeveloped Dehkhoda jetty. The jetties cut through the mangrove forests and are good vantage points to look for birds, also withouth boat trip (scope needed) - but taking tours will reveal much more. Boatmen seem to stay in defined parts of the mangroves (belonging to the town/jetty they depart from), so be sure to try from more than just one jetty to cover more areas. High tide is good to see waders, gulls, terns collecting at roosts but low tide was equally interesting, when the birds spread out into the mangrove jungle as well as adjacent mudflats (and become extremely hard to count).

Qeshm Roof
This archaeological site includes a surprisingly green area on top of the Qeshm hills with a lot of big old trees and green grass below. This spot seems to attract migrants that fly over the island and produced interesting records on both visits in 2016 and 2019.

Tonban
A small town near the airport with nice gardens. North of Tonban lies an extensive sandy desert area wich eventually ends up in some stony hills higher up the slope. Good for desert specialists but in lower densities than at Sarbili Beach.

Dukuhak
Big mudflats (at low tide) close to the city that hosted plenty of waders on our visit. Good to spend some hours walking along the beach.

Dulab
Our base for the first week of the trip (Assad homestay). Birding for passerines was good at the two (dried out) dams. Be sure to walk inland along the wadis that end up in the reservoirs. The Dulab beach attracts large numbers of gulls (Dulab is a fishing harbor), waders and other water birds.

Sarbili Beach
The sandy desert area at the coast south-west of Sarbili beach had good desert species on both visits in 2016 and 2019. This area is marked by a distinctive vertical monolith structure (see p. 11).

Species list (110)

See-see Partridge *(Ammoperdix griseogularis)*
3 at „Dehkhoda Roof“ (15th), 1+ at Qeshm Roof (16th). Confined to „higher altitudes“. Both sightings on rocky hilltops.

Greater Flamingo *(Phoenicopterus roseus)*
Flocks of max. 20 at Mesen Lagoon and on coastal mudflats west of Qeshm City (20th).

Rock Dove *(Columba livia)*
Feral Pigeons common around settlements, wild birds (?) also in desert areas.

Collared Dove *(Streptopelia decaocto)*
Surprsingly rare (very common in Dubai). 3 at Qeshm Roof (16th), 1 at Dehkhoda (19th), 3 at Tonban (21th).

Laughing Dove *(Streptopelia senegalensis)*
Very common, but large flocks usually single-figures.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *(Pterocles exustus)*
10 at low flyover in sandy desert near Tonban (21th).

Alpine Swift *(Apus melba)*
1 Dulab (12th) among Pallid Swifts and 25 Dehkhoda (15th).

Pallid Swift *(Apus pallidus)*
30 Dulab (12th), 5 Dulab (13th), 10 Qeshm City (16th).

Eurasian Coot *(Fulica atra)*
2 Mesen Lagoon (20th).

Eurasian Oystercatcher *(Haematopus ostralegus)*
Singles along the coast, 1 at a beach near Salt Cave (11th), max. was 10 at Dukuhak (20th).

Grey Plover *(Pluvialis squatarola)*
Common along the coast in small flocks, especially in the Hara Mangroves.

Red-wattled Lapwing *(Vanellus indicus)*
Seemingly more common in 2016. None seen in desert areas, only 4 at Ramchah (20th).

Lesser Sand Plover *(Charadrius mongolus)*
Common on mudflats and along the coast, often mixed with Greater Sand and Kentish Plovers. Max. 40 at Dukuhak (20th).

Greater Sand Plover *(Charadrius leschenaultii)*
Common (probably less so than Lesser Sand Plover) along the coast.

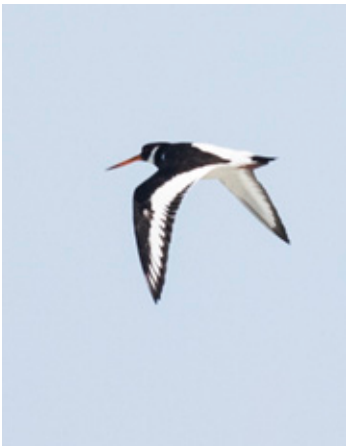
Kentish Plover *(Charadrius alexandrinus)*
More restricted to sandy beaches and mudflats than Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, but also seen in the Hara Mangroves. Max. 59 at Naz Islands beach (20th).

Common Ringed Plover *(Charadrius hiaticula)*
11 at Ramchah and 6 at Naz Islands beach (20th).

See-see Partridge (female) at Dehkhoda (LKH).

Laughing Dove at Soheili jetty (MSU).

