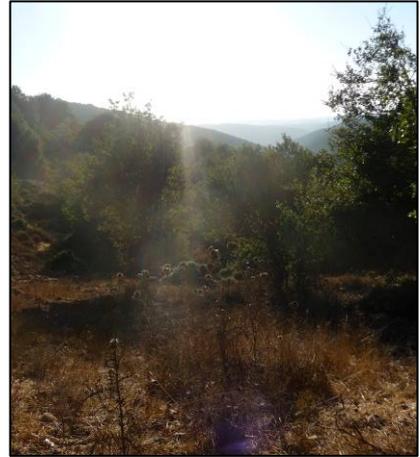


Israel – 4th-13th September 2009



Tristan Norton

A report detailing a 10 day trip to Israel between 4th and 13th September 2009. My wife was again helping out with a Palaeolithic excavation in the Hula valley and I tagged along for the ride. Essentially I spent 90% of the time out birding, the rest was spent helping at the dig site and doing more touristy activities. Huge thanks once again to Gonen Sharon and colleagues from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for providing accommodation, food and good company at Gadot and for the experience of digging bones and stones.

Sites visited

En Avdat, Kibbutz Lotan, Hai-Bar Yotvata, km20 saltpans, Eilat, Zohar Pool, En Gedi, Hula Reserve, Agmon ha'Hula, Gume fishponds, Leshavot Ha'bashan fishponds, Mount Hermon, Gamla, Jordan river nr Gadot, Kibbutz Gadot, Mount Meron and Upper Galilee.

Species seen = 115

Literature

Birding Hotspots of Israel (North and South) by Shirihai *et al.* Great for general info, but alas many of the sites are either gone or conditions have changed – maybe time for a reprint guys? Collins Bird Guide by Mullarney *et al* for general reference.

Accommodation and Food

Two nights at Kibbutz Lotan in the Arava, six nights at Kibbutz Gadot in the southern Hula valley and one night in the upper Galilee at Matat. Gadot kibbutz is fantastic – very, very friendly indeed and the pool is a godsend. Food overall was excellent – some real local treats here and there e.g. falafel, hummus etc.

4th September

Arrived at Tel Aviv at approximately 6am and after picking up the hire car (Budget Rentals at the airport – very quick and easy and relatively cheap too) we headed south towards Kibbutz Lotan on Route 40. After stopping in on the outskirts of Be'er Sheva for a top-notch breakfast/brunch we made a stop at En Avdat National Park, close to Ben Gurion's home and grave. Not having much time for

birding on the drive down, the only species seen from the car window were **Hooded crow**, **Collared dove** and **Laughing dove**. A dead dog was nice...

En Avdat is a spectacular gorge cut out of limestone, with horizontal veins of the blackest flint running through – a geologist's dream. At the entrance gate (where we purchased a fantastically good-value-for-money multi-entrance ticket to the INRPA sites) there was a single **Mourning wheatear** perched on the barbed wire and a little further down the track we came across a party of three **Green bee-eaters** lined up on a fence plus more Mourning wheatears – a good start to the visit and two new birds for me!



Mourning wheatear and Green bee-eater at En Avdat

We entered the park itself and in a small grove of acacia and tamarisk bushes at the car park we found **Blackstart** – an incredibly bold and tame species. The walk along the (already baking) gorge revealed many tutting and chacking sounds emanating from the shrubs and boulders – certainly several **Eastern olivaceous warblers** were present as well as **Graceful warblers**, **Blackstarts** and **Mourning wheatears**. Following the small stream bed through the gorge brought us out at a small waterfall and pool with some stands of rush. The pool was buzzing with Lesser emperor dragonflies *Anax parthenope* and an unidentified darter *Sympetrum* species. The water also contains a population of freshwater crabs! **Moorhens** were also in abundance.



Bird species encountered along the path were a noisy and active group of **Tristram's starlings**, two cruising **Griffon vultures** and a party of three **Desert larks** slaking their thirst in a small pool, allowing fantastic close views of these beautiful birds – larks are stunning creatures up close. Also present were a small group of **Rock martins**, flitting about the upper levels of the gorge walls.



