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What’s in a name?

The art and science of bird identification aim to put a correct name to every bird seen. With experience it becomes first unusual and then exceptional to find a bird which one cannot name, always assuming that it gives good views. Nowadays, however, knowing what a bird is and giving it its name are not always quite the same thing, since we are going through another spate of name changes which is still far from over.

The changes are driven by two main developments, which are not completely mutually-exclusive. Firstly, the development of gene technology to the extent where the DNA of two or more birds can be closely compared has revealed new relationships and overturned old ones, leading to changes in classification. Secondly, there is in some quarters a move to make the vernacular (i.e. English) names as precise and exclusive as the scientific (Greek/Latin names) ones. This second development has also provoked many alterations to English names, often of long standing. (It may be added that Spanish and other vernacular names have also seen similar changes).

There are, at least, objective grounds for the changes in the scientific names, even though some of them are controversial. For example, a recent investigation has shown that the *Hieraaetus* eagles, including the Booted Eagle *H. pennatus* and Bonelli’s Eagle *H. fasciatus* cannot be clearly separated from the *Aquila* eagles on genetic and other grounds. Hence the genus *Hieraaetus* has been absorbed into *Aquila* and we must now call the two local species *Aquila pennata* and *Aquila fasciata*. In an opposite direction, the tit genus *Parus* has been divided into six new genera, on the basis of genetic analyses (of mitochondrial cytochrome b sequences). Of those *Parus* tits on the Gibraltar List only the Great Tit *Parus major* remains in that genus, the Blue Tit is now *Cyanistes cyaneus*, the Crested Tit is *Lophophanes cristatus* and the Coal Tit is *Periparus ater*. For good measure, the Blue Tits on the south side of the Strait and in the Canaries now comprise a separate species, the African Blue Tit *Cyanistes teneriffae*.

I believe that the most important approach to name changes is to be consistent. One cannot pick-and-mix from among the new names without good reason, which can only take the form of a scientific challenge to the analyses on which they have been based. So, and with the agreement of the GONHS council, the scientific names used in the Gibraltar Bird Report and in other GONHS publications, such as the Gibraltar List, will be based on those considered and adopted by the British Ornithologists’ Union, and published in their periodical reports in Ibis. All the recent changes to scientific names, including those published in Ibis (2005) 147: 821-826,
have therefore been adopted for this and future reports. The purists among you will
have discovered that already.

The situation with the vernacular names is a little different. For simplicity as
well as for consistency, the Spanish names used are those adopted by the Spanish
Ornithological Society (SEO/Birdlife) and used in the Lista de las Aves de España,
Edición de 2005. The English names, though, allow for an element of flexibility and,
I have to admit, of personal preference.

It is probably impossible to make the English names as rigorous as the scien-
tific ones since many of them are of traditional origin and firmly embedded in common
use. Any attempts to rename the Blackbird Turdus merula the Black Thrush or the
Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla the Black-capped Warbler, for example, are surely doomed
to failure. Yet there has been widespread acceptance of the trend to make certain very
parochial names which have been in traditional use in Britain more specific. Hence, for
example, Swallow, Wheatear and Swift (for Hirundo rustica, Oenanthe oenanthe and
Apus apus respectively) are now Barn Swallow, Northern Wheatear and Common
Swift: you will probably know many more examples.

Scope for confusion arises where several English names exist since, unlike
the scientific names, there is no central authority responsible for these. The tenden-
cy is to qualify stand-alone names, such as Bee-eater (for Merops apiaster) and
Sparrowhawk (for Accipiter nisus) with adjectives: in these two cases the proposed
additions are geographical and we have European Bee-eater and Eurasian
Sparrowhawk. This is fine but such handles are often unwieldy and, let’s face it,
ever used in common parlance. I have never heard any of the raptor watchers at
Jews’ Gate call out ‘Eurasian Sparrowhawk’ (although they are bound to do so now
once they read this!). The Bird Report uses the shorter names where no ambigui-
ty exists, the authority for the identification always resting with the scientific name.

Some English names have changed a good deal. During my ornithological
lifetime I have ‘had’ to refer to Agrobates (now Cercotrichas) galactotes as the
Rufous Warbler, Rufous Bush Chat (my favourite), Rufous-tailed Robin and, now,
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin. The guiding principle in this report is to use those
names which are in common and widespread usage. In most cases they are those
adopted by the British Ornithologists’ Union but there have been occasional depar-
tures: we stopped calling our resident gulls Herring Gulls many years before the
BOU adopted the name Yellow-legged Gull for Larus michahellis.

Names will always change, whether we like it or not, but we are always free
to call anything by any name we like: except when trying to communicate with oth-
ers in print. Most importantly, the names we give birds are labels of convenience to
ourselves and they do not alter the actual relationships between existing groups
and species. Name them as we will, the birds remain the same.

* The Gibraltar List may be consulted on the GONHS website: www.gonhs.org
BIRDS IN GIBRALTAR 2005
Compiled by Ernest Garcia

Review of the year

A total of 161 species were recorded in 2005, only three fewer than in 2004 despite an unavoidable shortage of observers during part of the year. Europa Point was not well watched, except in summer, and the southward raptor migration was not monitored as fully as usual. These shortcomings arose from the absence from Gibraltar for much of the autumn of one of the principal raptor counters and also as a result of other commitments. The core team of resident birders in Gibraltar is very small and is overstretched at times. Volunteer observers who stay at the Observatory for periods of up to several months are important to ensuring continuity of coverage and GONHS will be taking active steps to increase their numbers.

Undoubtedly, the ornithological event of the year was the successful nesting by a pair of Eagle Owls, the first known for certain to have bred in Gibraltar for about a century. Full details of this remarkable occurrence are given in this Report together with a review of the known history of this species on the Rock. Almost as surprising was the presence, from early September, of two Long-legged Buzzards, at least one of which remained into 2006: they were the first wintering individuals known at Gibraltar. Other wintering raptors were unusually in evidence, particularly during November–December, when at least one Booted Eagle, one Short-toed Eagle, two Sparrowhawks and a Common Buzzard were present. The presence of so many raptor species for extended periods, as opposed to passing-by on migration, is as unprecedented as it is welcome. It may well be that the greening of the Great Sand Slope, following the dismantling of the water catchment works there, and the comparative peace afforded by the Nature Reserve to the Upper Rock, make Gibraltar more attractive to raptors (and probably other species) than was the case until recently.

The Gibraltar List increased by possibly one species in 2005. The bird in question was a male Seeböhm’s Wheatear which was found by Keith Bensusan on Windmill Hill on April 28th. Its identification was certain and clinched by photographs, one of which is reproduced in the Systematic List. However, the bird has hitherto been treated as a subspecies (seebohmi) of the Northern Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe. Given that it is as different from other Northern Wheatear races as such species as the Black-eared Wheatear O. hispanica or the Desert Wheatear O. deserti it is highly probable that it will be elevated to full species status in due course: some authorities have already done this. Accordingly it is provisionally admitted to the Gibraltar List as O.(o.)seebohmi. This sighting was particularly significant, being the first recorded occurrence of this North African wheatear in Iberia.
As always, the year produced a succession of sightings of locally rare or scarce species. Details of all such records are given in the Systematic List. They included two Spoonbills on May 17th and a flock of 25 on Aug 25th (5th & 6th records), a Sanderling on Jan 31st (7th record), a Slender-billed Gull on Feb 22nd followed by three more on Mar 30th (6th & 7th records), single Long-eared Owls on Oct 16th and Nov 7th (3rd & 4th records), single Cetti’s Warblers on Jan 15th and Feb 22nd (4th & 5th records), a Goldcrest on Nov 15th (7th record), single Bullfinches on Mar 12th and Nov 8th (9th & 10th records) and a flock of seven Hawfinches on Oct 27th (9th record). Other notable records included a Black-shouldered Kite, three Black Vultures, a Spanish Imperial Eagle, a flock of eight Avocets, a Common Redshank, a flock of 17 Black-winged Stilts, a Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (the first for some years), three Wood Warblers and a Southern Grey Shrike.
WEATHER SUMMARY 2005
Data provided by courtesy of the Meteorological Office, Gibraltar

A relatively dry, sunny year and one dominated by easterly winds. Mean temperatures were close to the long-term averages but an exceptionally cold snap in January saw the coldest temperatures recorded in Gibraltar since at least 1947. This cold period extended from January 26\textsuperscript{th} to January 29\textsuperscript{th}, when dry northwesterlies prevailed. The record-setting coldest day was January 27\textsuperscript{th}, with a minimum air temperature of 1.0°C and a maximum of 7.5°C. The lowest grass minimum temperature was –3.4°C on January 28\textsuperscript{th}. Sub-zero temperatures were recorded at this time in the Gibraltar hinterland, where damage to orange groves was widespread. In Gibraltar itself there was frost in the Botanic Gardens and the ponds at Jews’ Gate froze over. The temperature returned to normal in February and was unexceptional during the rest of the year. Maximum temperatures exceeded 30°C on 19 dates between June 23\textsuperscript{rd} and September 5\textsuperscript{th}, the year maximum of 35.3°C occurring on July 16\textsuperscript{th}.

As well as being exceptionally cold, January was almost completely dry, with only 0.8mm of rainfall. A typical January is a relatively wet month: the long term monthly rainfall average is 129mm. Most of February was also dry but a very wet period coincided with easterly gales between February 27\textsuperscript{th} and March 1\textsuperscript{st}: the rainfall of 127.8mm (5.0 inches) on February 27\textsuperscript{th} was a new record for the month and February 28\textsuperscript{th} saw a further 113.8mm (4.4 inches). Otherwise, 2005 was a very dry year, particularly in spring, and drought conditions prevailed in much of Mediterranean Iberia. In Gibraltar the summer drought, defined as the continuous period in which daily rainfall did not reach 1mm, extended for 99 days, from May 31\textsuperscript{st} to September 7\textsuperscript{th}.

The prevalence of easterly winds was noteworthy. The annual frequency of days of easterly winds, the levanters, was 34.2% in 2002, 36.7% in 2003 and 45.9% in 2004. In 2005 the corresponding figure was 55.8%. The preponderance of easterlies in March and August was especially frustrating for observers of raptor migration, who rely on westerlies. Gale force easterlies occurred on February 9\textsuperscript{th}, 10\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} and March 1\textsuperscript{st}, and then again on December 10\textsuperscript{th}, 21\textsuperscript{st} and 22\textsuperscript{nd}. Westerlies were seldom stronger than fresh but reached gale force on December 2\textsuperscript{nd} and near-gale force on May 12\textsuperscript{th}. 
### Wind direction

Number of days per month with predominantly westerly, easterly or variable winds.

*Winds have an easterly or westerly component almost invariably.*

*Days when the wind changed are assigned to the final wind direction*

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<th>Easterly</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<td>April</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>15</td>
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SYSTEMATIC LIST 2005

Records marked * are pending consideration by the Rarities Panel.

IMPORTANT NOTES.

Status definitions.

Vagrant: Exceptional at any time in southern Iberia (including Gibraltar), e.g. Allen’s Gallinule.

Local Vagrant: Exceptional in Gibraltar but not unusual in southern Spain, e.g. Woodpigeon, Moorhen.

Rare: Seldom recorded in Gibraltar or anywhere in southern Spain, e.g. Alpine Chough and Fieldfare.

Occasional: Seen infrequently and not annually e.g. Rufous Bush Chat.

Regular: Annual in small numbers. e.g. Red-necked Nightjar.

Common: Annual and sometimes numerous, e.g. Black Redstart.

Counts of migrant raptors. (See Appendix 1 for daily totals). Gibraltar only sees a variable fraction of the passage of raptors across the Strait. Most occur during westerly winds, when a higher proportion of the movements occur at the western end of the Strait. Harriers, falcons and the Osprey show only a limited tendency to seek short sea crossings and so their totals are invariably low. A daily watch is usually kept during both of the migration periods but in 2005 this was only possible in spring.

Seabird observations. (See Appendix 2 for monthly totals). Most records come from seawatching at Europa Point which is carried out frequently but not daily. The numbers and species recorded vary considerably according to season. Wind direction is also a key variable since migrating seabirds tend to coast into headwinds and are then easily visible from shore. Wintering seabirds may spend extended periods at Gibraltar and so the number of sightings or contacts often exceeds the numbers of individuals actually involved.

Names.
We follow the decisions on classification and nomenclature adopted by the British Ornithologists’ Union. However, the adjective ‘Eurasian’ is omitted from certain English names where no ambiguity results. Spanish names are those favoured by the Sociedad Española de Ornitología.
Barbary Partridge  
*Perdiz Moruna*  
*Alectoris barbara*  
*Resident.*

Birds were reported throughout their regular haunts, including on the Great Sand Slopes and the Catalan Bay talus. The largest covey seen was of 16 on the upper slopes of Windmill Hill on Oct 24th. A total of 24 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th.

Common Quail  
*Codorniz Común*  
*Coturnix coturnix*  
*Occasional migrant.*

One was on Windmill Hill on Sep 28th. Two were ringed.

Cory’s Shearwater  
*Pardela Cenicienta*  
*Calonectris diomedea*  
*Common in summer and on passage. A few remain in winter.*

Relatively small numbers were recorded during the year and there was no repeat of the 1,000+ feeding gatherings seen in 2004. A total of 773 seen at Europa Point between Feb 18th and Apr 1st were mainly migrants entering the Mediterranean: they included 582 flying east into an easterly gale on Feb 28th.

A total of 643 were recorded off Europa Point in 76 hours between Jul 17th and Sep 26th, with a maximum of 180 on Jul 30th. The movements of birds leaving the Mediterranean in late autumn were not recorded.

