aggressive species. In areas where it is common it drives away potential competitors for carrion such as the Black Kite and hassles others, especially colonially nesting species such as herons and terns, taking young and eggs. It attacks domestic animals, reptiles, rodents, even humans, and is thought to be instrumental in spreading human diseases. It is intelligent and cunning and feeds on anything a group can overpower. It has even been known to plunge into water for fish and feeds at night where there is illumination.

Reports of its predatory habits are rare so far in Arabia except from Aden where it is now especially abundant and a control programme has been started. Information is needed on the species it preys upon, the economic damage it causes and interactions between it and native species in Arabia. Please report all relevant observations, for example in respect of competition for nest sites, food stealing, unprovoked aggression etc., on the standard report. Form 3. News is also needed of its breeding needs and nidification. Does it for example have the curious habit of building wire nests in Arabia which it has learnt to do in many other parts of its range?

**THE FORMER DISTRIBUTION OF THE HOUbara**

The species for which most enquiries are received is the Houbara. It is a bird closely linked to Arab folklore and is one of two species whose numbers have been drastically reduced in Arabia this century. The other is the Arabian Ostrich which is now extinct - see Phoenix 4. There are currently several attempts in Arabia to breed this bird in captivity with a view, eventually, to reintroduction.

As a large, edible bird the Houbara has always had a price on its head. Before firearms were widely available it was trapped in a variety of ingenious ways and when guns came along it was shot on sight. In addition, it has always been the traditional prey of falconers. A combination of guns and falconers reduced the Houbara population throughout Arabia to almost negligible numbers by about 1950. We are more enlightened now, perhaps, but there is still much hunting pressure on this bird and the Houbara is having a hard time re-establishing itself in those corners of Arabia where it survived. Current breeding localities are widely separated and these would appear to be only in the extreme northern regions of Saudi Arabia and in central Oman, with possibly a small population in PDRY.

A hundred years ago the Houbara was widespread in the plains of northern Arabia and a reasonable picture of former distribution can be pieced together from the records of travellers and visitors to those areas who kept detailed records. It is a fortunate paradox that both the Houbara and the Ostrich were more often recorded in travellers' logs than other birds. Even those visitors with absolutely no interest in the natural environment could not resist entering notes in their diary such as, "Bedouin brought me fresh Houbara eggs for breakfast", and thereby recorded a Breeding Evidence Code 15 for posterity. The former distribution of the Ostrich has already been published in Phoenix 4 and that for the Houbara is shown in Fig 3.

One of the biggest problems for the recovery of the Houbara today in Arabia is over-grazing by domestic stock. Sheep and goats not only eat the plants which are also favoured by the Houbara but do such an effective job on the vegetation that they deprive the Houbara of cover for nesting as well. Nevertheless, the former breeding areas shown on the map may be regarded as a potential range map for the reintroduction of this bird to Arabia should any of the captive breeding exercises be successful. Any reintroduction, of course, will have to go hand-in-hand with a commitment from desert users to keep their finger off the trigger and their hand firmly holding the jesses.

**FUTURE BREEDERS AND EXOTICS IN KUWAIT**

**Moustached Warbler**

Until about 1980 records indicated that the Moustached Warbler was essentially an uncommon passage migrant in Kuwait, but since October 1981 it has become increasingly more common. This species has been a regular winter visitor to the Jahra Pool (NB 35) for the past seven years and during the last three winters it has been present from early November until at least mid-April. On several occasions, during single visits to readily

![Fig 3 Houbara. Breeding records prior to 1954 show a much wider distribution in N.Arabia than at present. Prior to 1954
- Confirmed breeding
- Other records
- 1954
- Confirmed breeding
- Probable breeding
- Other records](image-url)