Desert lark at En Avdat

Leaving En Avdat when it really got *too* hot (35°C) we continued south to arrive at Lotan in the late afternoon. The route through the Arava is exceptionally bleak for someone used to the lush greens of Britain – the landscape is generally beige, dusty and with only the occasional acacia shrub or palm plantation to break the monotony. Bird species spotted along the way were **Brown-necked raven** and **Chukar**.

After a much-needed siesta we had time to take in our surroundings a bit more and make a judgement on the place. I have to say I was underwhelmed with Lotan – the website is very professional and gives the impression that the place is a Mecca for birders and is well equipped to accommodate them. Our experience was that this was maybe true several years ago but there is very little in the way of birder-orientated facilities for late summer visitors. True, there is a small 'bird reserve' but the signage is so faded as to be unreadable, there is no sightings board and the reserve had virtually no birds in whatsoever, presumably due to the complete absence of any water in the ponds. The organic gardens mentioned in Shirihai are gone, now replaced by a goat farm.



Sunset over Lotan Bird Reserve...where are the birds?

I do realise that perhaps September is not *the* best time to visit Lotan, but I was disappointed and I have read other trip reports which echo my feelings – is Lotan living on a reputation? Maybe...

Also, throughout our stay the kibbutz bar was closed (I suppose it was Shabbat – but there was wine with dinner) and nobody seemed able to tell us much – not really what you expect when you are paying a lot of money for a room and the place markets itself as a tourist destination. All in all not a

great place to be a tourist and I don't think I would recommend the place to others I'm afraid. The best thing is its location for going elsewhere.

Still, over the two days there (in good, clean accommodation it must be said) we added **Barn swallow**, **Yellow-vented bulbul**, **Palestine sunbird**, **Hoopoe**, **House sparrow**, **Red-backed shrike**, **Yellow wagtail**, **Blackcap**, **Spotted flycatcher**, **Pallid swift** and **Spur-winged plover** as well as additional Collared and Laughing doves and Rock martins.

5th September 2009

A really enjoyable day. Started the morning with a reasonable breakfast at Lotan and then drove a short way south to Hai-Bar Yotvata Biblical Wildlife Park. Despite the name, this place is a serious venture entailing a laudable effort to re-introduce a number of large herbivorous mammals (and one large bird) previously extirpated from the Arava.



The site contains two activities – a walk taking you past enclosures, pens and tanks containing the typical desert fauna of the Arava including beautiful Leopards, Striped hyenas, Caracals, Wolves, Jackals, smaller cats, porcupines, numerous small furry things such as gerbils, snakes, lizards, tortoises and birds. The latter group comprises Eagle owl, Kestrel and Egyptian, Griffon and Lappet-faced vultures (the ugliest bird ever?). The end of the walk contains a night-time enclosure exhibiting the nocturnal denizens of the Arava such as scorpions, more small furry things, a pair of sexed-up Barn owls going at it like knives, and Little owl.

The enclosure area turned up two interesting species – **Arabian babbler** and a very brief but clinching view of an **Arabian warbler** – a new bird for me! Other species seen around the reserve were **Sand martin**, Rock martin, Swallow, Red-backed and **Masked shrike**, House sparrow, Palestine sunbird, **Isabelline wheatear**, **Indian silverbill**, and Collared and Laughing doves.



Gas Mark 4 (180°C) for 3 Days, Baste Regularly...

The second part of the Hai-Bar experience is a safari through the park, accompanied by a very useful CD commentary, and allowing close views of the larger creatures that have been bred at the reserve. Ostriches are everywhere, with moult making them look like huge plucked chickens, as well as two species of Oryx, Somali wild ass and other antelope-like things.