Balearic Shearwater  
*Pardela Balear*  
*Puffinus mauretanicus*  
*Common offshore, including regular passage.*

A very poor year with only 88 birds recorded (cf. 2,576 in 2004) and no significant movements detected. The largest day-count was nine on Apr 1st.

Levantine Shearwater  
*Pardela Mediterranea*  
*Puffinus yelkouan*  
*Regular, mainly on passage in late spring and autumn.*

None were reported but underwatching may be responsible.

Northern Gannet  
*Alcatraz Común*  
*Morus bassanus*  
*Common offshore, especially in autumn and winter and on passage.*

An unusual record was a flock of 53 overflying the Nun’s Well at Europa Point during easterly gales on Jan 15th: Gannets virtually never overfly land at Gibraltar. A total of 204 were recorded at Europa Point in 54 hours between Feb 18th and Apr 20th, either feeding offshore on passage. The largest count was of 34 on Mar 18th, most of them flying west. A total of 17 were recorded in summer, between Jun 26th and Aug 28th but mainly in late August. Only 56 were recorded later in the year but the period was underwatched.

Great Cormorant  
*Cormorán Grande*  
*Phalacrocorax carbo*  
*Small numbers present, chiefly in winter.*

Few were reported: single birds on four dates between Jan 16th and Mar 20th, including one flying over the city on Mar 19th. One flew south at Westview Promenade on Nov 12th.
Shag Cormorán Moñudo Phalacrocorax aristotelis
Several pairs are resident.
Observations at Europa Point totalled 113 in 135 hours of observation, a contact rate of 0.8 birds/hour, somewhat lower than in 2004 (1.1 birds/hour) and 2003 (1.2 birds/hour). The largest number noted on any one date was 14 in four hours on Mar 18th and these comprised a minimum of seven individuals: five adults, an immature and a first-winter bird.

Cattle Egret Garcilla Bueyera Bubulcus ibis
Occasional migrant and occasional in winter.
At least one was present throughout January, usually near Catalan Bay and at a rubbish dump near Europa, with an exceptional sighting in the Botanic Gardens on Jan 15th. Two were over Jews’ Gate on Sep 23rd and six were over Windmill Hill on Nov 15th.

Little Egret Garceta Común Egretta garzetta
Occasional migrant and occasional in winter.
One was on the Europa Point foreshore on Jan 24th and one was at Western Beach on Jan 30th. A flock of eight flew north off Camp Bay on Aug 24th.

Grey Heron Garza Real Ardea cinerea
Occasional migrant and occasional in winter.
Two flew past Europa Point on Aug 8th, followed by eight there on Sep 6th. One was over the airfield runway on Oct 27th and another was reported from Camp Bay and Europa Point on Dec 9th: the latter eventually being chased south by Yellow-legged Gulls. An individual ‘discovered’ the fish pond in the Open Air Theatre in the Botanic Gardens in December and was reported regularly there from Dec 6th into 2006: it appeared to commute from Spain daily and was not deterred by mobbing from Yellow-legged Gulls.

Black Stork Cigüeña Negra Ciconia nigra
Common migrant.
Spring migrants totalled 54 between Feb 13th and May 4th, including ten on Apr 19th. A total of 73 were reported in autumn between Sep 3rd and Oct 20th, including 25 on Sep 21st and 16 on Sep 22nd.

White Stork Cigüeña Blanca Ciconia ciconia
Common migrant, but most bypass Gibraltar to the west.
A total of 213 flew north on ten dates between Feb 21st and May 9th, including 52 on Feb 21st and 97 on Mar 28th. There was only a single report in autumn: ten birds on Sep 5th. A flock of 87 flew north over the Rock on Dec 31st.

Spoonbill Espátula Común Platalea leucorodia
Local vagrant.
There were two records of birds seen from Jews’ Gate: two flying north on May 17th and 25 flying south off Europa Point on Aug 25th. Fifth and sixth records.
Greater Flamingo  
Flamenco Común  
Phoenicopterus roseus

Irregular migrant, occurring most years.  
A flock of 12 flew south off Sandy Bay on Mar 29th, followed by 16 south there on Apr 14th. There were 34 flying west at Europa Point on Jul 23rd, one at Jews’ Gate on Aug 28th, 13 north over the Rock on Aug 29th, 24 were seen from Princess Caroline’s Battery flying west on Sep 10th and 52 flying west over the airfield on Dec 5th.

Honey Buzzard  
Abejero Europeo  
Pernis apivorus

Abundant migrant.  
The spring migration was strongly evident, after a succession of very poor years. A total of 11,717 were counted between Apr 19th and Jun 28th, a figure comparable with the best years of the 1970s and much higher than the 2001-2004 mean spring count of 4,313. As usual, the passage peaked during the first third of May: the period May 1st to May 11th saw 11,455 (97.8%) of the birds, including 3,915 on May 8th.

The autumn raptor passage was not properly monitored in 2005. However, 4,625 birds were recorded between Aug 26th and Oct 30th, including 1,420 on Sep 11th. Only nine birds were seen after Sep 25th so the late records of Oct 29th (eight birds) and Oct 30th (one bird) are noteworthy.

Black-shouldered Kite  
Elanio Común  
Elanus caeruleus

Local vagrant, migrant.  
One arrived from the Strait, flying north, on May 4th.

Black Kite  
Milano Negro  
Milvus migrans

Abundant migrant.  
A record 18,776 birds were counted in spring, over 3,000 more than in the previous record year, 2004. The first arrivals were exceptionally early: one on Jan 17th and two on Jan 30th. Passage proper began towards the end of February, with 850 on Feb 21st. The first half of March normally sees very large arrivals but unsuitable winds diverted passage away from Gibraltar then and the first big day count of the month was 1,782 on Mar 20th. The earlier arrivals are generally adult birds and are followed in the second half of April and during May by movements including many immature birds. The year was exceptional because of the large scale of the second passage peak, which included the unprecedented count of 2,202 on May 2nd. The period Apr 15th to May 11th saw 10,948 (58.3%) of the birds.

The occasional watches kept during the autumn passage recorded 2,105 birds, between Jul 17th and Oct 11th.
Red Kite  
*Milano Real*  
*Milvus milvus*

*Annual but very scarce migrant.*

One flew north at Jews’ Gate on May 4th.

---

Egyptian Vulture  
*Alimoche Común*  
*Neophron percnopterus*

*Regular migrant.*

A total of 56 were counted in spring, an average figure for recent years, between Feb 21st and May 16th, the largest day-count being 11 on Apr 30th. In the autumn 39 were recorded between Aug 27th and Oct 12th.

---

Griffon Vulture  
*Buitre Leonado*  
*Gyps fulvus*

*Common migrant.*

The spring total of 392 is often eclipsed by single flocks in autumn but is nonetheless a local record, the previous highest spring count being 291 in 2001. There were isolated records of single birds on Jan 26th and Jan 30th, and three on Feb 21st. Birds otherwise passed between Mar 21st and Jun 30th. Arrivals between Jun 12th and Jun 30th totalled 110 (28%) and involved flocks of up to 32. The significance of this late movement, which seems to be an increasing phenomenon, has been discussed by Garcia & Bensusan (in press).

Griffon Vultures are fiercely mobbed by the local Yellow-legged Gulls and a graphic example of the consequences was seen on May 2nd, when a flock of 20 was flying north over the sea some two kilometres east of Gibraltar, having presumably been drifted east of the Rock by the strong westerly wind. This flock was attacked by gulls and seven vultures were brought down in the water and drowned. Four other drowned birds were found at Gibraltar between Apr 22nd and Jun 30th, and there were reports of at least a further 11 drowned vultures picked up on the Spanish shore of
the Strait during this period. The greatly-increased size of the Iberian population (Martí & Del Moral 2003), and probably hence of the vulture passage, may mean that such events are now more often recorded than before. Four were over Windmill Hill on Aug 10th, an unusual date: they may have been late northbound arrivals. Thereafter, 223 were recorded on passage between Sep 12th and Nov 9th, most of them in a flock of 105 on Nov 3rd. These, and most of the other autumn birds, returned north after visiting Gibraltar, presumably to head for the main crossing-point west of Tarifa.

Black Vulture  
* Buitre Negro  
* Aegypius monachus

Occasional, migrant.
Three were reported in spring: on Apr 18th, Apr 20th and May 4th.

Short-toed Eagle  
* Culebrera Europea  
* Circaetus gallicus

Common migrant. Occasional in summer and has wintered.
Spring birds totalled 541, between Feb 21st and Jul 23rd. They passed mainly between mid-March and mid-April. However, the largest day-count was 69 on May 9th. None were seen between May 16th and Jun 28th but a late passage totalling 13 birds occurred from Jun 30th to Jul 23rd.

Only 58 were recorded during the partial watches kept in the autumn, between Aug 18th and Nov 16th, but they included a flock of 12 on Nov 8th, a late date for such a group. A wintering bird was present from at least early December into 2006. It was usually seen hunting over the Upper Rock and the Great Sand Slopes: it caught a snake at the latter site on Dec 18th.

Marsh Harrier  
* Aguilucho Lagunero  
* Circus aeruginosus

Common migrant.
A total of 157 were counted between Feb 21st and May 11th, 95 (61%) between Mar 21st and Mar 29th. The partial autumn counts recorded 16 between Aug 17th and Oct 22nd.

Hen Harrier  
* Aguilucho Pálido  
* Circus cyaneus

Regular but scarce migrant.
The total absence of records is probably unprecedented.

Montagu’s Harrier  
* Aguilucho Cenizo  
* Circus pygargus

Common migrant.
Only 49 were recorded in spring, between Mar 26th and May 3rd, a below-average count although this is never a numerous species locally. The partial autumn counts recorded 41 between Aug 25th and Sep 17th.

Sparrowhawk  
* Gavilán Común  
* Accipiter nisus

Common migrant.
One was hunting over the Rock on Jan 16th. Spring migrants totalled 571, between Feb 22nd and May 11th, the second-highest spring count on record, exceeded only in 2004 (620). There was a noticeable peak in late March which included 106 on Mar 27th and 63 on Mar 28th. There was also a concentration in late April, with 170 arri-
The autumn passage was evidently substantial since the partial counts recorded 449 between Aug 25th and Nov 16th, including 73 on Sep 16th and 89 on Sep 17th. Two, a male and a female, were reported from late November into 2006 and were clearly wintering locally, being seen hunting occasionally on the Upper Rock.

**Common Buzzard**  
*Busardo Ratonero*  
*Buteo buteo*

Regular but scarce migrant, formerly common. Occasional in winter. One was over the Rock on Jan 26th, Feb 2nd and Feb 4th. A total of 11 migrants were recorded between Feb 12th and Apr 17th, seven of them in late March. The only autumn record was one on October 30th. One was reported from early December into 2006, hunting over the Upper Rock and the Great Sand Slopes.

**Long-legged Buzzard**  
*Busardo Moro*  
*Buteo rufinus*

Vagrant. At least two individuals were present, perhaps intermittently, from Sep 2nd into 2006, an unprecedented instance of wintering by this species. One was an adult and the other a juvenile, although they were only seen together on Oct 23rd, Oct 26th and Nov 15th. They were reported on at least 22 dates, usually being seen hovering or otherwise hunting over the leeward side of the Upper Rock. One individual was seen to try and rob a Peregrine of its Collared Dove kill, without success.

**Booted Eagle**  
*Aguililla Calzada*  
*Aquila pennata*

Common migrant. Occasional in winter. A light phase bird seen over the Rock on five dates between Jan 13th and Jan 25th seems likely to have the wintering individual also reported in November and December 2004. The next report was not until Mar 6th when three migrants arrived. Spring migrants totalled 740, a record spring count. Most passed between mid-March and mid-April. The largest day-counts were 83 on Mar 28th and 61 on Apr 20th.
but there were eight days with 50+ birds. The last were ten on May 16th.

A total of 1,185 were recorded in the autumn, between Aug 16th and Nov 8th, including at least 158 on Sep 20th, 196 on Sep 21st and 200 on Oct 1st. Most of these occurred during easterly winds and returned north without crossing the Strait at Gibraltar itself. One was over the town on Dec 9th.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle**  Águila Imperial Ibérica  *Aquila adalberti*  
Local vagrant.
A juvenile was seen from Jews' Gate on Sep 20th flying around over the southern end of the Rock.

**Osprey**  Águila Pescadora  *Pandion haliaetus*  
Regular migrant and occasional in winter. Bred formerly.
Spring migrants totalled 35, between Feb 25th and May 11th, including five on Mar 21st. Six were seen during the partial counts in autumn, between Aug 26th and Sep 16th.

**Lesser Kestrel**  Cernícalo Primilla  *Falco naumanni*  
Scarce breeding species and regular but scarce on passage. Occasional in winter.
The North Face colony numbered 14 nests. Of these 12 pairs were successful and fledged a total of 36 young, a mean brood size of 3.0. The population showed a clear increase on recent years: it averaged 9.5 pairs between 2001 and 2004.
The earliest record was a male over the frontier on Jan 19th. As usual very few migrants were noted: only 11 in spring, between Mar 6th and Apr 24th, and none in autumn.

**Common Kestrel**  
*Cernícalo Común*  
*Falco tinnunculus*  
*Resident. Common migrant.*

Nine nests were reported during the breeding season. Six of them fledged a total of 25 young but the remaining three failed completely. The mean brood size of the successful pairs (4.2 young) is at the upper extreme of the species’ output so clearly Gibraltar is a good site for a species which is a relatively-recent colonist.

