Kuwait

Bird Families – Hypocolius Quest

September to March (7 days)



Grey Hypocolius by Forrest Rowland

This short tour to Kuwait is designed specifically to find Grey Hypocolius and Crab-plover, the sole representatives of two challenging mono-typic bird families. Kuwait is arguably the best location to see both species, along with a handful of other sought-after birds including the Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Basra Reed Warbler, Pallas's Gull, Socotra Cormorant, and White-throated Robin. As an added highlight, during the Spring and Autumn months, Kuwait is also on the migration route for many Palearctic species and vast migrants pass through the oasis of the city while on their trans-hemispherical migrations.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Kuwait and overnight**
Day 2	**Al-Shaheed Park, Jahra Pools Reserve, and Jahra Farms.**
Day 3	**Abraq Al-Habari, United Poultry Pivot Fields, and Liyah Reserve.**
Day 4	**Fintas Park, Abu Al Hasssaniya, and Nuwaiseeb.**
Day 5	**Mutla's Ranch and Abdaly.**
Day 6	**Clean-up day**
Day 7	**Final departures from Kuwait**



Detailed Itinerary



Crab-plover by Daniel Danckwerts

Al-Shaheed Park: An idyllic place to start a Kuwaiti birding trip is a visit to this iconic city-surrounded haven. We arrive at dawn in order to beat the crowds as well as enjoy the best of cool temperature and thus hopefully capitalize on the first of many species. Here, we anticipate sightings of the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Indian Silverbill, Cinereous Bunting, Barred Warbler, Turkestan (Red-tailed) Shrike and, if we're fortunate, the first Basra Reed Warblers (primarily April through September). After exploring the well-manicured pathways and vegetative horticulture of the park, we'll head back to the hotel for breakfast.

Jahra Pools Reserve & Jahra Farms: An infamous aquatic expanse, nestled close to the city, this location is one of the best in the state. Covering over 20km^2, Jahra Pools Reserve is a magnet for birds of all kinds, aquatic or migratory, and this site has a vast list and is one of the region's most productive wetlands. Amidst its myriad of large open water ponds, marshes, reedbeds and their subservient pathways we hope to encounter the Delicate Prinia, Grey-headed Swamphen, White-tailed, Spur-winged and Red-wattled Lapwing, Pallid Swift overhead, migratory Steppe Eagle, Eastern Imperial and Greater Spotted Eagles as well as the odd Pallid Harrier. White-throated Kingfisher is predictably common, as is Pied Kingfisher. We might also be graced by an early Blue-cheeked Bee-eater or two while the localised Moustached Warbler and Namaqua Dove, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Upcher's Warbler, and White-throated Robin are more reliable at this time.

Sulaibikhat Bay: A superb site, and one of grave importance to those species which navigate their migratory routes along the Africa- East Asia Flyway. During the migration period, there can be many hundreds of birds on their way from African wintering grounds headed towards, for most, the Artic Circle. While getting a snapshot of this natural phenomenon, here we'll be on the lookout for Tibetan and Greater Sand Plovers, monotypic Crab-Plover (the sole member of the family Dromadidae), Terek Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, as well as White-winged, Gull-billed, and Caspian Terns. Laridophiles will be pleased as there will be a smorgasbord of larger species possible such as Pallas's, Steppe and Heuglin's Gull. Together with the waders, many of these will already be in their fantastic summer plumage as they travel northwards to their breeding grounds.



Pallas's Gull by Glen Valentine

Abraq Al-Habri & Poultry Pivot Fields: This is a renowned oasis that attracts vagrants and rare migrants. These can include any number of passerines that pass through this region on their



Greater Hoopoe-Lark by Adam Riley

way home. Top-notch are the monotypic Grey Hypocolius (the sole member of the family Hypocoliidae), Semi-collared and Red-breasted Flycatchers, Eurasian Hoopoe, Isabelline and Eastern Black-eared Wheatear and other more common travellers and residents. The nearby Poultry Pivot Fields are acclaimed for their potential, serving as a favourite stop-over site among many migratory species, including the Cinereous Bunting, Yellow-throated Sparrow and Pale Rockfinch, Ortolan Bunting, Collared Pratincole and in some years, for the fortunate few, Sociable Lapwing and Caspian Plover have turned up, while more typical are harriers and other raptors.