Moving on from Hai-Bar we headed south again and stopped in at the famous km20 salt pans. Hmm. A great site for birding but the place looks like a bad chemical spill has occurred, with the pools glowing vivid reds, yellows and greens. Driving slowly along the western embankments, the shallow waters were teeming with birds – scores of **Greater flamingos** wading in the deeper parts along with dozens of **Slender-billed gulls**, a lone **Lesser black-backed gull**, two **Whiskered terns**, many **Black-winged stilts**, Spur-winged plovers, **Temminck's stints**, **Redshanks**, **Marsh sandpipers**, **Ringed plovers** and no doubt other distant wader species lost in the heat haze. The views across to the mountains of Jordan are superb.



Chemical spillage? Slender-billed gulls at km20 salt pans

The approach track, orchards and fields leading from the 40 held several Green bee-eaters, juvenile Red-backed and Masked shrikes, a single **Namaqua dove** (only one of the trip) and my bogey bird (at last) a lone **Rufous bush-robin** allowing very close views.



Namaqua dove at km20

From km20 pools we continued south to Eilat, which is every bit as naff as I had imagined – huge monstrous hotels clog the skyline. We called in at the Eilat International Birdwatching Centre just north of the city – a collection of several pools and saltpans with islands and areas of scrub and reed. Not too many birds here but had a single Greater flamingo, Black-winged stilt, Graceful warbler and Ringed plover, plus a fly-over party of **European bee-eaters**. A short drive away is North Beach – a rather grotty stretch of gravelly sand next to a suspiciously sewage outfall-like stream. The offshore buoys held several **White-eyed gulls** – very strange looking birds and oddly reminiscent of a curlew in silhouette. We spent much time watching these birds as they cruised in to land on the beach once the bathers had dispersed. A distant offshore tern remained unidentified. The stream/sewage outfall inland held several **Grey herons**, a single **Squacco heron**, **Little egret** and a lone **Pied kingfisher**.



White-eyed gull at Eilat North Beach

Later on we did some snorkelling at Coral Beach Nature Reserve - amazing colourful fish and other underwater blobs – much recommended! Spent the evening eating a picnic at Timna Park, watching the Jordanian mountains turn gradually from brown to pink to red to grey – stunning.

6th September 2009

Left Lotan in the early morning aiming to reach Gadot in the Hula valley by early evening. A detour through a huge crater to some coloured sands turned up more Blackstarts, our first Rock hyrax and the only **White-crowned black wheatear** of the trip.

Hitting the Dead Sea region about lunchtime we stopped in briefly at Zohar Pool for Dead Sea sparrow – no luck but did see **Crested larks**, Green bee-eater, House sparrow, **Mallard**, **Kentish plover**, Little egret, Grey heron and numerous hirundines including **House martin**.

A quick pit stop at En Gedi for an ice cream added more Tristram's starlings, **Fan-tailed ravens**, House sparrows and Yellow-vented bulbuls plus the ubiquitous Nubian ibex.

We hit Bet Shean and skirted the Kinneret by late afternoon and stopped in on the eastern shore to watch dozens of kite surfers having a ball in the extremely windy conditions.

Arrived at the Hula valley soon after and had a good few hours to kill before meeting our friends at Kibbutz Gadot. On the road via Gonen we had a magnificent **Short-toed eagle** right overhead and a good view of a **White-breasted kingfisher** on a fencepost. We stumbled across a superb restaurant - Dubrovin Farm – right next to the main Hula Reserve. This place is awesome – a fully restored 19th C farmstead with a fixed menu comprising numerous delicious salad dishes and a main course of six roasted meats followed by to-die-for deserts – heaven for weary travellers and good value at about

£25 each! If you are in need of a good feed you must go here! Spent the evening drinking beers at Gadot.

7th September 2009

Up at 0530 to get to the dig site just north of the Pkak Bridge on Route 918 north of Gadot. The willows, brambles and eucalyptus along the river banks were swarming with Eastern olivaceous warblers, **Cetti's warblers** and **Reed warblers**, the skies were full of Barn and **Red-rumped swallows**, **Syrian woodpeckers** hammered away at the papyrus stems, White-breasted kingfishers called loudly from the power lines and best of all I managed to spend a half hour listening to and trying to stalk a calling **Black francolin** – I got to within several feet of the bird and I just couldn't see it! Finally got a decent view of a male and female skulking away in the long grass.