At least 44 migrants were observed, between Feb 21st and Apr 23rd. One arrived from the south at Europa Point on Jul 23rd followed by two more on Jul 24th: they may have been very late migrants or post-breeding dispersers from Morocco. A total of 64 were reported during the partial counts in autumn but many of them are likely to have been adults and juveniles of the local population: the largest day-count was 24 on Sep 11th.

**Hobby**  
*Alcotán Europeo*  
*Falco subbuteo*  
*Regular but scarce migrant in spring, scarcer in autumn.*

A record spring count of 43 was made, between Apr 15th and May 11th, including ten on Apr 24th. Single birds were recorded on Oct 17th and Oct 20th.

**Eleonora’s Falcon**  
*Halcón de Eleonora*  
*Falco eleonorae*  
*Regular but scarce in late summer.*

One was over the Rock on Oct 1st. One was chasing migrants around Jews’ Gate on Oct 26th, during a large ‘fall’ in heavy levantener conditions.

**Peregrine Falcon**  
*Halcón Peregrino*  
*Falco peregrinus*  
*Resident. Some migrants may occur.*

Seven pairs attempted to breed but only four were successful, fledging nine young between them, a mean brood size of 2.3.

**Common Crane**  
*Grulla Común*  
*Grus grus*  
*Occasional and irregular migrant.*

A flock of 13 arrived from the south at Jews’ Gate on Mar 13th.

**Oystercatcher**  
*Ostrero Euroasiático*  
*Haematopus ostralegus*  
*Occasional migrant.*

Four were on Eastern Beach on Apr 30th. Two were at Europa Point on Aug 4th and single birds were there on Aug 8th and Aug 24th.

**Black-winged Stilt**  
*Cigüeñuela Común*  
*Himantopus himantopus*  
*Local vagrant, migrant.*

A flock of 17 were on Eastern Beach on Apr 26th.
Avocet  
*Occasional, migrant.*
A flock of eight flew south off Sandy Bay on Mar 6th.

Stone-curlew  
*Occasional migrant.*
One was on Windmill Hill on Mar 7th. Another was there on Oct 18th and Oct 19th. One was rescued from the sea off the South Mole, where it was being attacked by Yellow-legged Gulls on Oct 25th. It was taken into care by GONHS but died the following day.

Northern Lapwing  
*Irregular in winter but may be numerous during cold weather movements.*
Several groups of three or four were seen on Jan 30th: some flew north and others south.

Sanderling*  
*Local vagrant*
One was on Eastern Beach on Jan 31st (Charles Perez & Keith Bensusan). Seventh record.

Whimbrel  
*Regular on passage and in winter.*
One was at Camp Bay on Jan 7th and one was reported at Sandy Bay on Mar 4th, Mar 20th and Mar 23rd. One flew west at Europa Point on Mar 20th and one was there on April 3rd. Later in the year there were two at Europa Point on Jul 24th, with single birds there on Jul 26th and Sep 7th, and at Rosia Bay on Sep 1st and Eastern Beach on Sep 22nd.

Common Redshank  
*Local vagrant.*
One was at Governor’s Beach on Apr 21st (Keith Bensusan). Only the twelfth record, and the first since 1987.

Common Sandpiper  
*Regular but scarce migrant. Occasional in winter.*
One was at the North Mole on Jan 31st. Six were at Europa Point on Jul 24th.

Turnstone  
*Occasional on passage and in winter.*
Three were on the Europa Point foreshore on Mar 7th and four were there on Mar 23rd. The same site attracted eight on Nov 13th. Four were at Little Bay on Sep 26th.
Turnstone  
*(E. Garcia)*

**Arctic Skua**  
Págalo Parásito  
*Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Present all year.*  
Only three individuals were reported, one each at Europa Point on Mar 7th, Apr 3rd and Aug 27th.

**Great Skua**  
Págalo Grande  
*Stercorarius skua*

*Present all year. Common on passage.*  
Only 20 were recorded, all at Europa Point between Feb 18th and Apr 12th, including eight on Mar 1st.

**Mediterranean Gull**  
Gaviota Cabecinegra  
*Larus melanocephalus*

*Common migrant and common in winter.*  
A total of 55 were recorded at Europa Point in early spring, most of them during stormy weather between Feb 28th and Mar 7th. A further 36 were counted between Jul 23rd and Sep 27th. Wintering birds were not monitored.
Little Gull  
*Gaviota Enana*  
*Larus minutus*

*Occasional migrant but common in some winters.*
One was off Europa Point on Feb 28th.

Black-headed Gull  
*Gaviota Reidora*  
*Larus ridibundus*

*Common migrant and common in winter.*
A total of 32 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. There were 38 at the Europa Point foreshore on Jan 24th. A total of 542 were recorded at Europa Point in 54 hours between Feb and Apr, including 147 on Mar 7th and over 250 on Mar 8th. Only a further 67 were reported between Jul 18th and the end of the year but the final four months were poorly watched. A total of 21 (19 adults and two juveniles) at Europa Point on Jul 31st was a significant count for a summer date.

Slender-billed Gull  
*Gaviota Picofina*  
*Larus genei*

*Local vagrant.*
A second-winter bird was at Europa Point on Feb 22nd (John Day, Ian Thompson). Three, including two adults, were there on Mar 30th (Charles Perez, Keith Bensusan). Sixth and seventh records, and the first since 1992.

Audouin’s Gull  
*Gaviota de Audouin*  
*Larus audouinii*

*Common on passage. Some remain in winter.*
A total of 71 were seen off Europa Point in 84 hours between Feb 18th and Apr 20th, most of them flying east. In addition, a flock of 30 was resting on the Europa cric-
ket pitch on Apr 2nd. As usual, the westward migration in summer was much more evident. A total of 2,180 were counted at Europa Point in 76 hours between Jul 16th and Sep 11th, including 388 on Jul 26th, 383 on Aug 3rd and 273 on Aug 28th. Four were recorded on Oct 1st and two on Nov 13th.

First-summer Audouin’s Gull  
(C. Perez)

Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Gaviota Sombría  
\textit{Larus fuscus}  
Regular on passage and in winter. Formerly common.  
All reports came from Europa Point. They totalled 43 in 54 hours between Feb 28th and Apr 20th and a further 17 between Jul 23rd and Sep 11th.

Yellow-legged Gull  
Gaviota Patiamarilla  
\textit{Larus michahellis}  
Abundant resident.  
This species remained as much in evidence as ever and provided a significant contribution to the diet of the local Eagle Owls.

Black Tern  
Fumarel Común  
\textit{Chlidonias niger}  
Common migrant.  
Birds were only recorded at Europa Point on three consecutive dates in September: one on Sep 6th, 77 on Sep 7th and 43 on Sep 8th.

Gull-billed Tern  
Pagaza Piconegra  
\textit{Gelochelidon nilotica}  
Occasional migrant.  
Two adults flew west at Europa Point on Aug 5th.
Sandwich Tern  
Charrán Patinegro  
*Sterna sandvicensis*

*Common migrant and common in winter.*
A few individuals were present around the coastline and in the harbour in winter. Small numbers of presumed migrants were feeding off Europa Point in March, including a flock of 29 on Mar 18th. The last spring record was of four on Apr 6th. There were then seven on Jul 23rd and a total of 99 between then and Sep 11th, including 28 on Sep 8th, all at Europa Point.

Common Tern  
Charrán Común  
*Sterna hirundo*

*Common migrant.*
A very poor year with only two records, at Europa Point. Three birds on Aug 7th and two on Sep 5th.

Razorbill  
Alca Común  
*Alca torda*

*Common migrant and common in winter.*
Only 76 were recorded, all at Europa Point in February and March. They included 55 flying into the Mediterranean during an easterly gale on Mar 1st.

Puffin  
Frailecillo Atlántico  
*Fratercula arctica*

*Common migrant.*
One flew west off Europa Point on Mar 23rd. A total of 619 were seen on westward passage there in 20 hours between Mar 24th and Apr 20th, including 400 in one hour on Mar 30th. In addition, a rehabilitated bird was released at Rosia Bay on Apr 8th.

Rock Dove  
Paloma Bravía  
*Columba livia*

*Wild birds occasional. Feral population established.*
A total of 154 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th, including 43 in Camp/Little Bays.

Collared Dove  
Tórtola Turca  
*Streptopelia decaocto*

*Resident since 1991.*
Frequent in the town and Botanic Gardens. A total of 41 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. One was ringed.

Turtle Dove  
Tórtola Europea  
*Streptopelia turtur*

*Regular but scarce migrant.*
A total of ten were recorded on six dates between Apr 22nd and May 23rd, chiefly at Jews’ Gate although there was one in the Botanic Gardens on the last date. Single birds were at Jews’ Gate on Sep 1st and Sep 11th.

Great Spotted Cuckoo  
Críalo Europeo  
*Clamator glandarius*

*Occasional migrant.*
At least eight were recorded between Feb 8th and Mar 2nd. Of these an unprecedented three individuals were picked up in poor condition on Feb 28th after heavy rain: they were released after a period of rehabilitation.
Common Cuckoo  
*Cuco Común*  
*Cuculus canorus*

Occasional migrant.
One was on Windmill Hill on Mar 4th and one was at Jews’ Gate on Aug 24th.

Barn Owl  
*Lechuza Común*  
*Tyto alba*

Occasional. May breed.
A juvenile female, still showing some down, was picked up in the North Front cemetery on Jul 24th. It may well have been the offspring of a local pair but could also have arrived from nearby in Spain. The bird was taken into care by the GONHS raptor unit, for rehabilitation and release. Another was discovered on Nov 5th inside a flat at Harbour Views: it left through the window when disturbed.

Scops Owl  
*Autillo Europeo*  
*Otus scops*

Common migrant. Has bred.
Single birds were at Jews’ Gate on Mar 30th and Apr 25th. Nine were reported between Sep 19th and Oct 8th, most of them being seen on roadways on the Upper Rock at night.

Eagle Owl  
*Búho Real*  
*Bubo bubo*

Recently re-established resident.
One pair fledged three young, the first locally-bred Eagle Owls for perhaps a century. The circumstances of this extraordinary event and the history of this species at Gibraltar are reviewed on Pp 46-52.

Little Owl  
*Mochuelo Común*  
*Athene noctua*

Scarce resident.
One was recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th.

Tawny Owl  
*Cárabo Europeo*  
*Strix aluco*

Occasional. May breed.
Birds were heard at Jews’ Gate and around The Mount nearby on Mar 24th and May 8th, and then on seven dates between Sep 3rd and Nov 17th.

Long-eared Owl  
*Búho Chico*  
*Asio otus*

Local vagrant.
An adult was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Oct 16th (GONHS Ringing Group). It, or another, was perched on a post opposite the observatory there on Nov 7th (Hersham Ringing Group). Third and fourth records.
European Nightjar | Chotacabras Gris | Caprimulgus europaeus
*Occasional migrant.*
One was at Jews’ Gate on Oct 17th.

Red-necked Nightjar | Chotacabras Pardo | Caprimulgus ruficollis
*Regular migrant.*
Five were reported on the Upper Rock between Apr 24th and May 12th, with four there between Sep 19th and Oct 8th. Most of them were seen on roads at night. One was in the Botanic Gardens on Sep 28th.

Common Swift | Vencejo Común | Apus apus
*Abundant migrant and summer resident.*
Birds were reported between Mar 27th and Sep 6th. At least 340 at Jews’ Gate on Apr 17th, and 333 there on Apr 18th, are likely to have been migrants.
Pallid Swift  
Vencejo Pálido  
*Apus pallidus*

*Abundant migrant and summer resident.*
The earliest report was of five on Feb 3rd but few were noted until Mar 21st when there were 80 over the town.

Alpine Swift  
Vencejo Real  
*Apus melba*

*Regular but scarce migrant. Scarce summer resident.*
A total of 95 were reported from Jews’ Gate on eight dates between Feb 26th and Apr 22nd, including a noteworthy migrant flock of 80 on Mar 4th. One was over Jews’ Gate on Sep 2nd. There were no reports of breeding birds.

Common Kingfisher  
Martín Pescador  
*Alcedo atthis*

*Regular but scarce on passage and in winter.*
A poor year with only a single record: one at Rosia Bay on Sep 1st.

European Bee-eater  
Abejaruco Común  
*Merops apiaster*

*Common migrant.*
Spring migrants were seen or heard over Jews’ Gate on 25 dates between Mar 23rd and May 8th, the largest count being 116 on Apr 8th. A large southward passage was seen on Aug 21st, with smaller numbers passing on a further nine dates until Sep 17th.

Hoopoe  
Abubilla  
*Upupa epops*

*Common migrant.*
The earliest reported were six on the Upper Rock on Feb 14th. Spring migrants were reported on a further 21 dates until Apr 11th, chiefly in ones and twos, although there were four in the Botanic Gardens on Mar 2nd and six on Windmill Hill on Mar 4th. One was seen arriving at Europa Point on Mar 18th to be met by a pair of Peregrines, both of which stooped repeatedly at it: remarkably it made landfall safely. Single birds were reported on ten dates between Jul 13th and Aug 29th, with two on Jul 26th. Seven were ringed, five in spring and two in autumn.

Wryneck  
Torcecuello  
*Jynx torquilla*

*Regular but scarce migrant. Occasional in winter.*
Five were ringed in autumn.

Greater Short-toed Lark  
Terrera Común  
*Calandrella brachydactyla*

*Regular but scarce migrant.*
The sole record was of five at Windmill Hill on Oct 17th.

