



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE
& ENVIRONMENT

The Important Bird Areas in the UAE

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What is the Important Bird Area (IBA) program?

The IBA Programme aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of sites critical for the conservation of the world's birds and other wildlife. These sites, in addition to their international significance for biodiversity, also provide essential benefits to people, such as food, materials, water, climate regulation and flood protection, as well as opportunities for recreation and spiritual fulfilment. Over the past four decades, the IBA programme has identified and documented over 12,000 sites globally, amounting to around 6% of the world's surface area.

How are the IBA identified?

The selection of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) is achieved through the application of quantitative ornithological criteria, grounded in up-to-date knowledge of the sizes and trends of bird populations. The criteria are used to ensure that the sites selected as IBAs have true significance for the international conservation of bird populations and enabling comparability between, sites at national, continental and global levels.

IBA Global Categories and Criteria

- Globally Threatened Species
- Restricted Range Species
- Biome-restricted assemblages
- Congregations

IBA Criterion	Description
A1: Globally Threatened Species	Criterion: the site is known or thought regularly to hold significant numbers of a Globally Threatened species.
A2: Restricted Range Species	Criterion: the site is known or thought to hold a significant component of the group of species whose breeding distributions define an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) or a Secondary Area (SA).
A3: Biome-restricted assemblages	Criterion: the site is known or thought to hold a significant component of the group of species whose distributions are largely or wholly confined to one biome.
A4: Congregations	Criterion: the site is known or thought to hold congregations of $\geq 1\%$ of the global population of one or more species on a regular or predictable basis.

How many important bird areas in the UAE?