I strongly recommend exploring the Jordan river south of Pkak/Benot Ya'aqov – this is the only easily accessible stretch of the river and there's plenty of parking, especially on the eastern bank. There's plenty of shade, the river is good for swimming and the wildlife – avian and non-avian – is superb. Swimming chameleons, tortoises, mongooses and howling jackals are just some of the wildlife experiences to be had. The river corridor funnels migrants and I'm certain that a couple of days' exploration will turn up a few goodies.



The Dig Site, on the River Jordan south of Pkak Bridge

At about 0700 I headed north to visit Hermon, calling in at Nimrod Fortress on the way. Hermon looms large over the upper Hula valley and the Golan, and the drive through the minor roads takes you through some unexpectedly European-looking scenery, particularly around Dan, with hedge-lined villages, babbling streams and much greenery. At the Nimrod Fortress – a mediaeval Islamic redoubt – the views back down the valley are superb and overlook rugged limestone gorges covered with woodland and scrub. The fortress ruins held many charming Rock hyrax, including many youngsters, and birds seen from the walls included **Great tit** and **Sparrowhawk**.

Leaving the fortress I headed onwards and upwards to the Hermon. Arriving at the huge tarmac car park at the lower ski-lift area I bought a 40NIS ticket to the top. The fun ride upwards (alone except for a very funny group of Chinese tourists) yielded flocks of **Linnet**, **Greenfinch** and the occasional Great tit and **Sardinian warbler**.

The upper ski-lift area affords spectacular views across both Israel and neighbouring Syria. After a friendly chat with one of the soldiers I walked further up, looking in at a small quarry area on the way. Here I had my first glimpses of **Syrian serin** – I ended up seeing many birds but they were extremely mobile. Also present were numerous **Northern wheatears**, Isabelline wheatears, Linnets and **Black**

redstarts. Oddly, two **Willow warblers** were up there too! Further encounters with Syrian serins were frequent and I had a pair of fly-by **Rock nuthatches**. No luck with either Shore lark or Crimson-winged finch though – apparently these are higher up, nearer the military installations and depending on who you talk to the soldiers are either uptight humourless sods or just bored kids – either way they have assault rifles and I didn't want to start wandering off.

The evening was spent photographing the numerous Palestine sunbirds flitting around every flowering shrub at Gadot. Whilst enjoying a beer in the cool evening a Scops owl began calling for about a half hour – a bit late in the year I think.

8th September 2009

A whole day at Agmon ha'Hula. Arrived on site at about 0830, and more or less first through the door. Hired a golf buggy (the only available transport with shade!) and set off along the track circling the reserve. As per 2008, the place is literally heaving with birds from the start – most obvious are the hordes of cattle egrets following the numerous tractors and harvesters across the fields. The other obvious species are Spur-winged plover, Crested lark and Isabelline wheatear which are just about everywhere.



Cattle egrets abound at Agmon ha'Hula

The track initially takes you on a long drive south, with open crop fields and a ditch to the west, the huge mechanised sprinkler systems supporting lines of egrets and frequent **European Rollers**. Raptors were fewer in number than last year, although I did see plenty of Marsh harriers, a juvenile Pallid harrier, Short-toed eagle, Common kestrels and a Eurasian Hobby.



Isabelline wheatear at Agmon ha'Hula

I had more time this year to scan the various lakes, pools and ditches and turned up a flock of c.20 **Eurasian spoonbills**, numerous **Glossy ibis**, **White storks**, Grey herons, **Purple heron**, Squacco heron, **Great white**, Little and Cattle egrets, several **Ruff**, c.30 **Avocets**, Black-winged stilts, Marsh sandpipers, **Green sandpiper** and, to begin with, three **White pelicans**. At about 1500hrs I looked up and saw a huge flock of swirling pelicans coming down to roost at the centre of the main lake – one of the reserve staff estimated the flock at 2,800, a seriously impressive spectacle.