Pallid Swift at Dulab (LKH).



Oystercatcher at Dukuhak (LKH).

Lesser Sand Plover at Dukuhak (LKH)

Bar-tailed Godwits in the Hara mangroves (LKH).

Terek Sandpipers at high tide in the Hara mangroves (LKH).

Redshanks and Greenshank in the Hara mangroves (MSU).

Crab Plovers in the Hara mangroves (LKH).

Whimbrel *(Numenius phaeopus)*
Rather common along the coast and in the Hara mangroves, max. 25 in one flock at Hara mangroves (21st).

Eurasian Curlew *(Numenius arquata)*
Common mudflats and in the Hara mangroves, max. 50 there (15th).

Bar-tailed Godwit *(Limosa lapponica)*
88 on a high tide roost in the Hara mangroves (15th), 15 at Dukuhak (20th) and 2 at Naz islands beach (20th).

Ruddy Turnstone *(Arenaria interpres)*
4 at Dulab (13th), 1 at Dukuhak (20th).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *(Calidris falcinellus)*
Only 1 at Hara mangroves (15th) among Curlew Sandpipers and Terek Sandpipers. They were more common in February 2016, probably early migrants then.

Curlew Sandpiper *(Calidris ferruginea)*
15 at Hara mangroves (15th), 8 at Dukuhak (20th), ca. 5 at Hara mangroves (21st).

Sanderling *(Calidris alba)*
20 at Nas islands beach (20th).

Dunlin *(Calidris alpina)*
Well scattered along beaches, mudflats and in the Hara mangroves. Max. were 15 at Dukuhak (20th).

Little Stint *(Calidris minuta)*
1 at Dukuhak and 4 at Ramchah (20th).

Terek Sandpiper *(Xenus cinereus)*
Common in the Hara mangroves, max. was a flock with 196 during high tide (15th), also seen in single-figures on other mudflats.

Common Sandpiper *(Actitis hypoleucos)*
Few observations of single birds in the Hara mangroves and on mudflats.

Green Sandpiper *(Tringa ochropus)*
1 at Hara mangroves (15th).

Common Greenshank *(Tringa nebularia)*
6 at Hara mangroves (15th) and several single observations on mudflats.

Marsh Sandpiper *(Tringa stagnatilis)*
2 at Dukuhak and 1 at Ramchah (20th).

Common Redshank *(Tringa totanus)*
Rather common along the coast and in the Hara mangroves.

Crab-Plover *(Dromas ardeola)*
367 on a high-tide roost at Hara mangroves (counted from pictures, 15th).

Slender-billed Gull *(Chroicocephalus genei)*
Very common at Dulab beach (393 on 13th), much smaller numbers elsewhere along the coast.

Black-headed Gull *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus)*
Only seen in the east of the island: 20 at Qeshm city, 1 at Ramchah, 1 at Mesen lagoon (20th).

Pallas's Gull *(Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus)*
Usually in small numbers among Steppe and Heuglin's gull: i.e. 7 at Dulab (11th) and 5+ there on (13th); none seen in the mangroves this time.

Steppe Gull *(Larus barabensis)*
Most common large gull; very big flocks of several hundreds at the fishing beach of Dulab and in smaller numbers everywhere along the coast. 10.000+ birds at a fish-drying farm near Ramchah (20th).

Heuglin's Gull *(Larus fuscus heuglini)*
Usually among Steppe Gulls, but in much smaller numbers (usually 5-10% in flocks were *heuglini*); very dark-mantled birds (*fusucs*?) on 13th at Dulab.

Gull-billed Tern *(Gelochelidon nilotica)*
Seen in small flocks along the coast (1 at Dulab on 11th, 2 on 13th; 2 at Sarbili beach on 14th) and in the Hara mangroves (3 on 15th and 11 on 21st).

Caspian Tern *(Hydroprogne caspia)*
Common and frequently seen in smaller numbers along the coast. Max. was 16 in the Hara mangroves (15th) and 15 at Dukuhak (20th).

Common Tern *(Sterna hirundo)*
Only seen once, 2 at Dulab (11th); „Eco Park" where the species was more common in 2016 was not visited this time.

Great Crested Tern *(Thalasseus bergii)*
Common in the Hara mangroves and in small numbers along the coast, max. were 20 at Dukuhak (20th).

Sandwich Tern *(Thalasseus sandvicensis)*
1 at the Beach near Salt Cave (11th) and 2 at north end of Qeshm City (20th).

Lesser Crested Tern *(Thalasseus bengalensis)*
Less common than Great Crested Tern on this trip. Max. 15 at Dukuhak (20th).