Thekla Lark  
Cogujada Montesina  
*Galerida theklae*

*Regular but scarce; in winter.*
Three were at the Europa Point foreshore on Jan 24th. One or two were reported from Windmill Hill between Oct 13th and Nov 2nd, with three there on Oct 20th. Two were at Europa Point on Nov 28th.

Wood Lark  
Totovía  
*Lullula arborea*

*Occasional migrant.*
Single birds were in the North Front cemetery on Mar 19th and on Windmill Hill on Sep 30th.
Sky Lark  
*Alondra Común*  
*Alauda arvensis*

Regular but scarce migrant. Occasional in winter.

A total of 19 were on Windmill Hill on Mar 4th with two there on Mar 11th. Up to five were also present on Windmill Hill on eight dates between Oct 17th and Nov 2nd. One was at Europa Point on Oct 29th and two were there on Dec 22nd.

Sand Martin  
*Avión Zapador*  
*Riparia riparia*

Regular but scarce migrant.

There were only two records, both at Jews’ Gate: four birds on Apr 19th and one on Aug 25th.

Crag Martin  
*Avión Roquero*  
*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Common migrant and winter resident. Has bred.

Spring reports included 200+ over Jews’ Gate on Mar 14th. More autumn records were submitted in autumn, the earliest on Oct 7th, when there were two over the city. A large southward passage occurred at Europa Point on Oct 24th and 25th and 200 were over Windmill Hill on Oct 29th.

Barn Swallow  
*Golondrina Común*  
*Hirundo rustica*

Abundant migrant. Former summer resident.

Passage was reported on many dates from Feb 13th to May 11th and then from Sep 6th to Nov 9th. The largest counts made were all in spring at Jews’ Gate: 373 on Apr 16th, 692 on Apr 19th, 382 on Apr 20th and 326 on Apr 24th.

House Martin  
*Avión Común*  
*Delichon urbicum*

Abundant migrant. Scarce summer resident.

The earliest migrants reported were seven at Jews’ Gate on Feb 21st. Migrants were seen regularly from then until May 13th and then again between Aug 25th and Nov 9th. Breeding birds were present at the usual locality near Western Beach.

Red-rumped Swallow  
*Golondrina Dáurica*  
*Cecropis daurica*

Common migrant. Has bred.

An early bird was reported on Jan 27th. Migrants were seen in small numbers between Feb 15th and Apr 21st and again between Oct 24th and Nov 8th.

Tawny Pipit  
*Bisbita Campestre*  
*Anthus campestris*

Common migrant.

A total of 11 were recorded on seven dates between Apr 12th and May 5th, including four over Jews’ Gate on May 2nd. Single birds were also at Jews’ Gate on Aug 30th, Sep 19th and Sep 20th.

Tree Pipit  
*Bisbita Arbóreo*  
*Anthus trivialis*

Common migrant.

Only a total of 13 birds were recorded in spring, chiefly at Jews Gate, on seven dates between Mar 17th and Apr 19th. One was at Jews’ Gate on Sep 2nd and 3rd.
Meadow Pipit  
**Bisbita Común**  
*Anthus pratensis*  
*Common migrant and common in winter.*

A total of 31 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. The wintering individuals were supplemented by small numbers of migrants in March, the peak count being 39 at Jews’ Gate on Mar 27th. The last bird was reported on Apr 22nd. The autumn passage was more noticeable, as usual: birds were reported from Oct 16th onwards. Large numbers were seen flying south at Jews’ Gate on Oct 17th and Europa Point on Oct 24th. Up to 20 frequented Windmill Hill during the first half of November.

Yellow Wagtail  
**Lavandera Boyera**  
*Motacilla flava*  
*Regular but scarce migrant.*

A total of 29 were reported on seven dates between Mar 14th and May 24th, including 15 at Jews’ Gate on the first date. There were 20 in total between Sep 22nd and Nov 2nd, including six on Windmill Hill on Oct 17th. One was ringed on Sep 13th, an exceptional occurrence and only the second capture since 1991.

Grey Wagtail  
**Lavandera Cascadeña**  
*Motacilla cinerea*  
*Regular but scarce; migrant and in winter.*

Three were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Two were in the Botanic Gardens on Jan 27th and one was in the North Front cemetery on Mar 11th. One was reported at Jews’ Gate on Aug 23rd, with two there on Sep 1st and one on Sep 19th. One was reported from Windmill Hill on four dates between Sep 21st and Oct 27th, with two there on Sep 22nd. Three more were in the Botanic Gardens also on Sep 22nd.

White Wagtail  
**Lavandera Blanca**  
*Motacilla alba*  
*Regular but scarce migrant. Regular in winter. Has bred.*

Five were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Three were at Europa Point on Mar 4th. Observations of one at Westview Park on May 16th and Jun 3rd, a juvenile nearby at Montagu Gardens on Jun 15th and a juvenile feeding among shoppers in the lobby of the supermarket at Westview Park on Jun 25th suggest a repeat of last year’s first-ever recorded breeding in Gibraltar. Autumn migrants were reported mainly in small numbers from Oct 12th to Oct 27th, with some flocks seen on the move past Jews’ Gate on Oct 17th, when there were also 30 on Windmill Hill.

Wren  
**Chochín**  
*Troglodytes troglodytes*  
*Common resident.*

A total of 45 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Only 15 were ringed during the year.

Alpine Accentor  
**Acentor Alpino**  
*Prunella collaris*  
*Occasional; migrant and in winter.*

At least one was around the upper cable-car station on six dates between Jan 15th and Feb 9th. One was at Prince Phillip’s Arch, on the Upper Rock, on Dec 28th.
**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin**  
*Alzacola*  
*Cercotrichas galactotes*  
*Occasional migrant.*  
One was on Windmill Hill on May 14th.

**Robin**  
*Petirrojo*  
*Erithacus rubecula*  
*Common migrant and winter resident. Has bred.*  
A total of 139 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Wintering birds were reinforced by a large influx in late January and February, corresponding with a very cold snap. The last migrants were noted on Mar 22nd. One pair nested successfully, perhaps near Jews’ Gate where an adult was captured in early June and a recently-fledged juvenile was drinking at the pond on Jul 2nd. One was in the Botanic Gardens on Jul 31st. Autumn birds reappeared from Sep 19th, with a peak around Oct 27th, when there were 40 at Jews’ Gate.

A total of 845 were ringed during the year: 149 in spring and 696 in autumn, an unusually large number and over 300 more than in 2004, itself a good year.

**Nightingale**  
*Ruiseñor Común*  
*Luscinia megarhynchos*  
*Common migrant. Has bred.*  
Three were at Jews’ Gate on Mar 19th and there were single birds in the Botanic Gardens on Apr 24th and Windmill Hill on Apr 25th. A total of 34 were reported at or near Jews’ Gate on 14 dates between Aug 21st and Sep 23rd, including six on Aug 25th. Ringed birds totalled an unexceptional 44.

**Black Redstart**  
*Colirrojo Tizón*  
*Phoenicurus ochruros*  
*Common migrant and common in winter.*  
A total of 103 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. An increase in numbers was noted on the Upper Rock from Jan 26th, with a large influx on Feb 1st. Presumed migrants included 14 in the North Front cemetery and 15 on Windmill Hill on Mar 11th. There were 25 in the cemetery on Mar 20th, with five there on Mar 22nd being the latest reported. The first returning bird was also in the cemetery, on Oct 10th. Autumn migrants included concentrations of 150+ at Jews’ Gate on Oct 26th and 100+ on Windmill Hill on Oct 29th. A total of 314 were ringed, 242 of them in autumn.

**Common Redstart**  
*Colirrojo Real*  
*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
*Common migrant.*  
Only 16 were observed in spring, on nine dates between Mar 11th and Apr 7th, and just three in early September. However, a high total of 71 were ringed, 56 of them in autumn.

**Whinchat**  
*Tarabilla Norteña*  
*Saxicola rubetra*  
*Common migrant.*  
Very few were reported: one on Windmill Hill on Sep 22nd and two there on both Sep 23rd and Oct 1st. Three were ringed in autumn.
Stonechat  
**Tarabilla Común**  
*Saxicola torquatus*

*Common migrant and common in winter.*

A total of nine were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. The few wintering individuals were joined by returning migrants in March, notably on Mar 4th when there were eight at Europa Point and 25 on Windmill Hill. The last spring report was on Mar 11th, with seven in the North Front cemetery and 13 on Windmill Hill. The first returning birds were seven on Windmill Hill on Sep 21st and up to six were present there throughout October and at least until early November. A total of 13 were ringed.

Northern Wheatear  
**Collalba Gris**  
*Oenanthe oenanthe*

*Common migrant.*

Only 17 were reported in spring, between Mar 21st and Apr 27th, including six on Windmill Hill on Apr 18th. A further eight occurred between Sep 5th and Oct 24th.

Seeböhms Wheatear  
**Collalba Gris Africana**  
*Oenanthe (o.) seebohmi*

*Vagrant.*

A male was seen and photographed on Windmill Hill on April 28th (Keith Bensusan). First record and first European record.

Seeböhms Wheatear is endemic to the mountains of northwest Africa and has populations in Morocco chiefly in the Atlas ranges but some breed further north in the Rif mountains (Thèvenot *et. al* 2003). The population winters chiefly in southern Mauritania and Senegal. The Gibraltar record is clearly of an overshooting bird on its spring migration.

Seeböhms Wheatear has traditionally been treated as an isolated race of the Northern Wheatear but its distinctive plumage and song may soon qualify it for full-species status. The male recalls a Northern Wheatear but differs in having a black throat and black underwing coverts. The female is less different from the male than in the Northern Wheatear but is generally browner above than the male, with a mottled dark throat. The song is slower and lower pitched than in the Northern Wheatear (Collar 2005).

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*Seeböhms Wheatear at Gibraltar*  
*(K. Bensusan)*
Black-eared Wheatear  
*Collalba Rubia*  
*Oenanthe hispanica*  
*Common migrant.*  
Very few were reported: just four single birds between Mar 18th and Apr 18th and one on Aug 21st.

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush  
*Roquero Rojo*  
*Monticola saxatilis*  
*Occasional migrant.*  
A juvenile was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Sep 29th.

Blue Rock Thrush  
*Roquero Solitario*  
*Monticola solitarius*  
*Scarce resident.*  
Five were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th.

Ring Ouzel  
*Mirlo Capiblanco*  
*Turdus torquatus*  
*Occasional migrant.*  
Single birds were at Jews’ Gate on Oct 19th and Nov 5th and one was ringed there on Nov 10th.

Blackbird  
*Mirlo Común*  
*Turdus merula*  
*Common resident.*  
A total of 134 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Birds ringed totalled 100.

Song Thrush  
*Zorzal Común*  
*Turdus philomelos*  
*Common migrant and winter resident.*  
Sixteen were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. There were four records of single birds during February but a distinct influx occurred in March with reports of at least 39 birds on eight dates, including 19 on Windmill Hill on Mar 4th. The last spring record was one at Windmill Hill on Apr 18th. Autumn records totalled 119 birds between Oct 14th and Nov 8th, most of them seen on the upper reaches of Windmill Hill. In addition, several flocks were reported on passage at Jews’ Gate on Oct 17th. Birds ringed totalled an above-average 64, 57 of them in autumn.

Redwing  
*Zorzal Alirrojo*  
*Turdus iliacus*  
*Occasional migrant.*  
Four were at Windmill Hill on Mar 4th and one at Jews Gate on Mar 20th. Two were ringed at Jews’ Gate in spring, on Mar 8th and Mar 20th, and one on Nov 10th.

Cetti’s Warbler  
*Ruiseñor Bastardo*  
*Cettia cetti*  
*Local vagrant.*  
One was recorded on Windmill Hill during the winter bird count on Jan 15th and one was heard there on Feb 22nd. Fourth and fifth records but perhaps involving only one individual.
Cetti’s Warbler  

**Zitting Cisticola**  
Buitrón  
*Cisticola juncidis*  
Common migrant and common in winter. Some breed.  
Three were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. The exceptionally cold weather in February hit this tiny species harder than most throughout southern Spain and it may have eradicated the small Gibraltar population, although one was heard on the Great Sand Slopes on Apr 18th.

**Grasshopper Warbler**  
Buscarla Pintoja  
*Locustella naevia*  
Occasional migrant.  
One was on Windmill Hill on Sep 26th.

**Reed Warbler**  
Carricero Común  
*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
Common migrant.  
The only birds reported were four ringed at Jews’ Gate in spring and nine ringed there in autumn.

**Melodious Warbler**  
Zarcero Común  
*Hippolais polyglotta*  
Common migrant.  
Remarkably few were observed, just six records of single birds: on Apr 2nd, Apr 3rd and four dates between Aug 23rd and Sep 23rd. However, a total of 37 were ringed: 32 of them in spring, an average number for 1991–2004 but more than in the past few years.
**Blackcap**  
*Curruca Capirotada  
*Sylvia atricapilla*

*Common resident and also a common migrant and wintering species.*  
A total of 143 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Spring passage was poorly marked but there were evident concentrations in autumn, including 100+ at Jews’ Gate on Oct 26th/27th. The ringing catch was an exceptional 1,803: 1,625 of them in autumn, about three times the long-term average.

**Garden Warbler**  
*Curruca Mosquitera  
*Sylvia borin*

*Common migrant.*  
Birds ringed totalled 126, 71 of them in autumn: an average year.

**Orphean Warbler**  
*Curruca Mirlona  
*Sylvia hortensis*

*Common migrant.*  
A poor year with only three observations of single birds, at Jews’ Gate on Mar 19th, in the unexpected location of Westview Promenade on Apr 2nd and at the North Front cemetery on Apr 3rd. The total of 12 ringed during the year was also below average.