▶ Total number of Birds Species

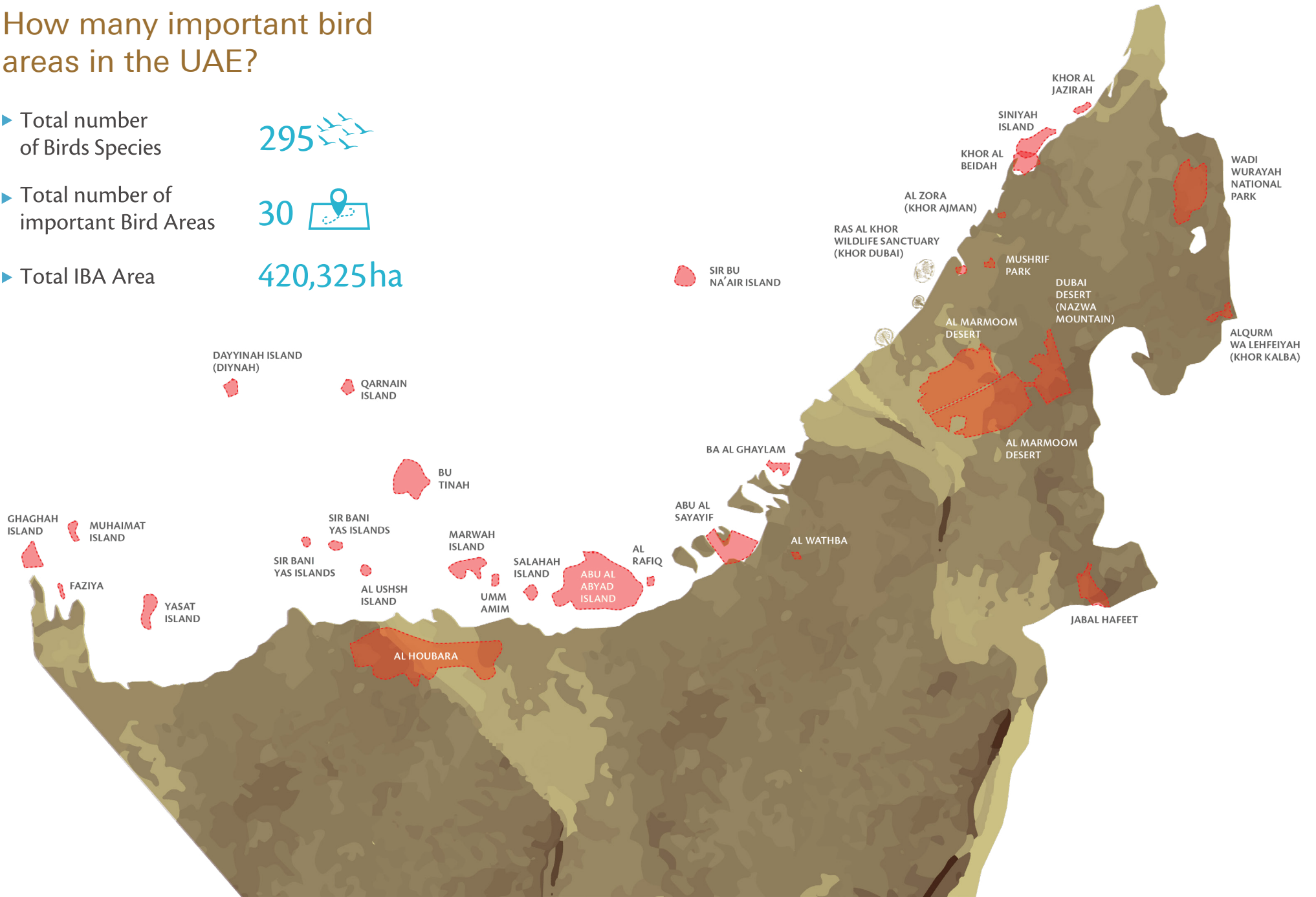
295 

▶ Total number of important Bird Areas

30 

▶ Total IBA Area

420,325ha



Important bird areas in the UAE

Abu Dhabi

- Abu Al Abyad Island
- Abu Al Sayayif
- Al Houbara
- Al Rafiq
- Al Ushsh Island
- Al Wathba
- Ba Al Ghaylam Island
- Butinah Island
- Dayyinah Island (Diynah)
- Faziya Island
- Ghagha Island
- Jebel Hafeet
- Marawah Island
- Muhaimat Island
- Qarnain Island
- Salahah Island
- Sir Bani Yas Island
- Umm Amim
- Yasat Island

Ajman

- Al Zora (Khor Ajman)

Um Al Quwain

- Khor Al Beidah
- Siniyah Island

Ras Al Khaimah

- Khor Al Jazirah

Fujairah

- Wadi Wurayah National Park

Dubai

- Al Marmoom Desert
- Dubai Desert (Nazwa Mountain)
- Mushrif Park
- Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary (Khor Dubai)

Sharjah

- Alqurm Wa Lehfeiyah (Khor Kalba)
- Sir Bu Na'air Island



Abu Dhabi

Abu Al Abyad Island

Site description

The site has a large, low-lying island (20 km by 30 km, up to 10 m elevation) of calcareous sands and sabkhah, with very little natural vegetation; there are small areas of salt-tolerant scrub and irrigated cultivation. The coast is fringed with extensive intertidal sandflats and mature mangrove *Avicennia* woodland.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Dromas ardeola*

Common name: Crab-plover

Status: Breeding



Scientific name: *Charadrius mongolus*

Common name: Lesser Sandplover

Status: Breeding

Al Wathba

Site description

The site is an important area for breeding of many birds, with high numbers. It is the only inland wetland in the Arabian Peninsula that has witnessed successive successful breeding of Greater Flamingo (from 2011 to 2017). In winter, there are high numbers of Greater Flamingo, large groups of ducks, mainly Shoveler and Teal; Greater Spotted Eagle, Ferruginous Duck and Avocet are also present. The site has one of the region's biggest winter roosts of Marsh Harrier.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Himantopus*

himantopus

Common name: Black-winged Stilt

Status: non-breeding



Scientific name: *Charadrius*

alexandrinus

Common name: Kentish Plover

Status: Winter

Ba Al Ghaylam Island

Site description

The site is having extensive inter-tidal mudflats near Abu Dhabi city that is under private ownership and has restricted entry. It is also a marine area with extensive intertidal mudflats which are important for wintering and migrating waterbirds. This site has regularly recorded Great Knot and it also has significant numbers of waterbirds like Kentish Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Western reef Egret, Eurasian Curlew and Eurasian Oystercatcher.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Charadrius leschenaultii*
Common name: Greater Sandplover
Status: Passage



Scientific name: *Calidris tenuirostris*
Common name: Great Knot
Status: Winter

Bu Tinah

Site description

The site has a well-vegetated, shelly shoals on coral platform, coral fringed, some mangrove, extensive seagrass beds and sheltered lagoon. Area includes part of Butinah island up to the sand-bar holding the Socotra Cormorant breeding colony; includes sea area.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Charadrius mongolus*
Common name: Lesser Sandplover
Status: Winter

Abu Al Sayayif

Site description

The site has an extensive inter-tidal mudflat near Abu Dhabi city that has mangrove stands. It is also a marine protected area with extensive inter tidal mudflats which is important for wintering waterbirds. This site has the highest number of wintering Greater Flamingo. It also has significant numbers of waterbirds such as Western Reef Egret, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Bar-tailed Godwit.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Egretta gularis*
Common name: Western Reef-egret
Status: Winter



Scientific name: *Phoenicopterus roseus*
Common name : Greater Flamingo
Status: Breeding and winter

Dayyinah Island (Diynah)

Site description

The site has an offshore island with limited naval personnel station permanently. Only a portion of the islands is built up whereas major proportion of the island is safe for breeding birds.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Sterna repressa*
Common name: White-cheeked Tern
Status: Breeding