Great Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax carbo)*
Common along the coast and in the Hara mangroves. Max. were ca. 300 at Dukuhak (20th). No Socotra Cormorants were found.

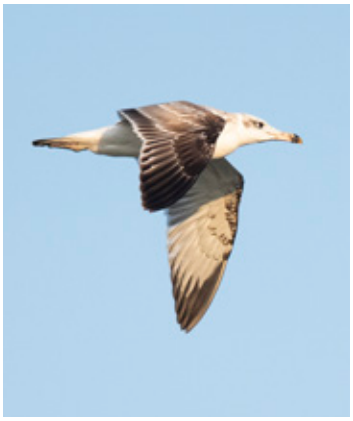
Dalmatian Pelican *(Pelecanus crispus)*
16 at Hara mangroves (15th), 74+ out at sea off Dukuhak (20th).

Grey Heron *(Ardea cinerea)*
Less common than Western Reef-Heron and Great Egret, but frequently seen. Max. were 6 at Dulab (13th).

Great White Egret *(Ardea alba)*
Common along the coast and in the Hara mangroves. Max. were 10 Dukuhak (20th).

Steppe Gull at Qeshm City (LKH).

Heuglin's Gull at Dulab (LKH).



Pallas's Gull at Dulab (LKH).

Great Crested Terns near Salt Cave (LKH).

Dalmatian Pelicans fishing offshore at Dukuhak (MSU).

Great White Egret at Dukuhak (LKH).

Western Reef-Herons at Dulab (LKH).

Striated Heron at Hara mangroves (LKH).

Egyptian Vultures at Dukuhak (LKH).

Pallid Scops Owl at Salt Cave (LKH).

Little Egret *(Egretta garzetta)*
Probably overlooked among the very common Western Reef-Herons: Just one sighting of five birds in the Hara mangroves (15th).

Western Reef-Heron *(Egretta gularis)*
Very common along the coast, with more birds of dark morph. Max were 81 at Dulab beach (13th) with 80% dark morph birds.

Cattle Egret *(Bubulcus ibis)*
Locally common, but apparently not widespread. Max. was 25 at Mesen lagoon (20th), small groups and single birds occasionally along the road.

Indian Pond Heron *(Ardeola grayii)*
Only some single birds at Dulab and in the Hara mangroves.

Striated Heron *(Butorides striata)*
1 Hara mangroves (15th) and 1 at dusk at Soheili jetty (19th).

Eurasian Spoonbill *(Platalea leucorodia)*
1 at Sarbili beach (14th), 8 at Hara mangroves (15th), 6 at Dukuhak (20th).

Osprey *(Pandion haliaetus)*
Three single observations along the coast.

Egyptian Vulture *(Neophron percnopterus)*
Very widespread, common throughout the island and sometimes tame. Maximums were hard to obtain, since birds were scattered and seldomly gathered in larger groups. Max. was 14 together near Soheili (19th).

Crested Honey-buzzard *(Pernis ptilorhynchus)*
5 observations of single birds: 2 in Dulab, 3 in Dehkhoda.

Greater Spotted Eagle *(Clanga clanga)*
Confined to the Hara mangroves: 3 on 15th, 1 on 19th, 2 on 20th.

Imperial Eagle *(Aquila heliaca)*
1 subad. near Dulab (12th), 1 ad. and 1 immat. between Aiport and Qeshm City (20th).

Western Marsh Harrier *(Circus aeruginosus)*
Single birds were frequently seen hunting along beaches and in the Hara mangroves (there 5 on 15th).

Shikra *(Accipiter badius)*
4 observations, i.e. 2 at Dulab (13th).

Pallid Scops Owl *(Otus brucei)*
1 near the entrance to Salt Cave (11th) flushed from Acacia trees.

Spotted Owlet *(Athene brama)*
1 near Dulab (13th) and 2+ calling birds at dusk near Dehkhoda (15th) and 1 on (17th).

Eurasian Hoopoe *(Upupa epops)*
1 at Tonban (21st).

Common Kingfisher *(Alcedo atthis)*
Single birds in the Hara mangroves and at Dukuhak.

Green Bee-eater *(Merops orientalis)*
Very common both in and around towns as well as in semi-deserts. Max. 20 together at Dehkhoda on 19th.

Indian Roller *(Coracias benghalensis)*
Curiously lacking in the west of the island but rather common (especially along roads) in the east.

Common Kestrel *(Falco tinnunculus)*
2 at Tonban (21th).