**Common Whitethroat**  
*Curruca Zarcera  
*Sylvia communis*

*Common migrant.*  
Three were in the North Front cemetery and one on Windmill Hill on Mar 21st. Single birds were at or near Jews’ Gate on Sep 4th, Sep 21st and Sep 23rd. Birds ringed totalled 23, 12 of them in spring: an average year.

**Spectacled Warbler**  
*Curruca Tomillera  
*Sylvia conspicillata*

*Regular but scarce migrant. Has bred.*  
Single birds were ringed at Jews’ Gate on Mar 11th, Apr 7th and May 4th. Two males were in the North Front cemetery on Mar 19th, with one there on Mar 20th and Mar 21st.

**Dartford Warbler**  
*Curruca Rabilarga  
*Sylvia undata*

*Regular migrant. Occasional in winter. Has bred.*  
One was in the North Front cemetery on Mar 20th. Birds were reported on Windmill Hill between Oct 12th and Nov 8th, with peak counts of four on Oct 13th and Oct 24th.

**Subalpine Warbler**  
*Curruca Carrasqueña  
*Sylvia cantillans*

*Common migrant.*  
Birds were only reported in the spring, on eight dates between Mar 11th and Apr 7th. The majority were in the North Front cemetery where there were ten on Mar 21st and 14 on Mar 22nd. Four were at Westview Promenade on Apr 7th. Birds ringed totalled 19: 17 of them in spring.

**Sardinian Warbler**  
*Curruca Cabecinegra  
*Sylvia melanocephala*

*Common resident.*  
A total of 173 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Birds ringed totalled 175.
Western Bonelli’s Warbler  Mosquitero Papialbo  Phylloscopus bonelli
Common migrant.  
Birds ringed totalled 40, a poor year, especially when compared with the 122 ringed in 2004.

Wood Warbler  Mosquitero Silbador  Phylloscopus sibilatrix
Occasional migrant. 
Single birds were ringed at Jews’ Gate on Apr 6th, Apr 7th and May 2nd.

Common Chiffchaff  Mosquitero Común  Phylloscopus collybita
Common migrant and common in winter.  
A total of 97 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Wintering birds were supplemented by a large influx on Feb 1st, coinciding with a cold snap in Spain, with at least 20 at Jews’ Gate. Migrants were prominent throughout March, with a peak count of 100+ in the North Front cemetery on Mar 19th. The last spring bird seen was on Windmill Hill on Apr 12th but late individuals were ringed on Apr 24th, Apr 25th and May 7th. Windmill Hill also saw the earliest autumn bird reported, on Oct 13th. Mainly small numbers of migrants followed but there was a large arrival on Oct 29th. Birds ringed totalled 165, 107 of them in spring, a relatively poor year.

Iberian Chiffchaff  Mosquitero Ibérico  Phylloscopus ibericus
Regular migrant.  
Eleven were identified at Jews’ Gate or Windmill Hill between Mar 19th and Apr 8th. One was seen and heard in the Botanic Gardens between Aug 9th and Aug 19th. A total of 13 were reported at or near Jews’ Gate between Aug 21st and Sep 22nd, including four on Aug 23rd. Birds ringed totalled 16.

Willow Warbler  Mosquitero Musical  Phylloscopus trochilus
Common migrant.  
The first reported were two in the North Front cemetery on Mar 11th. Migrants were recorded until May 1st, with maxima of 20 on Mar 19th and 18 on Mar 22nd, also in the cemetery. Up to three were reported on ten dates between Aug 26th and Oct 20th. Birds ringed totalled 267, 204 of them in spring, an above-average year.

Goldcrest  Reyezuelo Sencillo  Regulus regulus
Rare: migrant.  
One was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Nov 15th. Seventh record (Hersham Ringing Group).

Firecrest  Reyezuelo Listado  Regulus ignicapilla
Regular but scarce migrant and occasional in winter.  
Two were recorded in the Botanic Gardens during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Single birds were at the Botanic Gardens on Feb 18th and Jews’ Gate on Mar 20th. One at Jews’ Gate on Oct 19th was followed by a noteworthy eight birds in the area between there and O’Hara’s Battery and Douglas Path on Oct 22nd. The same site produced one on Nov 10th and two on Dec 17th. Three were ringed.
**Spotted Flycatcher**  
*Papamoscas Gris*  
*Muscicapa striata*

*Common migrant.*

Very few were reported: three on May 1st at Jews’ Gate, one in the Botanic Gardens on May 23rd and one on Windmill Hill on Oct 14th. Birds ringed totalled 17, 11 of them in spring: a low figure but above average for recent years.

**Pied Flycatcher**  
*Papamoscas Cerrojillo*  
*Ficedula hypoleuca*

*Common migrant.*

Single birds were reported on Apr 2nd, Apr 20th and seven dates between Aug 9th and Oct 17th. Birds ringed totalled an above-average 115, 81 of them in autumn.

**Long-tailed Tit**  
*Mito*  
*Aegithalos caudatus*

*Local vagrant.*

Two were retrapped at Jews’ Gate on Feb 2nd and a third bird was in the area. The ringed birds were part of the flock of ten which was originally first recorded at Jews’ Gate on Nov 12th 2004. One was retrapped again at the same site on Feb 17th.

**Blue Tit**  
*Herrerillo Común*  
*Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Common resident.*

A total of 45 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th, including 20 in the Botanic Gardens. Birds ringed totalled 64.

**Great Tit**  
*Carbonero Común*  
*Parus major*

*Scarce resident.*

One was at Jews’ Gate on Jan 15th. Four were ringed.
**Short-toed Tree Creeper** Agateador Común Certhia brachydactyla
*Occasional migrant and occasional in winter.*
One was present near Jews’ Gate throughout the first half of January and one was in the Botanic Gardens on Jan 27th. One was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Sep 26th.

**Southern Grey Shrike** Alcaudón Real Lanius meridionalis
*Local vagrant.*
One was on Windmill Hill on Jul 23rd.

**Woodchat Shrike** Alcaudón Común Lanius senator
*Common migrant. Has bred.*
Migrants were reported on 18 dates between Mar 20th and Jun 7th, with maximum counts of 12 on Mar 22nd, 14 on Apr 2nd and ten on Apr 3rd, these all in the North Front cemetery. Birds ringed totalled 16, 15 of them in spring and including single late birds on Jun 6th and Jun 7th. No others were reported in autumn.

**Raven** Cuervo Corvus corax
*Recently re-established resident.*
The resident pair was present all year but once again failed to breed, for the fifth time in succession. They were seen chasing away a third bird over the Bay on Oct 12th.

**Common Starling** Estornino Pinto Sturnus vulgaris
*Common in some winters.*
Three observations were made on Windmill Hill: one bird on Mar 4th, two there on Nov 2nd and one on Nov 16th.

**Spotless Starling** Estornino Negro Sturnus unicolor
*Common resident.*
A total of 122 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th.

**House Sparrow** Gorrión Común Passer domesticus
*Common resident.*
A total of 392 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th, including 168 in the Botanic Gardens and 126 in and near the North Front cemetery. Few records were submitted but they included 70 in the North Front cemetery on Mar 17th and 11 at Jews’ Gate on Mar 27th. Birds ringed totalled 54, an above-average year.

**Spanish Sparrow** Gorrión Moruno Passer hispaniolensis
*Occasional migrant.*
A male was with House Sparrows at Europa Point on Dec 6th.

**Tree Sparrow** Gorrión Molinero Passer montanus
*Occasional migrant.*
One was at Windmill Hill on Oct 24th.
MAP OF LOCATIONS MENTIONED

- Eastern Beach
- Catalan Bay
- Rock Gun
- Great Sand Slopes
- North Face
- Governor's Lookout
- Bruce's Farm
- Cable Car Station
- Frontier
- North Front Cemetery
- Airfield
- Western Beach
- Princess Caroline's Battery
- City
- Europort
- North Mole Reclamation
- West View Promenade
- North Mole
- Harbour
- Queensway Quay
- Detached Mole
Chaffinch
Pinzón Vulgar
Fringilla coelebs
Common migrant and common in winter. Has bred.
A total of 30 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Wintering birds and migrants were present until at least Apr 19th, when there was one at Jews’ Gate; with some suggestion of an influx in mid-March, when there were 30 at Jews’ Gate on Mar 19th, 12 also there on Mar 21st and eight in the Botanic Gardens on Mar 20th. Two juveniles were on Engineer Road on Aug 4th and there were further sightings on the Upper Rock throughout August, suggesting successful breeding within the Nature Reserve. Autumn passage was especially noteworthy on Oct 24th, when large numbers passed south. Birds ringed totalled an above-average 43, 35 of them in autumn.

Brambling
Pinzón Real
Fringilla montifringilla
Occasional migrant.
One was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Oct 26th.

European Serin
Verdecillo
Serinus serinus
Common migrant and common in winter. Some resident.
Birds were reported between Jan 15th and May 2nd and then again between Sep 21st and Oct 25th, with no records of breeding birds submitted. Spring passage was weakly marked, the largest count being 40 at Jews’ Gate on Mar 29th. A large southward passage was noted at Europa Point on Oct 24th and Oct 25th. Birds ringed totalled 25, an average year.

Greenfinch
Verderón Común
Carduelis chloris
Common migrant and common in winter. Some resident.
A total of 31 were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Mainly small numbers were reported on passage, chiefly between mid-March and mid-April and in the second half of October. Juveniles from the resident population were feeding on Lantana berries in the Botanic Gardens on Jun 12th. Birds ringed totalled 130, an average year.

Goldfinch
Jilguero
Carduelis carduelis
Common migrant and common in winter. Has bred.
Four were recorded during the winter bird count on Jan 15th. Records of small groups were frequent until May 4th, with passage notable in mid-April when peak counts at Jews’ Gate were 302 on Apr 16th and 105 on Apr 24th. One on Aug 24th was the first post-breeding record. Significant passage occurred as usual in October, with a large southward movement at Europa Point on Oct 24th. Up to 20 frequented Windmill Hill between Oct 20th and Nov 8th. Birds ringed totalled 37, an above-average year.

Siskin
Lúgano
Carduelis spinus
Regular but scarce migrant. Occasional in winter.
One was in the Botanic Gardens on Jan 27th. Birds were far more prominent late in the year, with reports on 14 dates between Oct 12th and Nov 16th. They included a large passage south at Europa Point on Oct 24th, part of a large movement of other
finches. The other records included 75 at Jews’ Gate on Oct 27th and 30 there on Nov 11th. Seven were ringed, all in autumn.

**Linnet**
*Pardillo Común*  
*Carduelis cannabina*

*Common migrant.*

One was at Jews’ Gate on Feb 11th. Migrants were reported in small numbers regularly between Mar 13th and May 4th, the largest count being 50 at Jews’ Gate on Mar 28th. The return passage was noted between Oct 17th and Nov 2nd and included a large southward passage at Europa Point on Oct 24th. Six were ringed.

**Red Crossbill**
*Piquituerto Común*  
*Loxia curvirostra*

*Occasional.*

Two were at Jews’ Gate on both Sep 2nd and Sep 20th.

**Bullfinch***
*Camachuelo Común*  
*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

*Rare migrant.*

A female was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Mar 12th. A juvenile female was ringed at Jews’ Gate on Nov 8th, where it or another was heard the following day. Ninth and tenth records.

**Hawfinch***
*Picogordo*  
*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

*Local vagrant.*

A flock of seven was seen flying south at Jews’ Gate on Oct 27th (Charles Perez & Keith Bensusan). Ninth record, and the first since 1991.
Ortolan Bunting  
Escribano Hortelano  
*Emberiza hortulana*

*Regular but scarce migrant.*

A total of four were reported at Windmill Hill on three dates between Apr 18th and Apr 27th. Single birds were ringed on Apr 22nd and Apr 26th.

Corn Bunting  
Triguero  
*Emberiza calandra*

*Regular but scarce migrant and occasional in winter.*

Two were on Windmill Hill on Mar 4th and single birds were there on Mar 29th and Apr 12th. One was in the North Front cemetery on Mar 19th. A female with a brood patch was ringed at Jews’ Gate on May 3rd, perhaps indicating a nest nearby. One or two were present on and near Windmill Hill on five dates between Sep 23rd and Nov 2nd.

References.


CONTRIBUTORS TO BIRDS IN GIBRALTAR 2005

This Report has been made possible by the submission of information by many people, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. Particular thanks are due as ever to the stalwart regulars of GONHS, who submit the bulk of the records: Keith Bensusan, John Cortes, Charles Perez, Paul Rocca and Albert Yome. The ringing effort was organised by Charles Perez, and Ian Thompson was ringer-in-residence for much of the spring. A team from the Surrey-based Hersham ringing group was also at Jews’ Gate for a short period in autumn. The full list of contributors is as follows.

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The successful nesting by a pair of Eagle Owls in Gibraltar in 2005 was undoubtedly one of the most surprising and unexpected events in the recent history of the local breeding bird community. This emblematic species was known as a former resident but its disappearance, probably early in the 20th century, was generally regarded as permanent: the owl had presumably become another victim of the increased urbanisation and disturbance of Gibraltar’s habitats and had gone the same way as those other notable former-residents, the Egyptian Vulture Neophron percnopterus, Bonelli’s Eagle Aquila fasciata and the Osprey Pandion haliaetus. This account reviews what is known about the former occurrence of the Eagle Owl in Gibraltar and gives the circumstances of the recent recolonisation. The future prospects of the species locally are also considered.