Faziya

Site description

This site is a desert island in far west of UAE, joined to mainland by a causeway.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Falco concolor*
Common name: Sooty Falcon
Status: Breeding

Source: <https://dibird.com/species/sooty-falcon/>

Ghagha Island

Site description

This site is flat, arid islands in the Arabian Gulf close to the Saudi Arabia. The islands were formerly inhabited and cultivated.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Sternula saundersi*
Common name: Saunders's Tern
Status: Breeding

Jebel Hafeet

Site description

This site is on the UAE/Oman border, 20 km to the west of the main Hajar range. The barren, arid slopes are deeply incised by wadis full of scree. A road runs up the western flank to the summit (1,300 m), whilst the east flank is very steep. Vegetation is very sparse: Ziziphus and Acacia bushes grow on the lower flanks. Most of the mountain is inaccessible and rarely visited.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Neophron percnopterus*
Common name: Egyptian Vulture
Status: non-breeding



Scientific name: *Torgos tracheliotos*
Common name: Lappet-faced Vulture
Status: non-breeding



Scientific name: *Oenanthe monacha*
Common name: Hooded Wheatear
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Ammoperdix heyi*
Common name: Sand Partridge
Status: Resident

Sir Bani Yas Islands

Site description

This site is a part of several offshore islands near Sir Bani Yas.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Sternula saundersi*

Common name: Saunders's Tern

Status: Breeding

Marawah Island

Site description

This site is a large nearshore island near Mirfa with extensive inter-tidal mudflats.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Limosa lapponica*

Common name: Bar-tailed Godwit

Status: Passage



Scientific name: *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common name: Grey Plover

Status: Winter

Muhaimat Island

Site description

This offshore site (near Kafai) comprises two large islands and one small island in close proximity to each other.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Common name: Lesser Crested Tern

Status: Breeding

Qarnain Island

Site description

This site is a 2-km-long island in the southern Arabian Gulf, 180 km west-north-west of Abu Dhabi city. It is mostly composed of sabkha and fairly flat sand, and there are two rocky peaks about 50 m high at the north end, with an outer shelf of limestone rock around the edge of the island, as well as patchy coral reef offshore. The low and level southern area of blown shell-sand is relatively well-vegetated (low shrubs of *Suaeda* and *Salsola*) but this becomes sparse in the undulating hillocks of the north due to the barren subsoil and the former presence of a *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* roost/colony. There is some habitation with a small permanent population, including a desalination plant and a navigation station.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Phaethon aethereus*
Common name: Red-billed Tropicbird
Status: Breeding

Salahah Island

Site description

The site comprises one main island and three small rocky outcrops that are nearby. The islands lie near Mirfa and are near to the main island of Salaha.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Sternula saundersi*
Common name: Saunders's Tern
Status: Breeding

Al Rafiq

Site description

The site is on the offshore islet near Dabiya.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*
Common name: Socotra Cormorant
Status: Breeding

Al Ushsh Island

Site description

This site is inhabited, rocky island with tussock grass, joined by bar to sandy island (east).

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Sterna repressa*
Common name: White-cheeked Tern
Status: Breeding

Umm Amim

Site description

This site is an uninhabited, low, sandy island. The island is surrounded by intertidal sand flats on the south and east sides and a coral shelf elsewhere.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Onychoprion anaethetus*
Common name: Bridled Tern
Status: Breeding



Scientific name: *Dromas ardeola*
Common name: Crab-plover
Status: Breeding

Yasat island

Site description

Three islands up to 36 m high in the south-east Arabian Gulf, 35 km north of Abu Dhabi mainland and 70 km west of Sir Bani Yas island. The islands are fringed by coral reefs.

Most important birds in this area

Scientific name: *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Common name: Lesser Crested Tern

Status: Breeding



Al Houbara

Site description

This site is a sand-gravel plain with scattered flat-topped outcrops in the extreme west of Abu Dhabi emirate, becoming purer sand and more undulating towards the south (but not forming large dunes), with sabkhah in coastal and more low-lying areas. Climate is very arid with sparse winter rainfall.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Chlamydotis macqueenii*

Common name: Asian Houbara

Status: Winter

Dubai

Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve

Site description

Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR) is a large desert reserve in the south of the Emirate of Dubai, linking to the adjacent Al Marmoom Desert Reserve (to the west).

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Cursorius cursor*
Common name: Cream-coloured Courser
Status: Breeding



Scientific name: *Bubo ascalaphus*
Common name: Pharaoh Eagle-owl
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Corvus ruficollis*
Common name: Brown-necked Raven
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Alaemon alaudipes*
Common name: Greater Hoopoe-lark
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Eremopterix nigriceps*
Common name: Black-crowned Sparrow-lark
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Chlamydotis macqueenii*
Common name: Asian Houbara
Status: non-breeding

Al Marmoom Desert

Site description

The Marmoom desert covers more than 10% of Dubai's land area. It will be the first unfenced desert conservation reserve in the country and will host more than 20 environmental, cultural and sports initiatives. The reserve includes more than 40 hectares of shrubland and 10 km² of artificial lakes (Al Qudra Lakes).