Some of the 2,800 White pelicans at Agmon

Ducks included **Mallard**, **Shoveler**, **Garganey** and a single **Marbled teal**. All three kingfisher species – Pied, White-breasted and **River kingfisher** – were present in good numbers. Other passerines present around the reserve were **Zitting cisticola**, Graceful warbler, **Golden oriole**, reed warbler and **Ortolan bunting**. **Coots** were plentiful.

All in all I managed three complete leisurely circuits of the reserve and had a fantastic day at what must be one of the premier birding sites in the Western Palaearctic – photographic opportunities abound and the sheer variety and quality of bird species present is a spectacle to behold.



The quality of birds at Agmon is fantastic...

Glossy ibis, Spur-winged plover, Cattle egret and White-breasted kingfishers

9th September 2009

Spent the morning at the main Hula reserve, arriving at opening time at c. 0800. There were some contractors on site so it was a bit noisy near the visitor centre/car park area and the bulldozers ploughing through some scrub didn't really help. Still, I wandered off around the paths towards the tower hide and lake. The first pool you come to is the water buffalo area – these impressive beasts wallowing in the mud and shallows. The fields beyond held at least a dozen foraging Hoopoes plus numerous Spur-winged plovers and doves, including **Turtle dove**. The margins of the dense *Cyperus* stands fringing the pools and dykes held many Common moorhens and at least two **Little crakes**. The tower hide was actually open this year and allows excellent panoramic views across the reserve – from the hide I was able to spot Little crane and get a half-decent view of a **Clamorous reed warbler**.

In the distance, looking north and east, I could see various storks and raptors beginning to rise on thermals – White stork, **Black stork**, Kestrel and **Honey buzzard**. I had a very distant view of a fast-moving **sandgrouse** flock heading south-west over Route 90 – no idea which species though.



From the tower I moved on to the covered walkway-hide overlooking the main lake – the hide had just been sprayed with wood treatment and so was a bit sticky and rather smelly! From the hide I could see a flock of c.15 White pelicans loafing in the corner plus various herons and egrets amongst the *Cyperus* beds. Several Honey buzzards flapped heavily over the lake, trying to get some height.

This reserve does not really compare with Agmon for variety or accessibility although it is always worth a look – the main attraction is clearly the 20,000 cranes that gather in winter and the attendant raptors.

From the Hula valley I headed south to Gamla on the eastern side of the Kinneret. I spent most of the remainder of the day relaxing in the covered vulture watchpoint overlooking the gorge – it's shady, cool and the birds float by at eye level. It doesn't compare to Monfrague for numbers but the views you get of soaring raptors are certainly comparable.



Gamla Gorge

During the afternoon I had close encounters with several Griffon vultures, **Egyptian vultures**, Short-toed eagles and two flybys from a **Bonelli's eagle**. The strong winds blowing up the gorge kept passerine and hirundine numbers to a minimum but I was able to spot at least one **Little swift**, a small party of **Alpine swifts**, **Blue rock thrush**, Great tit, Isabelline wheatear and a lone **Lesser grey shrike** at the side of the main access track.

Apparently only one Griffon vulture chick reached fledging this year in the entire Galilee – an absolute disaster for this species in Israel, especially after last year's increase in poisoning. There is a turf war

being waged between farmers in the area, resulting in deliberate fires and the use of poison to kill rivals' cattle – bottom line is that the vultures suffer badly.

A **Tawny owl** was calling at Gadot during the early evening.



Griffon vultures – having a hard time in the Galilee

10th and 11th September 2009

Spent the majority of both days in the Hula valley, at Gume and Leshavot fishponds. Gume fishponds are dead easy to access, either from the minor road from Gonen or from the recently revamped Gume junction (good restaurants, bars and cafés here by the petrol station – I recommend the pizzas and various pastries sold at the Domino cafe.)

Entering the fishponds at the gravel track c.500m east from the junction, I drove straight down to the site office to ask permission – I would recommend you do this rather than just turn up and start driving around. The chap I met was more than happy to let me hang around and drive around the pools – “Enjoy yourself!” he said, and I did.



