

Spur-winged Lapwing at Djamaa, Algeria, in June 2011

The Oued Righ wetlands in the north-eastern part of Algeria are regularly visited by local birders and ornithologists to monitor and count birds. In the early morning of 16 June 2011, we observed an adult Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* here and managed to take several photographs. Our observation was at Ayata lake near Djamaa (33°29'32.44"N, 5°59'31.55"E), Ouargla province. Being an unmistakable bird, the identification was straightforward. It was a medium-sized, long-legged wader with black chest and belly, crown, tail-band and foreneck stripe. The upperparts appeared uniform pale brown. The bill and legs were black and the side of neck, cheek and lower belly were white. The bird was present for only one day.

Distribution and status

Spur-winged Lapwing occurs in warm dry latitudes in Mediterranean, subtropical and tropical zones. Its main distribution range lies across Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal and Uganda (del Hoyo et al 1996, Snow & Perrins 1998). In addition, it also breeds in Egypt, especially in the Nile valley and Nile delta (Goodman & Meininger 1989) but probably also in the oases in the Western Desert, where several birds were seen in March 2009 (Enno Ebels in litt). The species is furthermore present in south-eastern Europe and the Middle East (Wiersma & Kirwan 2020), including Yemen (Jennings 2010), Oman (Eriksen & Victor 2013), Kuwait (Gregory 2005) and Saudi Arabia (Jennings 1981, Porter et al 1996). The largest population in the Middle East is found in Turkey (Burfield & van Bommel 2004). The species is common in various Turkish regions as a migrant and breeding bird (Erdoğan et al 2010, Özkan et al 2012). In Iran, since 2000, the species occurs with increasing frequency in Khuzestan, where it now is a resident breeding bird, and extending its range, with confirmed breeding in West and East Azerbaijan provinces since 2014 (Ayé & Salmanzadeh 2007, Khaleghizadeh et al 2017). In Arme-

nia, it has become a year-round visitor in recent years (Aghababayan 2019).

The population of Spur-winged Lapwing is relatively small in south-eastern Europe (Cyprus, Greece and western Turkey), the Middle East and Egypt. Breeding numbers are estimated between 25 000 and 100 000 individuals (Stattersfield & Capper 2000, Boere & Stroud 2006). The population has increased considerably in Egypt since the 1960s. On the other hand, in Greece, numbers have decreased 25-30% between 1970 and 1993 (Tucker & Heath 1994, Handrinos & Akriotis 1997). However, recent figures from that region show an increase again (Charalambidou et al 2012).

The species occurs in a wide variety of habitats, such as mudflats, sandy shores, beaches and dunes, as well as in man-made habitats like cultivated fields and meadows near water, rice paddies and flooded fields (del Hoyo et al 1996, Ciach 2011).

As a vagrant in the WP, the species has been recorded in many countries, eg, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Cape Verde Islands (an overseas flight of at least 600 km from nearby Senegal), Croatia, Czechia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Qatar, Poland, Romania, Serbia, United Arab Emirates and Ukraine, but some of these records have been

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placed in category D or/and E, especially a few in western Europe (Mitchell 2017; www.tarsiger.com). There is one record from Libya, at Kufrah in the south-east on 4 January 2011 (Hering 2012, Isenmann et al 2016). There are no records for Morocco or Tunisia. The vagrancy potential of the species is illustrated by the first record for the Seychelles from November 2010 to April 2011 (trapped and ringed), at least 1300 km from the nearest coast where the species breeds in Somalia (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Seychelles/news).

This was the first record for Algeria; the species is not mentioned by Isenmann & Moali (2000). It is also the first record for north-western Africa and relatively far from breeding areas in south-eastern Europe, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. The bird may have originated from the south (Sahel region), which is nearer to most of Algeria than Greece, Turkey or Egypt. The distance to the nearest populations in the Western Desert in Egypt is c 2000 km, to the northern limits of the distribution in Mali and Niger c 1800 km and to the closest breeding sites in Greece also c 1800 km. A vagrancy occurrence is not unexpected because of the species' overall increasing trend and dispersive behaviour.

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