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Caprimulgus aegyptius*
Common name: Egyptian Nightjar
Status: non-breeding



Scientific name: *Merops cyanophrys*
Common name: Arabian Green Bee-eater
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Ammomanes cinctura*
Common name: Bar-tailed Lark
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Ammomanes deserti*
Common name: Desert Lark
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*
Common name: Pale Rock Martin
Status: Breeding



Scientific name: *Eremopterix nigriceps*
Common name: Black-crowned Sparrow-lark
Status: Breeding

Mushrif Park

Site description

The site lies in Dubai, in Alkhawaneej area.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Argya squamiceps*
Common name: Arabian Babbler
Status: Resident

Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary - Khor Dubai

Site description

Ras Al Khor Wildlife is a wetland reserve renowned for attracting migratory birds in large numbers.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Larus ridibundus*
Common name: Black-headed Gull
Status: Winter



Scientific name: *Phoenicopterus roseus*
Common name: Greater Flamingo
Status: non-breeding

Sharjah

Sir Bu Na'air Island

Site description

The island of Sir Bo Na'air is 65 km offshore of the west coast of the UAE. The nearest location on the land is Jebel Ali. It is a 1340 ha, teardrop-shaped arid rocky island in the Arabian Gulf. Shallow reefs offshore hold a diversity of corals and associated marine species.

Most important birds in this area

Scientific name: *Larus hemprichii*
Common name: Sooty Gull
Status: Winter



Alqurm Wa Lehfeiyah - Khor Kalba

Site description

The Alqurm Wa Lehffaiiah is a Protected Area that is located on the east coast of the Sharjah Emirate.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Larus hemprichii*
Common name: Sooty Gull
Status: Passage



Scientific name: *Todiramphus chloris*
Common name: Collared Kingfisher
Status: Resident

Ajman

Al Zora - Khor Ajman

Site description

The site supports a total of 87 species including the globally vulnerable greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and Socotra cormorant (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*). The waterbirds that use Al-Zorah during their annual migration include the broad-billed sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*) during passage and the greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) in winter. The mangroves (*Avicennia marina*) support a range of wildlife species by providing nursery habitats, shelter in the roots/branches and rookeries. Many migratory species depend on mangroves for part of their route migrations.

Most important birds in this area

Scientific name: *Hydroprogne caspia*

Common name: Caspian Tern

Status: Passage



Umm Al Quwain

Khor Al Beidah

Site description

This site is a sheltered lagoon north-east of Umm al Quwain, containing intertidal mudflats (up to 400 m wide), islands and sparse mangrove *Avicennia* bounded inland by sabkha and rolling dunes with salt-tolerant scrub.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Common name: Kentish Plover
Status: non-breeding

Siniyah island

Site description

A flat island, 12 km × 1 km, situated 2 km north-east of Umm al Quwain town, and mainly composed of low sand-dunes, saltflats, and some shallow hollows, with sparse salt-tolerant scrub. The sheltered inland side is much dissected by tidal inlets, with associated mudflats; apart from some mangrove *Avicennia* the island is tree-less. Tidal amplitude is 1 m. Khor al Beidah (site 005) lies opposite on the mainland.

Most important birds in this area



Scientific name: *Clanga clanga*
Common name: Greater Spotted Eagle
Status: Winter



Scientific name: *Dromas ardeola*
Common name: Crab-plover
Status: Winter

Ras Al Khaimah

Khor Al Jazirah

Site description

This site has intertidal mudflats, sandbars and islets. Above the tideline there is salt-tolerant scrub, and mature *Prosopis* trees on the dunes, heavily grazed by camels and goats.

Most important birds in this area

Scientific name: *Larus genei*

Common name: Slender-billed Gull

Status: Winter



Fujairah

Wadi Wurayah National Park

Site description

The site lies within the Emirate of Fujairah on the east coast of the United Arab Emirates at approximately 23 km north-west of Fujairah town, 2 km south-west of Bidiyah village (Fujairah Emirate), 6 km north-east of Masafi town (Fujairah Emirate), 11 km south of Dibba town (Fujairah Emirate) and 5 km north-west of Khor Fakkan (Sharjah Emirate) town.

Most important birds in this area



Source: <https://dibird.com/species/omani-owl/>

Scientific name: *Strix butleri*
Common name: Omani Owl
Status: Resident



Scientific name: *Phylloscopus neglectus*
Common name: Plain Leaf-warbler
Status: Winter

Scientific name: *Oenanthe albonigra*
Common name: Hume's Wheatear
Status: Resident



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