**Historical Presence.**

The earliest recorder of the owls’ presence seems to have been the Rev. John White, who was employed as a cleric in Gibraltar towards the end of the 18th century. He corresponded with his brother Gilbert White, whose letter to John White of Jan 25th 1771 (quoted by Holt-White 1901) says ‘You mention the Great Eagle Owl … and send me a wing and claw’.

Howard Irby (1875, 1895) quotes John White as reporting the Eagle Owl in
1776. Irby himself wrote that ‘some frequent the Rock, probably nesting in some of the numerous inaccessible caverns of the east side. One was caught in 1869 in a magazine near the Rock Gun’. This bird had apparently become trapped between two walls. He kept it for a while and eventually sent it to Lord Liford in England, who paired it with a Norwegian bird. Irby also kept young taken from a nest at Castellar and noted that their calls attracted the wild Gibraltar birds at night. Irby never found an Eagle Owl nest personally, either in Gibraltar or in Spain, and gives the impression that he seldom or never saw the birds on the Rock. He says that their vocalisations were very familiar and were thought by some of the inhabitants of Gibraltar to be ‘the cry of the apes’.

Philip Saville Grey Reid, a contemporary of Irby who was in Gibraltar from 1871 to early 1874, was better acquainted with the Gibraltar owls (Reid 1871-1890). He wrote that on February 22nd 1874 ‘Denison & I walked up to the Rock Gun to see if we could get any clue to the whereabouts of the nest of Eagle Owls which haunt the cliffs there. The pair are constantly seen sitting one above the other on rocky steps or ledges just under the Magazine.’ He commented too that the pair did not lay until the end of March. Reid also placed on record an incident involving the Eagle Owl which certainly serves as additional confirmation of the bird’s presence in Gibraltar even if some of the details are highly implausible. In 1873 I purchased a fine specimen of this bird for Denison on the 18th June which had been killed on the Rock the previous evening in rather an amusing manner. It seems a certain drunken cigar maker of Gibraltar had fallen asleep among the bushes near “Onetti’s Farm” (an enclosure of prickly pear hedges above the Alameda and south end of the town) and had been aroused and horribly frightened by the appearance of this huge owl which had hovered around him as he slept. Having (“fortunately” as he thought) a stick with him he had aimed a blow at the bird and by great luck had hit it over the head and killed it. He had unfortunately knocked-off one of the poor bird’s “horns” in doing this …’.

The owl also came to the notice of Willoughby Verner, who lived in Gibraltar from 1874 to 1881 and subsequently wintered near Algeciras for some years. He devoted chapter four of his ornithological autobiography (Verner 1909) to the Eagle Owl, describing his raids to collect its eggs at nests in Spain. However, with regard to Gibraltar, he knew of ‘a pair which have nested on the Rock of Gibraltar for over 30 years and although I have listened to their strange calls by night many times, I have only once seen one of the birds on the wing by day during that period’.

It may be safely concluded that Eagle Owls were present in Gibraltar until at least the end of the 19th century but there is no record of whether more than one pair was resident locally. It was not recorded again until the second half of the 20th century although, since it can be highly elusive, it may have been present in the interim. Most ornithological records between 1900 and 1950 were made by visitors who spent short periods on the Rock and who could easily have overlooked the Eagle Owl, particularly since the Upper Rock was a restricted military zone for a large part of this period and hence inaccessible to many. Helen Rait-Kerr was in Gibraltar from 1932 to 1935 and published her observations in a series of articles.
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in the Gibraltar Chronicle (Rait-Kerr 1933-34): she recorded a wide range of species but did not mention the Eagle Owl.

Her eventual successor as nature correspondent of the Chronicle was A.J.S.Tuke, who was in Gibraltar from 1950 to 1953 and whose collected articles were later published (Tuke 1953). Tuke said that Eagle Owls were resident on the Rock, but without giving any details. His only specific reference to the species was to say that he had once heard one calling at night on the Upper Rock. There were no further records of Eagle Owls at Gibraltar, whether visual or auditory, until November 5th 1990, an interval approaching forty years. The 1990 record was of a bird seen by Nigel Ramos arriving at the North Face, where it landed in one of the cannon embrasures. There was then another long interval before a further confirmed record, the sighting of a bird at Rock Gun on Apr 10th 2004, an event which led to the re-establishment described below.

It is impossible to be absolutely certain whether the Eagle Owl was effectively extinct in Gibraltar for most, if not all, of the 20th century but it seems highly unlikely that such a large, vocal species could have remained unnoticed for such a long period, although transient individuals would easily have passed unseen. It seems safe therefore to assume that the isolated local population, numbering perhaps just one pair, died out and that natural recolonisation failed to occur until the 21st century.

The 2004 ‘recolonisation’.

An Eagle Owl was seen at Rock Gun by Vincent Robba just before first light on Apr 10th 2004. It was seen and heard there again on Apr 20th, and identified as a male on account of its vocalisations. What was presumably the same bird was next reported at Windmill Hill, over two kilometres south of Rock Gun, where it was seen and heard in the vicinity of a caged female Eagle Owl which was in the aviaries of the GONHS Raptor Rehabilitation Unit. The female was a road casualty from Spain which was handed in to the Unit, who cared for her until she was fit to return to the wild. This female was ringed and released at Rock Gun on May 31st, partly in the hope that it might pair with the wild male. Subsequently one was again seen at Windmill Hill on Aug 6th. Towards the end of the year it became apparent that at least the male was frequenting a small cave high on the eastern side of the Rock and this site was occupied into 2005.

Ringing of the female Eagle Owl prior to release (J. Cortes)
Events in 2005

A promising observation was made on Feb 17th when a female Eagle Owl was seen leaving the ‘male’s cave’. The site was kept under observation by telescope from a distance of about 100m, the location being on a sheer cliff-face which would have prevented closer approach (not that such disturbance would have been contemplated). There was no way of telling whether or not there was a nest in the cave but it became increasingly apparent that the owls were taking a heavy toll of the local Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis*, whose feathers littered the escarpment below the cave.

Confirmation of successful nesting came on Apr 16th when three young were sighted at the cave entrance, the male and female also present nearby. This was a momentous event, marking the first proved nesting of the Eagle Owl in Gibraltar for 100 years. It never proved possible to confirm whether the female of the pair was the one released by GONHS since the presence or absence of the ring could not be established. However, it seems likely that she was indeed the rehabilitated female, in which case the re-establishment of the species involved only a partial natural recolonisation.

Eagle Owls in Spain may nest very early: the laying season extends from mid-January to late March, peaking in mid-February (Doñazar 1989). The Gibraltar pair clearly laid late in February or early in March, a period which matches Reid’s observations of local birds in the 1870s. The timing of any future breeding attempts
will be interesting to see.

The owlets fledged safely in mid May and were subsequently seen at various points on the Great Sand Slope during May and June. Unfortunately one of them became entangled in the heavy cable mesh, designed to protect the east coast road and buildings from small boulders. It was rescued but found to have a severely damaged wing and was therefore taken into the permanent care of the raptor rehabilitation unit.

Observations in 2006

No further observations were made of any Eagle Owls until January 2006, when one was seen flying along the eastern cliffs. Birds were then heard calling throughout spring 2006 and there were strong indications that the pair again nested, at a site also on the eastern side of the Rock but some 200m north of that used in 2005. The supposed nest site could not be viewed directly but once again an accumulation of gull remains in its vicinity and the repeated attention of irate Peregrines testified to its occupation by the owls.

Three Eagle Owls were seen together above Catalan Bay on July 10th. The distance was too great to distinguish juveniles from adults but the sighting makes it
highly likely that successful breeding also occurred in 2006.

**Prospects for Eagle Owls in Gibraltar**

Eagle Owls clearly are able to survive successfully in Gibraltar. The Rock offers excellent breeding habitat, the sheer limestone cliffs being riddled with small caverns for shelter and nesting. The long periods which elapsed between observations once the pair was established confirms that the eastern side of the Rock especially, including the Great Sand Slope, provides them with secure and undisturbed living quarters. There is also abundant food, not only in the form of thousands of Yellow-legged Gulls of all ages but also in the shape of significant numbers of Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and Black Rats *Rattus rattus alexandrinus*. It is quite likely that Gibraltar can support two or three Eagle Owl pairs and it is important for the species’ long term prospects locally that more than one pair should be present.

Gibraltar is in many ways an ecological island, separated by a barren, largely built-up isthmus and the town of La Linea from the nearest potential Eagle Owl habitat in Spain. It seems likely that the nearest birds to Gibraltar are at least 15km away, although that population, in the Alcornocales Natural Park is thriving. Natural occurrences of dispersing Eagle Owls from Spain appear to be very rare events in Gibraltar and a population based on a single pair may accordingly be extremely vulnerable to extinction. Events will show whether the Eagle Owl population will increase, although pairs formed by sibling-sibling or sibling-parent partnerships would be subject to the harmful effects of in-breeding. It may be that releasing additional birds should be considered, now that the continuing viability of Gibraltar as Eagle Owl habitat has been established.

Eagle Owls are formidable predators. In Spain their principal prey is Rabbits (Perez Mellado 1978, Serrano 2000) but they are opportunists and will take animals as large as foxes and deer fawns (Cramp 1985). They are also well known to kill raptors and their young, presumably surprising the adults at their roosts (Cramp 1985). The question therefore arises whether the presence of Eagle Owls in Gibraltar will seriously harm the local populations of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni*, Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and Barbary Partridges *Alectoris barbara*, and whether the owls would prevent the successful return of any of the large diurnal raptors which formerly bred on the Rock.

Eagle Owls coexisted with all these species in Gibraltar for centuries and probably (the introduced partridges excepted) for millennia. Hence the losses they will inflict on other species should not be taken as a reason to discourage their return to Gibraltar. On the contrary, the presence of this enigmatic and spectacular species should be welcomed unequivocally as a valued re-addition to the Rock’s biodiversity. Considerable reassurance may be taken from the fact that in 2006 Gibraltar’s Peregrines enjoyed a record-breaking breeding season, with eight pairs fledging a total of 23 young – irrespective of the continuing presence of Eagle Owls.
Acknowledgements

The detection of the Eagle Owls, and the discovery of their nest, is entirely due to the enthusiasm, dedication and skill of Vincent Robba and Stanley Olivero, who made all the key observations, and who continue to monitor the birds. We are very much indebted to them. Vincent Robba, and his team at the GONHS raptor rehabilitation unit: Stanley Olivero, Denis Federico and Gilbert Gonzalez, also cared for and released the female Eagle Owl, and continue to care for the owlet which was injured. John Cortes kindly commented on this text. I am grateful to Dr Joanne Cooper of The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK, for drawing my attention to Reid’s manuscript.

References


A view of part of the Smir Wetland  

(I. Thompson)

The principal wetlands of northwesternmost Morocco were visited in order to count wintering wetland bird species, in conjunction with a Moroccan-wide effort coordinated by the Institut Scientifique du Rabat*. Our trip coincided with exceptionally cold conditions. Indeed, the temperature when we left Gibraltar early in the morning of the 28th January was only 0°C, a record for the Rock. We took an early morning ferry from Algeciras to Ceuta and crossed the border from Ceuta into Morocco.

1. Marsh and lagoon of Smir-Restinga (Jan 28th).

This site is the object of an ongoing joint ringing study operated by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS) and the Institut Scientifique du Rabat. GONHS-coordinated Ringers, mainly from the UK, visited the area during the autumn and spring months. As well as ring, these groups provide training for Moroccan students who are interested in taking up ringing.
As we drove out of Ceuta towards Smir in the early morning sun, we noticed that many of the puddles on the roadside were frozen over. Our first bird of note was a Black-shouldered Kite sitting on a pylon about five minutes away from Smir, where one was often observed during the summer and autumn of 2004, particularly during the evening.

Despite the intense cold, we were able to obtain an accurate count from a vantage point overlooking the lagoon. Waterfowl numbers, especially Common Coot, seemed to have decreased since autumn 2004: perhaps many of the birds counted then were on passage. Our count of 194 Pintail was noteworthy. The most abundant duck species was the Shoveler (534 birds). Other characteristic species present at the Lagoon included Greater Flamingos and Spoonbills: the latter species breeds at Smir. Marsh Harriers were extremely common as ever; a total of 14 birds were counted at the site.

The marshy end of the lagoon, which includes a ‘sewage outlet’, produced numbers of Purple Swamphens and Glossy Ibises, both of which are fairly recent arrivals at the site, where they seem to be doing very well. Perhaps the most interesting find here was the five European Reed Warblers seen and heard in the bulrushes. Although a few Reed Warblers had been ringed here during November, it then remained to be seen whether some individuals would overwinter at the site. They obviously did. The presence of a number of individuals of a bird that is a trans-Saharan migrant is noteworthy: Thévenot et al. (2003) give only a few winter records for Morocco.

Another important sighting was of a group of Penduline Tits, one of which was carrying a ring. This confirmed that the birds recorded and ringed in November were indeed part of a wintering population. Thévenot et al. (2003) give only 14 records (25 birds) for Morocco and state that it is now perhaps a rare but regular winter visitor to the northwest.

