

COMMON BIRDS OF QATAR

By Hanne & Jens Eriksen and Frances Gillespie.

ISBN: 978-9948-15-747-2

A search on the internet for Bird Books reveals a plethora of field guides, bird watching books from almost every corner of the globe. However, when one looks at bird books from this region there is a paucity of information. It was therefore very exciting to hear that Frances Gillespie was releasing her book "Common Birds of Qatar" last November.

The book, which is beautifully illustrated with photographs from Hanne & Jens Eriksen, is a welcome resource to a subject which has fascinated people since cave dwellers learned to draw. The birds are split into three habitat types, 1) gardens, parks and farms; 2) lakes, lagoons and coasts; 3) deserts and arid plains. While this might not be an ideal way to classify a species, it helps the novice user to make an initial identification based on where they might have seen the bird.

According to the authors, there are 280 bird species identified for Qatar, but about 65 of these are rare and difficult to find. As the name suggests, this book contains 215 identified species (with around 400 colour photographs) which are considered common and easy to see. Each page contains at least one photograph of the species being identified, together with a map of Qatar showing the distribution of the bird and a bar graph at the bottom showing the months which the birds can be found in the country.

Frances gives a very good introduction for the beginner, detailing how to watch birds, equipment to use, how to properly identify a species based on common features such as size, plumage, colour of face masks, tail size and shape, plus many other small identifiers which when put together makes identification all that more easy.

The book also tells the reader where some of the better bird watching locations in Qatar are. It also contains the important "Bird watching code of conduct" which should be adhered to by all bird watchers irrespective of the country they are in.

GREEN PROPHET - THE LEADING SOURCE OF ENVIRONMENT NEWS ON THE MIDDLE EAST REGION. *Tafline Laylin, taflinekay@mac.com!*

Not long after graduating from Northern Arizona University, I took a job as a tour-guide, believing that it would enable me to share my love of the North American outdoors. Ours were supposed to be "eco-friendly" camping tours that ventured to such iconic national parks as Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon. It soon became apparent that the tours weren't so friendly at all. I drove a giant Ford van from east to west, north to south, and my passengers left behind a trail of plastic bottles and beer cans. Save a special few, they scarcely learned a thing about the wonders of nature. This is when I decided to pick up my mighty pen instead.

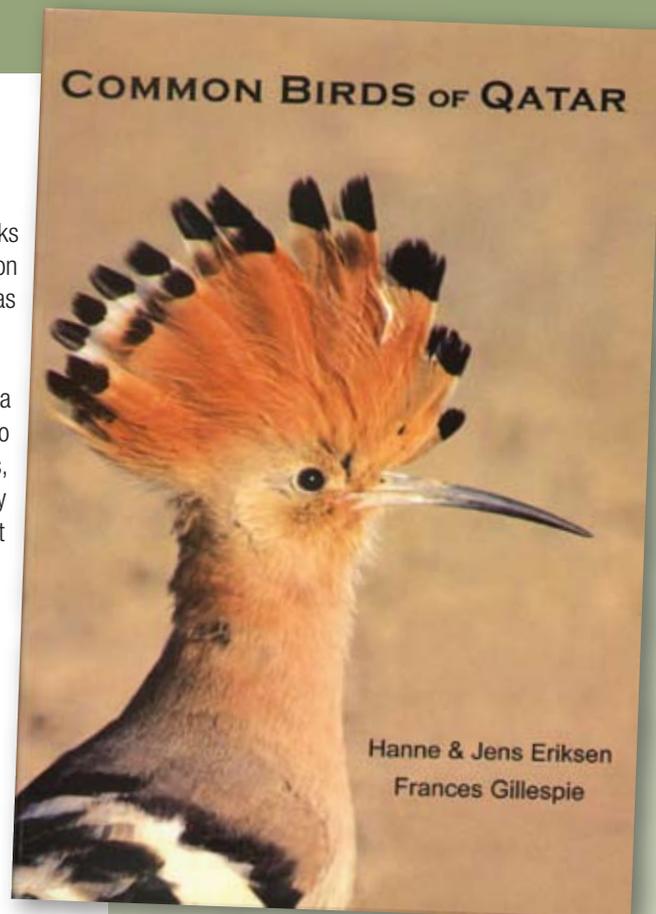
Born in Iran and raised in South Africa, I have an enduring interest in both the Middle East and Africa and their unique environmental circumstances. So I packed a backpack and moved to the Middle East. It wasn't long before my editor Karin Kloosterman accepted me as a Green Prophet contributor. So far, it has been an amazing journey.

Although environmental awareness is less prominent in the MENA region than it is in Europe it is far from environmentally dead. We have sought to dispel the notion that it is, and to provide a meeting space for like-minded enthusiasts, a space that is at once newsy and practical, inspiring, and informative. There are incredible initiatives in the works: Abu Dhabi is becoming one of the most environmentally progressive nations on the planet, Israel is famous for its cleantech, Qatar will host the 2022 World Cup with solar-powered stadiums, and conservation organizations are transcending political obstacles with important transboundary work.

Of course, the Middle East also faces a difficult and uncertain future. Temperatures in the last year were higher than ever, water is becoming increasingly scarce, food more expensive, and eventually - regardless of corporate hubris - we will have to shift away from fossil fuels if we want to retain even a semblance of climatic normality. We highlight these problems, but attempt to do so with at least a view towards viable solutions. It is not instructive to beat readers over the head with doomsday predictions, nor is it ethical to pretend that "everything is alright." Finding a positive balance forms the backbone of what we do.

In addition to keeping an eye on corporations that attempt to usurp our natural resources without the same due process demanded in western countries, we provide delicious recipes; while keeping an eye on Egypt and its potential impact on renewable energy projects, we also provide news about inspiring designs that encourage creative, critical thinking. And we try to direct our readers' attention to the extraordinary biodiversity of our region. Leopards, hyenas, falcons, dunes, desert, oases, Bedouin: our treasure trove of culture, fauna, and flora is unique and we're proud of it. Thanks in part to Green Prophet, which has an extensive international readership, the rest of the world is gradually becoming aware of both the challenges and the progress that are otherwise hidden behind mainstream political headlines.

For more information and to subscribe go to: <http://www.greenprophet.com/>



The book is a great addition to the ornithological literature and although aimed slightly more towards the casual bird watcher, it will no doubt be a constant companion to the myriad of other more serious twitchers resident and visiting Qatar. I