Liyah Reserve: In a land of desert and riches, the stark contrast, the Al-Liyah Reserve serves as a fitting reminder that, despite the amazing coastline and human technological achievement, the Sahara is at its doorstep. We finish our day here and, as the sun turns golden, we conclude a successful day in search of the Bar-tailed Lark and Greater Hoopoe-Lark and migrants such as wheatears and raptors.

Fintas Park: This amazing island of vegetation, with its canopy-laden trees and shaded pathways, offers a chance to find the earliest arriving members of the scarce and highly vulnerable, yet charismatic, Basra Reed Warbler. This distinctively shaped member of its unassuming family would be a great bonus if found. This target, along with other top-quality migratory species such as Semi-collared Flycatcher and White-throated Robin are hoped for here and at several other sites during our adventure.

Shoeddah Area: This region, to the west nearing the border with Saudi Arabia, holds a fantastic array of classic arid birding for those that make it this far. The mixed arid terrain is excellent for larks. This is particularly true regarding the endemic Arabian Lark, a species we hope to connect with, as well as Desert Lark, Temminck's Lark, and Turkestan Short-toed Lark. Other notable species will likely include the recently recognized Arabian Green Bee-eater, striking Pied Wheatear, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, and others.



Nubian Nightjar by David Hoddinott

Mutla'a Ranch & Abdaly: we will scour the arid scrubland and plantation-like vegetation around the Mutla'a Ranch area where we hope to encounter numerous migrants including the Red-throated Pipit, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, Citrine Wagtail, Isabelline Wheatear, Common Redstart, and one of the real prizes of this region, at thus time of year, Semi-collared Flycatcher.

Residents here include the habituated, Red-wattled Lapwing. Grey Hypocolius also occurs here, if we have not seen this species previously.

From here we then continuing north to Abdaly, one of the few places in the world that is reliable for the enigmatic Afghan Babbler. This area should also yiled yet more migrants including the Isabelline Shrike and Lesser Whitethroat among many of the aforementioned species. Residents include Blue Rock Thrush, Spanish Sparrow, Common Wood Pigeon, Namaqua Dove and the ubiquitous but incredibly striking White-throated Kingfisher.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Birding is undemanding.
Birding Ease		One of the most enjoyable & prolific birding destinations in the Middle East. Many species are approachable & provide good visuals in open conditions.
Accommodation		Excellent!
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground. Predominantly roadside birding.
Vehicles / Roads		Numerous long drives. Unsealed roads are variable, sealed roads have potholes & livestock in some areas. Dust is prevalent.
Photography		Good to excellent. No dedicated hides. Many species are approachable, habitat & lighting are often conducive.
Annoyances		Food diversity is limited in many areas, accommodation in the south is basic. Temperatures can be hot.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**

- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- This tour is designed to be a fast-paced tour, attempting to get good views of as many bird species as possible with key emphasis on the three monotypic bird families and the Arabian endemics. Most of the tour is not physically challenging but there are a few walks in the highlands of Saudi Arabia that may be marginally more strenuous.
- Daytime temperatures are generally extremely hot, while early mornings and late evenings can be much cooler.
- This tour does not require a good level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as much of our birding will be done on foot.
- Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us well in advance of the tour.
- We move accommodation regularly, so the more luggage you pack the less mobile you are. It is thus important for your comfort and ease of travel that you do not over-pack. Kingly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.
- Guests who are allergic to bees are kindly requested to carry the necessary medication, as bees are common in some areas.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Kuwait on Day 1, and you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in Kuwait on Day 7, and you would be free to depart at any time.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Kuwait International Airport, Kuwait (IATA: KWI) is the main port of entry/exit for international flights for this tour and is well-serviced by several major airlines.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.