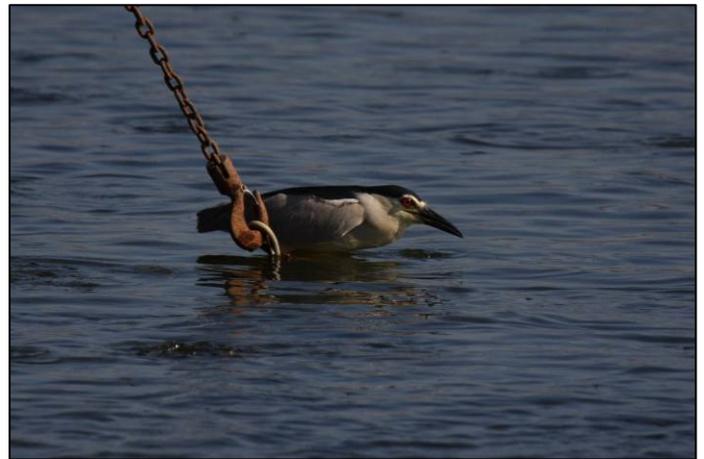
Egrets and Ibis at one of the many pools at Gume

There are a variety of pools at the site, ranging from deep water to dry mud. The main ornithological spectacle is the huge number of herons – Grey, Squacco and Night and Little, Cattle and Great egrets literally in their hundreds – all lined up along the banks or perched on the many wires and cables, allowing superb close views once they've settled down. Glossy ibis and both storks are also present in good numbers and I had a single Purple heron on 11th.

The drier pools towards the centre of the site held large numbers of waders – Spur-winged plovers, stilts, Redshank, Greenshank, Marsh sandpiper, Ringed plover, Temminck's stint, **Little stint**, **Wood sandpiper**, Green sandpiper, Common sandpiper and Ruff.

Large numbers of Yellow-legged gulls were present throughout the site – the strangest sight I saw was two Night herons swimming like ducks around the fish feeding hoppers. Every ten minutes or so the hoppers spray the water with food pellets, initiating a fish and bird feeding frenzy.

Ducks were plentiful, mostly Mallard but also many Shoveler and Garganey and best of all, a flock of 17 Marbled teal – a good sized group of this endangered species. Raptors were a constant presence and included two **Ospreys**, Marsh harriers and occasional **Black kites**.



Juvenile and Adult Night heron – a very common species at Gume

Another good result was coming across a party of three Egyptian mongoose scurrying around one of the pools. Tried to give them some pizza crust but they weren't interested.



Egyptian mongoose *Herpestes ichneumon* and Pied kingfisher at Gume

Leshavot fishponds are several km east of Gume and, as stated in Shirihai, can be found immediately opposite the Leshavot kibbutz entrance. Not having permission to wander, I restricted my movements to the two or three pools nearest the kibbutz – parking is very simple just off the main road. The first pool you come to is small and fringed by dense reed and scrub except the eastern bank – from here I saw all three kingfisher species (on one wire!), Moorhen, **Goldfinch**, and Graceful warbler.

The second, larger pool is also fringed by reed and shrubs and has many hidden bays. Again, kingfishers were ever present and the marginal vegetation held several obliging Clamorous reed warblers. A pair of **Pygmy cormorants** dropped in on 10th – they plummeted straight into the water and dived, only to be seen again when flushed late by a group of low-flying IDF helicopters. The helicopters, and a passing Marsh harrier, also managed to flush two Night herons and two **Little bitterns** from the dense vegetation.



Clamorous reed warbler at Leshavot

On the afternoon of the 10th, our wedding anniversary, we headed off east to the Mediterranean coast north of Nahariya. After battling the traffic we ended up at a sandy beach just south of the Lebanon border – the beach was OK but there was a huge amount of general litter all over the place and the only new birds were a solitary **Turnstone** and small parties of presumed **Rock doves** around the coastal cliffs.