The ‘sewage outlet’ also provided us with a number of waders such as Common, Wood and Green Sandpipers and a Spotted Redshank, as well as a large number of Black-tailed Godwits and Common Snipe. Another highlight at this end of the marsh was the 300 or so Teal that flew out every time a Marsh Harrier passed overhead. Their wariness was justified; a Harrier was later observed with a Teal in its talons. A Water Rail, four Common Bulbuls and numbers of Common Chiffchaffs and Bluethroats were also noted in the area. Unfortunately, this part of the site is being filled in with rubble at an alarming rate. Something needs to be done fast in order to protect this extremely rich wetland. The site should receive national protection and BirdLife International Important Bird Area (IBA) classification, since it is obviously of considerable importance as a breeding ground, wintering site and stopover site for migrants.
2. Barrage Smir (Jan 28th).
This is a reservoir in the hills just south of M’diq. Access is a problem, involving a poor track requiring a 4WD vehicle. There is also no good vantage point from which to count wildfowl. However, since the water level was very low due to this year’s lack of rain, we were able to walk down the shore for a distance. There were a few hundred duck on the reservoir, mostly Shoveler. 99 Greylag Geese feeding and resting on the lakeshore were the only ones seen on the trip.

The next morning we made our way towards the Atlantic coast on the Tetouan to Larache road. The only Red Kite of the trip was seen along this road, as were a couple of Black Kites and a Common Buzzard.

3. The beach just north of Asilah (Jan 29th).
A flock of gulls and terns was at a small estuary here. Further north, a flock of 167 European Golden Plovers were counted at the estuary of Oued Ghrifa, a site that produced few other birds.

4. Estuary of Oued Tahardat (Jan 29th).
This is a BirdLife International IBA that was once a regular wintering site of the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (Fishpool & Evans 2001). Here, we found a mixed group of Eurasian Curlews and Whimbrels feeding on the mudflats, as well as the only Bar-tailed Godwits seen on the trip. Dunlin were plentiful, and a handful of Greater Flamingos were present. A flock of 20 Common Cranes was seen soaring in the distance: up to 600 are known to winter in this area (Fishpool and Evans 2001).

5. Larache salt marsh (Jan 29th).
This is a large area of salt marsh consisting largely of saltpans which we viewed from the roadside. Black-tailed Godwits, Black-winged Stilts and Dunlin were numerous, and good views were had of Ruff and Pied Avocets. In addition, an Osprey could be seen sitting on a pylon in the distance, and Marsh Harriers were as common as they are in any Moroccan wetland. A loose flock of 71 Greater Flamingos was present, and three European Spoonbills were seen briefly in flight. A flock of about 25 Little Swifts was evidence of the presence of this species here in winter.

This consists of a large expanse of bulrushes interrupted by sizeable open pools. The Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* is resident here but we failed to see any. The site also includes some flooded fields that are rich in waders. Indeed, waders and waterfowl were present in numbers. About 100 Pintail congregated in the pools of open water and other duck were equally noticeable. Herons and Egrets dotted the fringes of the expansive beds of bulrush. Black-winged Stilts were very much in evidence feeding amongst the wildfowl and Red-knobbed Coot were common. Five Whiskered Terns were also noted: although most
field guides do not indicate that this species winters in Morocco, Hollom et al. (1988) note that ‘a few winter in NW Africa’ and this is confirmed by Thévenot et al. (2003). About 45 Marsh Harriers were seen gathering to roost at dusk, together with flocks of Cormorants and Glossy Ibises. Purple Swamphens could be heard in the marsh.

**Oued Loukkos marsh (Jan 30th – morning).**

Observations were disrupted by the unwelcome presence of numbers of European, apparently French, hunters. Notable species recorded included about eight Caspian Terns fishing along the river. A Great Bittern was seen on two separate occasions. Of particular note was the c.300 Black-tailed Godwits feeding together on a flooded field. The edges of the same field were the haunt of Common Snipe, Little Stints, Dunlins and Little Ringed Plovers. As was the case the previous evening, Bluethroats crept through stands of bulrushes, with bolder individuals sitting on the track, out in the open. Bluethroats and wagtails were evident, the latter including a few Yellow Wagtails.

Duck were not as evident as they had been the previous evening, which was unsurprising given the shooting. However, the hunters did not seem to deter the flocks of Red-knobbed Coots. This is by far the most abundant coot species at this wetland, where only a handful of Common Coots were noted, in complete contrast to Smir on the Mediterranean coast, where only Common Coots were observed.

A few Black Kites, including a small flock, were noted during our return northwards towards Ceuta and the ferry crossing to Europe. These birds were obviously the first pre-nuptial migrants making their way north to their European breeding grounds. Southern Grey Shrikes proved to be extremely common along this road. Birds were seen perched on fences, trees and dry thistles with incredible frequency.

Our short visit highlighted the need for these Moroccan wetlands to be afforded the protection that they merit. In particular, hunting seems a serious problem at Moroccan wetlands that needs to be addressed. The Smir area is popular with Spanish hunters, particularly those from Ceuta, since plenty of hunters are present there on Sundays. Morocco is a signatory of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (Fishpool and Evans 2001) and is thus required to conserve such species. It is worrying to note that most of the birds targeted by hunters are migrants from northern Europe, such as is the case with most duck and waders. In addition, some migratory wetland species, such as the Great Bittern (let alone the Slender-billed Curlew), do not have a favourable conservation status. Some resident species, such as the Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and Red-knobbed Coot, which have an extremely restricted range within the Mediterranean region are also under threat from hunting and disturbance.

*The trip was one of the activities of GIBMANATUR, the Gibraltar Morocco Interreg IIIA collaborative project of GONHS and the Institut Scientifique de the Universite Mohammed V, Rabat-Agdal, cofunded by the European Union and the Government of Gibraltar.*
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References
PROBABLE NESTING OF THE BLUE-CROWNED CONURE *Aratinga acuticaudata* IN GIBRALTAR

**John Cortes**  
*Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory, GONHS, PO Box 843, Gibraltar.*

Exotic bird species are regularly observed in Gibraltar, mostly attributable to escapes from captivity. Many of the species concerned are tropical and most of these are parrots Psittacidae. Several species of parrots have been recorded flying free in Gibraltar, including Senegal Parrots *Poicephalus senegalus*, African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erythacus*, Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus* and several conure species, including individual Blue-crowned Conures and White-eyed Conures *Aratinga leucophthalmus*. Colonies of Monk Parakeets, Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* and Nanday Parakeets *Nandayus nenday* are established in nearby Spain (Barros & Rios 2002), with this last species nesting in Sotogrande, Cádiz, approximately 10km north of Gibraltar. However there have been no conclusive records of any parrot nesting wild in Gibraltar.

Free-flying parrots in Gibraltar have been seen largely to frequent garden areas, mainly in the South District, where the combined grounds of the Mount, the Botanic Gardens in the Alameda and other smaller areas cover approximately 18 hectares. There are many broadleaf trees: especially Olive *Olea europea*, Nettle Tree *Celtis australis*, and Narrow-leaved Ash *Fraxinus angustifolia*, palms: largely *Phoenix canariensis*, and shrubs including *Tecoma capensis*, *Lantana camara* and *Viburnum tinus*. Since 1997, confiscated or rescued parrots of several species have been kept in captivity at the Botanic Gardens, adding to the attraction of the area for free-flying escapees, which frequently visit and interact with the captive parrots and perch on their cages or adjacent trees.
Groups of parrots have been seen to survive in Gibraltar for several months. They often form interspecific flocks, composed of whatever parrot species happen to be around. Combinations observed have involved Senegal Parrots with both White-eyed Conures and Blue-crowned Conures, Senegal Parrots with Amazon species *Amazona* spp., and Amazons with both Senegal Parrots and both Conure species. These have developed regular patterns of behaviour, roosting in particular locations and undergoing regular movements to feeding sites in different parts of Gibraltar. Feeding has been observed on native fruit-bearing trees, including Olive, Nettle Tree and Carob *Ceratonia siliqua* (feeding on unripe pods), and on the Australian Boobiala *Myoporum acuminatum*.

Since early 2002, both White-eyed and Blue-crowned Conures have been seen regularly in Gibraltar, especially in the Botanic Gardens. Throughout the summer of 2004, two Blue-crowned Conures, apparently released from an aviary on the Upper Rock (G. Olivero, pers.comm.) and three Senegal Parrots (survivors of an original group of five Senegals) formed an interspecific flock. The Senegals disappeared one by one until by early 2005, only the two conures were seen regularly. In late spring, these were seen on several occasions inspecting holes on roofs in Main Street, near the garden of The Convent and on Red Sands Road overlooking the Botanic Gardens.

By July 2005, only one conure was seen regularly at any one time. However, as from the 1st of September, a flock of five conures began to frequent the Botanic Gardens and all the former locations visited by the mixed species flock. A Mitred Conure *Aratinga mitrata alticola* escaped from a cage in the Botanic Gardens on 21st September and soon joined the flock, which for some weeks was composed of six birds. These species are known to associate with each other in the wild (Juniper & Parr, 1998).

These birds developed regular daily movements, arriving in the Botanic Gardens from the south early in the morning and heading north just before midday, and then returning south in the evening, presumably to a roost in a garden in the South District. They have been seen feeding on the tree species mentioned above, and they also frequent flowering eucalypts, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *E. camaldulensis*, although feeding on the flowers has not been observed. The species frequents a large range of habitats in South America, including dry deciduous forest and open habitats, including semi-desert. In the wild it feeds on a wide range of fruit and seeds, including the fruit of cacti and of cultivated species (Juniper & Parr, 1998). The fruit of the Prickly Pear *Opuntia ficus-indica*, which is common and widespread on the Rock, is therefore also a potential food source, although there have been no records of the parrots feeding either on these or on the many cactus species growing in the Botanic Gardens. Clearly though, there is sufficient food in Gibraltar to sustain a population of these parrots. The species is known to roost and nest in cliffs in South America (Juniper & Parr, 1998), another feature that is available in Gibraltar.
By mid October 2005, the flock consisted once again of five individuals, including the Mitred Conure. Close observation of the flock on 15th October revealed that in addition to the Mitred Conure, there was an adult Blue-crowned Conure and three immature Blue-crowned Conures, distinguishable as immature birds have blue restricted to the forehead and crown, with no blue tinge on the breast (Juniper & Parr, 1998).

It may be surmised that the pair of Blue-crowned Conures had successfully raised three young and that one member of the pair had been lost and indeed, soon afterwards, in November 2005, GONHS received a report of a dead ‘green parrot with a blue head’ having been found in a garden in the South District. The suspected time of nesting was therefore July and August. The most southerly populations in South America, in Argentina, nest in December, suggesting a six-month shift in this pair in the northern hemisphere.

The group of five conures has persisted until the time of writing (June 2006) and it remains to be seen whether there is further evidence of nesting of this parrot species in Gibraltar in 2006.

References:
A WINTER ROOST OF WHITE WAGTAILS
Motacilla alba alba IN GIBRALTAR

Norman Elkins
18 Scotstarvit View, Cupar, Fife, KY15 5DX, UK.

Winter 1972-1973
I was alerted to a roost of White Wagtails in Gibraltar by B. Etheridge on Feb 21st 1973. At 18:15 GMT on Feb 22nd, flocks of alba Wagtails were arriving from the north in a steady stream, landing silently on the roof of the Catholic Community centre on the Line Wall, and on an adjacent roof. They then gradually flew down to roost in a row of Canary Island Date Palms Phoenix canariensis. After a great deal of flitting about, with some calling, the birds finally perched on the palm fronds which were waving in a strong wind. All had gone to roost within 20 minutes.

The roost was again visited on Feb 23rd. Birds began to appear from the NNW in flocks at 18:05 GMT. They included at least one Pied Wagtail M. a. yarrellii. On Feb 24th an estimated 500 birds were present. The roost was still occupied in mid-March, with 60 present on Mar 12th, and Mrs. A. Bourne saw flocks coming from the north over the border on Mar 19th.

Winter 1973-1974
The town roost was occupied from late October 1973, the numbers building up to 36 on Nov 6th, 165 on Nov 15th and 189 on Nov 22nd and peaking at 350 on Dec 1st. A decline to 136 by Dec 8th followed a spell of cold weather on Dec 4th–5th. They then built up to a steady 310-330 throughout January and increased to 461 in early February, when numbers were possibly augmented by migrants. On Feb 23rd the flock numbered 355. Main arrivals at the roost area began on average three minutes before local sunset, although some often arrived as early as 15 minutes before sunset. Arrivals ceased quickly, on average 18 minutes after sunset.

This same roost was studied by Cortes (1977) between Dec 20th 1976 and Jan 15th 1977, when the maximum count was 103. It was in use until at least 1984, when the Public Works Department had to be stopped from pruning the trees in December (J. Cortes, pers. comm.). However, the site has since been abandoned. White Wagtails are extremely numerous in Spain in winter, when the Iberian population is strongly reinforced by migrants, so a new roost could form in Gibraltar in future. Roost sites tend to be traditional however and once continuity of use is lost the change may well be permanent. On the positive side, the species is still a common migrant and winter visitor in Gibraltar and it bred successfully for the first recorded time in 2004, with a breeding season presence also recorded in 2005 and 2006. Editor.

Reference
The ‘Carrefour’ Yellow-browed Warbler

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

Ernest Garcia
Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory, GONHS, PO Box 843, Gibraltar.

Yellow-browed Warbler in unusual habitat (E. Garcia)

Birders always need to be prepared for the unexpected but I was caught utterly off my guard when I found a Yellow-browed Warbler inside the Carrefour supermarket at Los Barrios, near Algeciras, Spain, on 14th November 2005. By fortunate chance I happened to be passing the fresh fruit displays when a small bird flew past and landed on top of a rack a few metres away. I was amazed to recognise it as a Yellow-browed Warbler: the long supercilium and the wing bars were obvious to the naked eye at such short range. Even more fortunately I happened to have my camera with me and was able to take a series of photographs to back up a claim which I fear some might otherwise have doubted.