Barbary Falcon *(Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides)*
Single observations of hunting birds along the coast near Dulab.

Ring-necked Parakeet *(Psittacula krameri)*
Rather common. Frequently seen in small groups, also several kilometers away from human settlements. Max. were six at Tonban (21st).

Eurasian Golden Oriole *(Oriolus oriolus)*
1 juv./W? at Qeshm Roof on 16th. *O. kundoo* not excluded. *Oriolus* seems to be very rare in winter in the region (only observation from Khatar on ebird), winter areas of *kundoo* are much closer.

Isabelline Shrike *(Lanius isabellinus)*
Single birds around Dulab, Sarbili and Dukuhak. All apparent *isabellinus*.

Great Grey Shrike *(Lanius excubitor aucheri)*
Single birds, also singing individuals. *Pallidirostris* was seen several times on previous trips but lacking (one potential sighting) this time.

House Crow *(Corvus splendens)*
Only seen in Qeshm City, max 16 there on 16th.

Brown-necked Raven *(Corvus ruficollis)*
Fairly common in low densities, usually in pairs, max. 7 in Dulab (13th).

Desert Lark *(Ammomanes deserti)*
Fairly common in desert areas. Max. 16 near Dulab (13th).

Crested Lark *(Galerida cristata)*
Less common than Desert Lark. Max. 9 near Tonban (21th).

Graceful Prinia *(Prinia gracilis)*
Fairly common but usually not seen. Singing individuals frequently heard.

Clamorous Reed Warbler
(Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens)
Several singing individuals in the Hara mangroves on both visits.

Sand Martin *(Riparia riparia)*
2 at Dulab (12th), 1 at Sarbili beach (14th).

Green Bee-eaters at Dehkhoda (LKH).

Great Grey Shrike at Dehkhoda (LKH).

Presumed Eurasian Oriole (LKH).

Brown-necked Raven at Salt Cave (LKH).

Crested Lark at Qeshm Roof (LKH).

Desert Lark at Salt Cave (LKH).

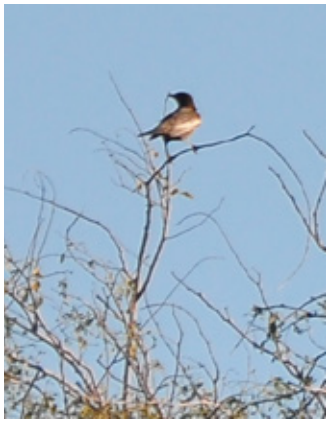
Pale Rock Martin nesting inside Salt Cave (LKH).

Siberian Chiffchaff, Tonban (MSU).

Hume's Warbler, Tonban (MSU).

Asian Desert Warbler at Sarbili (LKH).

Lesser Whitethroat (LKH)



Ring Ouzel at Tonban (MSU).

Black-throated Thrush (LKH)

Pale Rock Martin *(Ptyonoprogne fuligula)*
Common. Max. 8 near Dulab (13th). Nest-building inside the Salt Cave, close to the entrance.

White-eared Bulbul *(Pycnonotus leucotis)*
Common, especiall in and around towns but also seen in less vegetated semi-deserts. Max. 11 at Tonban (21st).

Hume's Warbler *(Phylloscopus humei)*
2 at Tonban gardens (21st).

Plain Leaf Warbler *(Phylloscopus neglectus)*
Fairly common in gardens and other habitats with bushes/trees.

Common Chiffchaff *(Phylloscopus collybita)*
Apparently both *collybita*-types and *tristis*-types present. In the Hara mangroves, songs of both subspecies but only calls of tristis were heard. Observations also at Chahkooh Canyon and Tonban.

Asian Desert Warbler *(Sylvia nana)*
At least 5 at Sarbili beach (1 caught and ringed, 14th) and 3 at Tonban (21st). Always in sandy desert areas.

Lesser Whitethroat *(Sylvia curruca)*
Common in bushes, trees and gardens of all kinds. Focus bird of this trip, 33 birds caught and DNA sampled. In the field and in hand impressions suggest ssp. *halimodendri*, maybe *minula* some birds. No results yet.

Menetries's Warbler *(Sylvia mystacea)*
1 at Dulab (13th), 1 male „Dehkhoda Roof" (15th). This species was more common on the island in February 2016.

Afghan Babbler *(Turdoides huttoni)*
Scarce and localized but then in larger groups. Max. 9 at Dehkhoda (19th).

Common Myna *(Acridotheres tristis)*
Only some birds seen in Qeshm City (20th).