After this we headed back west, passing through the Druze stronghold of Hurfeish (fantastic food here) and went on to Mount Meron, the Olive-tree warbler site in Shirihai. Meron is clothed in beautiful oak forest, dripping with lichens, a most unexpected habitat to find in Israel really. Of course I wasn't expecting to find any of these giant Hippos but you never know...what I did see were several Black redstarts, a Sparrowhawk and an **Orphean warbler**. Watched the sun set over the Galilee and drove back to Gadot for food.

Speaking the next day with the regional manager for the INRPA, apparently Olive-tree warbler is very scarce in Northern Israel now – the best site is not actually Meron but another nearby hillside, and the local ornithologist has not seen or heard them there for the last three years.

12th and 13th September 2009

Spent the morning of the 12th at the dig site and was able to watch birds migrating overhead as well as the resident species along the river valley. Raptors included two Griffon vultures, Montagu's harrier, Short-toed eagle and Kestrel. Bee-eaters were regular and a large feeding group of Alpine

swifts was notable. White storks were going through in good numbers also. Found a dead Eastern olivaceous warbler on the top of the sheet we were using to shade the dig site – the poor thing was virtually feathers and bone, with a sternum as sharp as a razor.

After saying farewell to Gadot, we headed back into the upper Galilee to stay at a friend's house in a small hamlet called Matat. The views from here are amazing and the streets are lined with delicious fig and pomegranate trees – we had a good feed on these freebies. No new birds added, but this region gives a totally different experience of Israel – wooded, damp and cool.

Overall then, another great trip to Israel. The landscapes are often stunning, the people are very friendly, though blunt, and the wildlife is exceptional. For some reason people seem to single-out Israel for particular criticism without actually taking the trouble to go there, talk to people and find out about the place – the network of parks and reserves is most impressive and there are many good folk working hard for wildlife – they deserve support.

Systematic List

Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Common at Hula valley wetlands
White pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	2,800 at Agmon, smaller numbers at Hula
Pygmy cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	2 at Leshavot fishponds
Little bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2 at Leshavot fishponds
Night heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Abundant throughout Hula valley esp. Gume
Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Common at Hula valley wetlands
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Abundant throughout Hula valley wetlands
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Abundant throughout Hula valley wetlands
Great egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	Small numbers at all Hula valley wetlands
Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	One each at Agmon and Gume fishponds
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Abundant at all Hula valley wetlands
Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Regular in Hula valley
White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Very common throughout Hula valley
Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Abundant at all Hula valley wetlands
Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	20+ at Agmon
Greater flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Very common at km20 salt pans
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Small numbers at all wetland sites
Eurasian shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Small numbers at all wetland sites
Marbled teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	17 at Gume fishponds, 1 at Agmon

Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Small numbers at Agmon
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Very common at Agmon and Gume
Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Common at Gamla, occasional elsewhere
Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Two birds at Gamla
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Two birds at Gume fishponds
Short-toed eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Regular throughout the North
Bonelli's eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>	Single birds seen at Gamla
Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Just two birds seen at Gume fishponds
Eurasian marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Common throughout Hula valley
Pallid harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Single juvenile at Agmon
Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Ringtail over Jordan river near Gadot
Honey buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Very common throughout Hula valley
Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Single birds seen at Nimrod Fortress and Meron
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common throughout the North
Eurasian hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Single bird hunting over Agmon
Black francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Frequent along Jordan river near Gadot
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Occasional throughout Israel
Common quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Several calling birds at Agmon
Little crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Two birds at Hula reserve
Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common at all wetland sites
Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Very common at Agmon
Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	20+ at Agmon
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Common at all wetland sites
Ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Regular at all wetland sites
Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Several birds at Zohar pool
Spur-winged plover	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	Abundant throughout the North
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Single bird on coast north of Nahariya
Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Common at km20 pools and Hula valley wetlands

Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Several at Gume fishponds
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Several at Gume fishponds
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Singles at Gume and Agmon
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Several birds at all Hula valley wetlands
Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Regular at all wetland sites
Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Regular at all wetland sites
Marsh sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Common at all wetland sites
Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Single bird at Agmon
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	5+ at Leshavot fishponds
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	10+ at Agmon, several at Gume
Slender-billed gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	Dozens at km20 salt pans
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Common at all Hula valley wetlands
Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Single bird at km20 salt pans
White-eyed gull	<i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>	6+ at Eilat North Beach
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Two birds at Akko
Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Two birds at km20 salt pans, single bird at Agmon
Feral pigeon/Rock dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock doves on Med coast
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Abundant throughout
Eurasian turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Common in North
Laughing dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Abundant throughout
Namaqua dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	Single bird at km20 salt pans
Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Heard calling at Gadot
Scops owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	Heard calling at Gadot
Alpine swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	Several at Gamla, large flock over Jordan at Gadot
Pallid swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	Occasional in south e.g. Lotan
Little swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Several distant birds at Gamla
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Common throughout

River kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Common at all Hula valley wetlands
White-breasted kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Common throughout Hula valley
Pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Common throughout Hula valley, 1 at Eilat
European bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Common migrant through Hula valley
Green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis cyanophrys</i>	Common in south, e.g. En Avdat, km20
European roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	Many birds at Agmon
Ring-necked parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Abundant throughout Hula valley
Syrian woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	Common throughout Hula valley, Hermon, Meron
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristatus</i>	Very common throughout, esp. in North
Desert lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	Several birds at En Avdat
Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Regular throughout
Rock martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Common in south, e.g. Lotan En Avdat
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common throughout
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Common, esp. In Hula valley
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Occasional throughout
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Regular migrant throughout
Yellow-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>	Very common throughout
Rufous bush-robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes syriacus</i>	Single bird at km20 saltpans
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurous semirufus</i>	Common in North, e.g. Hermon, Meron
Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Many birds on summit of Hermon
Isabelline wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Very common throughout, esp. Hula valley
Blackstart	<i>Cercomela melanura</i>	Common at all Southern sites
Mourning wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugens lugens</i>	Common at En Avdat
White-crowned black wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	Single bird west of Be'er Sheva
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Single bird at Gamla
Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Regular in wooded areas in North, e.g.

		Hermon
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Regular migrant through Hula valley, also Lotan
Eastern orphean warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	Single bird at Meron
Arabian warbler	<i>Sylvia leucomelaena</i>	Single bird at Hai-Bar Yotvata
Sardinian warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Common throughout
Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Occasional
Graceful warbler	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Very common throughout Hula valley
Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Very common at Agmon
Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Abundant throughout Hula valley
Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenabaenus</i>	Very common throughout Hula valley
Clamorous reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Common at all Hula wetlands
Great reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Single bird at Jordan river near Gadot
Eastern olivaceous warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	Very common throughout the North, occasional elsewhere
Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Common along Jordan river valley
Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Two birds at summit of Hermon
Eastern Bonelli's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	Occasional birds along Jordan river valley
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Regular along Jordan river valley
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Common in uplands e.g. Hermon, Meron
Rock nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>	Pair seen at summit of Hermon
Red-backed shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Very common throughout
Woodchat shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Common throughout, esp. Agmon
Masked shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>	Common throughout
Southern grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Common throughout
Lesser grey shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Single bird on Gamla entrance track
Palestine sunbird	<i>Nectarinia osea</i>	Very common near habitation, esp. at Gadot
Arabian babbler	<i>Turdoides squamiceps</i>	Single bird seen at Hai-Bar Yotvata

Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Regular in upland areas e.g. Hermon, Meron
Hooded crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Very common throughout
Brown-necked raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Common throughout Arava, Judean desert
Fan-tailed raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>	Common at En Gedi
Tristram's starling	<i>Onychognathus tristramii</i>	Very common at En Gedi and En Avdat
Golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Single bird seen at Agmon
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Abundant throughout
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Very common at Hermon
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Very common in Hula valley
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Occasional in Hula valley and Hermon
Syrian serin	<i>Serinus syriacus</i>	Common at summit of Hermon
Ortolan bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Common migrant at Agmon and Jordan river valley
Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Occasional at summit of Hermon
Indian silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	Single bird seen at Hai-Bar Yotvata