The bird was attracted to the white grapes and was seen pecking at them repeatedly. The grapes showed puncture marks on examination. From time to time a shopper would disturb it but it returned repeatedly to the same place and allowed approach to about three metres. The supermarket staff said that it had been present for several days. I informed local birders and the warbler was netted, ringed and liberated in more conventional surroundings the following day.

The Yellow-browed Warbler is by far the most frequent of the Asian warblers to stray to western Europe but it is still very rare in Spain, with only 28 accepted records (plus six in the Canaries) up to 2004.
RINGING REPORT 2005

Charles Perez
Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory, GONHS, PO Box 843, Gibraltar.

The Gibraltar Ringing Group, working under the auspices of the British Trust for Ornithology, is based at the Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory at Jews’ Gate on the Upper Rock Nature Reserve. Ringing commenced on January 31st and continued until June 8th with a break between May 16th and June 2nd. Activity resumed on August 23rd until November 19th with a break between October 27th and November 5th. The weather permitted 97 ringing days in the first period and 67 ringing days in the second. A total of 270m of nets were used when the manpower was available, but only 136m of nets were used in the autumn when catches were greater.

A total of 5,452 birds were captured, of which 4,814 were new birds, 592 were retraps and seven were controls of foreign ringed birds. These last included a Spanish Serin, an English Blackcap, Willow Warblers from Scotland and Sweden on their way back in the spring; and a Belgian Blackcap, a French Black Redstart and a Spanish Robin in the autumn. A further 16 birds brought in by members of the public were ringed and released after a period of recovery in captivity. Overall, 72 species were handled, four of which were ringed for the first time: Puffin, Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl and Great Spotted Cuckoo. Ringing totals are given in Table 1 and details of Recoveries and Controls in Table 2.
Monthly highlights

February. Wintering species were present and commencing their migration north with 70 Blackcaps, 48 Black Redstarts, and 13 Common Chiffchaffs captured during this month. A variety of other species included an early Barn Swallow on the 19th, a Common Kestrel on the 13th, 11 Crag Martins, four Stonechats and several finches.

March. Common Chiffchaffs increased with 77 birds caught and Blackcaps were still moving through with 57 birds handled. Interesting migrants included a Firecrest on March 20th and single Redwings on March 8th and 20th. Visible finch passage was evident but only a few individuals were caught including a Bullfinch on March 12th, the ninth local record. The first trans-Saharan migrants included a Hoopoe on the 3rd, an Iberian Chiffchaff on the 7th, a Spectacled Warbler on the 11th; a Willow Warbler on the 11th: with 21 for the month including 11 on the 19th; a Subalpine Warbler also on the 19th: with four for the month, a Tree Pipit on the 25th and a Woodchat Shrike on the 30th.

April. April saw late wintering birds leaving with a Song Thrush on the 6th, a total of 15 Common Chiffchaffs with late single birds on the 24th and 25th, and four Robins up to the 23rd. The month was dominated by trans-Saharan migrants with 167 Willow Warblers, 31 Bonelli’s Warblers, 29 Nightingales and 21 Garden Warblers as the most numerous species. The weather did not provide for exceptional fall conditions but catches were regular throughout the month, with small numbers on a daily basis. Among other interesting birds ringed was a Puffin recovered from the bay and a Quail found in the town area, both released on the 8th, and a pair of Griffon Vultures downed by gulls and released on the 25th.

May. Only 14 days were employed in ringing activities in May, mainly early in the month. Flycatchers dominated the month with 18 Pied Flycatchers and 10 Spotted Flycatchers up to the 15th and Melodious and Willow Warblers were also evident with 14 and 16 birds respectively. No nightjars were encountered but the variety included three Reed Warblers in the scrub vegetation, an Orphean Warbler and a Wood Warbler on the 2nd, a Corn Bunting on the 3rd, a Spectacled Warbler on the 4th, a late Common Chiffchaff on the 7th, a Spotless Starling on the 14th and two Woodchat Shrikes on the 15th. At this time of the year House Sparrows foraged at the netting site for insects to feed their young and 15 birds were trapped and ringed.

June. Ringing extended to seven days in June up to the 8th, with mainly resident birds and their young trapped and ringed. These included 37 recently fledged Sardinian Warblers, 11 young Wrens, 12 young Blackbirds and four young Blue Tits. The Yellow-legged Gull colony was targeted and 58 nestlings were ringed, one which was recovered five months later in Málaga (See Table 2). Late trans-Saharan migrants caught included three Melodious Warblers, two Woodchat Shrikes, single Garden Warblers on the 4th and 7th, a Common Whitethroat on the 7th and an Orphean Warbler on the 8th. A very late Robin on the 2nd was also a surprise.
The early summer saw several birds ringed and released after a period of rehabilitation. They included a Black Kite and two more Griffon Vultures. Also ringed and released were young birds that were found by concerned members of the public, comprising three Common Kestrels, two Little Owls and a Barn Owl.

**August.** Ringing resumed on the 24th and already early trans-Saharan migrants were on the move. A total of five Reed, two Melodious and three Garden Warblers were ringed at the end of the month together with small numbers of juvenile resident birds.

**September.** Captures were again dominated by juvenile resident birds including 24 Blackbirds, 36 Blue Tits and 45 Sardinian Warblers. Some of the 126 Blackcaps caught were early migrants handled at the end of the month: this species dominated the rest of the season. A total of 13 Robins were caught, the first on the 19th. Low numbers of trans-Saharan migrants were caught in comparison to other years but 55 Pied Flycatchers, 47 Willow Warblers, 35 Garden Warblers, 19 Common Redstarts and 11 Nightingales made up the numbers. Disappointingly there were only two Subalpine Warblers: on the 19th and 20th, a single Reed Warbler on the 29th; four Orphean Warblers, six Common Whitethroats and three Spotted Flycatchers, all species that are usually more numerous at this time of the year. Interesting highlights included a Hoopoe on the 9th, a Common Nightjar and a Yellow Wagtail in the scrub on the 13th: the latter being only the third-ever ringed, two Red-necked Nightjars on the 19th, a Short-toed Treecreeper on the 26th, and four Scops Owls: the last of the month on the 29th, and a Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, also on the 29th.

**October.** A total of 1,247 Blackcaps and 443 Robins were trapped and ringed during the month. Other wintering birds arriving included 68 Black Redstarts from the 13th, 37 Song Thrushes from the 5th: with the main passage between the 14th and 20th, and 26 Common Chiffchaffs, mainly from the 20th to the 26th. Finch passage was not notable but small numbers were caught including 16 Chaffinches from the 17th and 69 Greenfinches from the 15th. Other finch species were scarce with only five Goldfinches and single Serins and Linnets caught. However, a Brambling on the 26th was only the second-ever ringed: the previous was caught on Nov 6th 2001. Late trans-Saharan migrants were still evident with three Reed Warblers and two Nightingales during the first half of the month, 18 Willow Warblers: the last on the 21st, and 33 Garden Warblers and 37 Common Redstarts up to the 22nd. Interesting catches included a Grey Wagtail during the World Birdwatch day on the 1st and the first ringed Long-eared Owl on the 16th, itself only the second record for Gibraltar.

**November.** Ringing continued until the 19th, during which another 242 Blackcaps and 239 Robins were ringed. Black Redstart passage was intense during the earlier part of the month with 174 birds ringed. Wintering birds continued to arrive with 20 Song Thrushes; a Redwing, a Firecrest and a late Ring Ouzel on the 10th, and a Meadow Pipit on the 12th. Small numbers of finches continued to fly south including many Siskin flocks: one Siskin was caught on the 8th and six more on the 9th. Crag Martins arrived to winter on the cliffs and six birds were ringed, including four on the 10th. A Goldcrest on the 15th was the third-ever ringed and the ninth record for Gibraltar.
Resident and visiting ringers.

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See Systematic List for records of species represented by fewer than ten individuals

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APPENDIX 1B. MINIMUM DAILY TOTALS OF SOARING MIGRANTS. AUTUMN 2005

See Systematic List for records of species represented by fewer than ten individuals

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APPENDIX 2. **MONTHLY TOTAL OF SEABIRDS RECORDED AT EUROPA POINT**

Figures are totals of daily observations and do not necessarily indicate the number of separate individuals involved.

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APPENDIX 3. SPECIES WHICH ARE NOT CONSIDERED BY THE GIBRALTAR RARITIES PANEL.

The Rarities Committee of the Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory aims to ensure that published records of birds observed at Gibraltar are those which have satisfied defined, objective criteria regarding their authenticity. In common with other national Rarities Committees, the Gibraltar committee is conservative in outlook, preferring to err on the side of caution when doubts arise. The rejection of a record by the committee does not imply that the record was incorrect but only that the circumstances of the observation were insufficient to rule out all possibility of error.

The list below includes all those species for which records submitted to the Panel DO NOT require supporting descriptions. Records of any other species must be accompanied by a written description, including full details of the observation. A rarities submission form can be downloaded from the GONHS website (www.gonhs.com).

A written description of the bird(s) and the circumstances of the record should be submitted to the Committee Chairman, Mr Charles Perez (records@gonhs.org) in the first instance. The format favoured by the Association of European Rarities Committees is ideal (see http://www.aerc.be/Documents.htm). A description is required for records of all species EXCEPT those specifically excluded below. Descriptions are also required for all potential additions to the Gibraltar List, which may be viewed on the GONHS website (www.gonhs.org).

LIST OF SPECIES WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS
• Black-necked Grebe
• Cory’s, Balearic and Levantine Shearwaters
• European & Leach’s Storm Petrels
• Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant & Shag
• Night, Squacco, Purple & Grey Herons
• Little & Cattle Egrets
• Black & White Storks
• Greater Flamingo
• Greylag Goose
• Mallard & Common Scoter
• Honey & Common Buzzards
• Black-shouldered, Red & Black Kites
• Egyptian, Griffon & Black Vultures
• Marsh, Hen & Marsh Harriers
• Short-toed & Booted Eagles
• Goshawk & Sparrowhawk
• Osprey
• Common & Lesser Kestrels
• Merlin, Hobby, Eleonora’s Falcon & Peregrine
• Barbary Partridge & Common Quail
• Common Crane
• Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet & Stone Curlew.
• Kentish Plover, Northern Lapwing, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper & Turnstone
• Great, Arctic & Pomarine Skuas
• Mediterranean, Little, Black-headed, Audouin’s, Lesser Black-backed & Yellow-legged Gulls & Kittiwake
• Gull-billed, Caspian, Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Common, Little & Black Terns
• Razorbill & Atlantic Puffin
• Rock, Collared & Turtle Doves
• Rose-ringed & Monk Parakeets
• Great Spotted & Grey Cuckoos
• Barn, Scops, Little & Tawny Owls
• European & Red-necked Nightjars
• Common, Pallid & Alpine Swifts
• River Kingfisher, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Hoopoe & Wryneck
• Short-toed, Thekla, Wood & Sky Larks
• Sand, Crag & House Martins
• Barn & Red-rumped Swallows
• Tawny, Tree & Meadow Pipits
• Yellow (flava, flavissima, iberiae & cinereocapilla), Grey & Pied (alba & yarrellii) Wagtails
• Wren, Dunnock & Alpine Accentor
• Rufous Bush Chat, Robin, Nightingale, Bluethroat, Common & Black Redstarts, Whinchat & Stonechat
• Northern & Black-eared Wheatears
• White-backed & Blue Rock Thrushes, Ring Ouzel, Blackbird, Song & Mistle Thrushes, Redwing
• Zitting Cisticola, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Common & Iberian Chiffchaffs, Firecrest
• Grasshopper, Reed, Olivaceous, Melodious, Dartford, Spectacled, Subalpine, Sardinian, Orphean, Garden, Western Bonelli’s, Wood & Willow Warblers
• Spotted & Pied Flycatchers
• Blue & Great Tits
• Short-toed Treecreeper
• Golden Oriole
• Woodchat & Southern Grey Shrikes
• Jackdaw & Raven
• Common & Spotless Starlings
• House, Spanish & Tree Sparrows
• Chaffinch, Brambling, Serin, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnet & Red Crossbill
• Cirl, Rock, Ortolan & Corn Buntings
CONTRIBUTING TO THE GIBRALTAR BIRD REPORT

All records of birds seen in or from Gibraltar are welcomed for incorporation into the Society’s archives and for publication in the annual reports. Records from adjacent regions of Spain are also gratefully received.

Records should be sent to the Recorder, Mr Charles E. Perez, Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, PO Box 843, Gibraltar, email Records@gonhs.org. Records of rarities should be accompanied by a full description.

Other contributions for the Report should be sent to the Editor, preferably on disc or via email to ernestgarcia@gonhs.org
THE GIBRALTAR ORNITHOLOGICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) was founded in 1976. Its aims are to promote the study and protection of the natural history of Gibraltar, the Strait and its hinterland.

GONHS, a Gibraltar Registered Charity, is a membership-based non-governmental organisation. It is the Gibraltar Partner of BirdLife International, and a member of The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Iberian Council for the Defence of Nature (CIDN) and the Bird Club Partnership of the British Trust for Ornithology.

The Society is active in many fields of biological research, nature conservation, and wildlife management.

We very much welcome membership applications from persons who support our aims. The annual subscription is £15 for individuals (£5 for under-18s and senior citizens), £20 for families and £125 for Business Supporters.

Prospective members should supply their names, addresses and other contact details, and a cheque made out to “GONHS”, to the Membership Secretary, GONHS, c/o The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, The Alameda, Red Sands Road, P.O. Box 843, Gibraltar.
GIBRALTAR BIRD REPORT 2005

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