Song Thrush *(Turdus philomelos)*
1 at Qeshm Roof (16th) in a flock with Dark-throated Thrushes and Oriole, 2 at Dehkhoda (17th).

Ring Ouzel *(Turdus torquatus)*
2 briefly in a Wadi with trees in the sand desert north of Tonban (21th).

Black-throated Thrush *(Turdus atrogularis)*
6 (5 male, 1 female) at Qeshm Roof (16th). For some minutes the flock was joined by a Song Thrush and an Oriole when perched high up in a tree.

Black Redstart *(Phoenicurus ochruros)*
Single birds in many places. Max. 4 at Dehkhoda (17th). Apparently all ssp. *phoenicuroides*.

Isabelline Wheatear *(Oenanthe isabellina)*
1 at Sarbili beach (14th), 1 at Tonban (21st).

Desert Wheatear *(Oenanthe deserti)*
5 at Sarbili beach (14th), 2 at Dehkhoda (19th), 6 at Tonban (21st).

Pied Wheatear *(Oenanthe pleschanka)*
1 female (potential) at Sarbili beach (14th).

Variable Wheatear *(Oenanthe picata)*
Most common Wheatear in different habitats, more males than females. Max. 7 at Dulab (13th).

Persian Wheatear *(Oenanthe chrysopygia)*
1 Salt Cave (11th), 1 at „Dehkhoda Roof" (15th).

Purple Sunbird *(Cinnyris asiaticus)*
Common wherever bushes or trees were found, 15th at Dehkhoda (17th).

Indian Silverbill *(Euodice malabarica)*
12 at Dehkhoda (19th).

House Sparrow *(Passer domesticus)*
Common.

Grey Wagtail *(Motacilla cinerea)*
1 at the edge of Qeshm City on rocks at the coast (20th).

Citrine Wagtail *(Motacilla citreola)*
1 female at Dehkhoda (16th), 1 female at the Dekhoda Mosque (18th).

White Wagtail *(Motacilla alba)*
Fairly common in small numbers. Max. 31 at Dulab (13th). One „Masked Wagtail" ssp. *personata* at Dehkhoda (17th).

Long-billed Pipit *(Anthus similis)*
Fairly common; no sightings in February 2014 and 2016. 6 observations of 10 individuals, sometimes together with Tawny pipits. Max. 3 at Sarbili beach (14th).

Tawny Pipit *(Anthus campestris)*
6 sightings of 14 individuals, sometimes together with Long-tailed pipits.

Water Pipit *(Anthus spinoletta)*
1 at Dukuhak (20th).

Trumpeter Finch *(Bucanetes githagineus)*
10 near Dulab (13th), 53 at „Dehkhoda Roof" (15th), 2 at Tonban (21st).

Eurasian Siskin *(Spinus spinus)*
Rather surprising! 23+ in gardens at Dehkhoda (17th), 8+ there on 19th, associated with House Sparrows, many males.

Striolated Bunting *(Emberiza striolata)*
Scarce in semi-deserts, five observations.

Variable Wheatear at Salt Cave (LKH).

Persian Wheatear, Salt Cave (MSU).

Citrine Wagtail at Dehkhoda (LKH).

Masked Wagtail, Dehkhoda (MSU).

Long-billed Pipit at Sarbili (LKH).

Tawny Pipit at Sarbili (LKH).

Siskins at Dehkhoda (MSU).

Hara mangroves (MSU)

Hara mangroves (LKH)

Dulab beach (LKH)

Dehkhoda jetty (LKH)

Wadi near Dulab (LKH)

LKH and MSU ringing Lesser whitethroats near Dulab.

Lesser Whitethroat (LKH)

Lesser Whitethroat (LKH)

Salt Cave (LKH)

Salt Cave (LKH)

Salt Cave (LKH)

Guard feeding Afghan babbles near Salt Cave (LKH).

Chahkooh Canyon (LKH)

Near Salt Cave (LKH).

Near Sarbili Beach (LKH).

Seyed Earth Dam (LKH)

„Dehkhoda Roof“ (LKH)

Sunrise at Dehkhoda with the silhouette of „Dehkhoda Roof“ (MSU).

Dehkhoda (LKH)

Qeshm Roof (LKH)

Dukuhak (LKH)

Walton‘s mudskipper (Periophthalmus waltoni) ? at Dukuhak (LKH).

Near Dulab (LKH).

Migratory locust (Locustella migratoria) ? at Tomban (MSU).

Gulls at Ramchah (MSU).

Near Salakh (LKH).

Environmental education program with Qeshm Environmental Conservation Institute (QECI) supported by the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME).