In the central coastal area near Belhaf an impressive flock of 33,000 Socotra cormorants were drying themselves on the beach or fishing nearby. Watching a group of fishermen landing their catch of sprats (used in this part of the world as animal fodder) about 50 Persian shearwaters suddenly appeared just off the beach to feed on scraps.

One of the objectives of the survey was to gain information and to make local contacts for a full scale OSME expedition to PDRY in the future. A proposal has now been submitted to OSME.

A full report is in preparation.

M.C.J.

ORIENTAL SCOURGE - INDIAN HOUSE CROW

As I reported in Sandgrouse 8, the Indian house crow attempted to breed in Kuwait in 1982 and then hatched young in 1985 and 1987. Kuwait has escaped invasion by this "oriental scourge", although one or two birds turn up annually. Why the house crow has not established itself here is not clear, but I suspect that the urban environment now is simply too clean. Until 1982 it was usual in most urban areas of Kuwait to see garbage lying about or spilling out of dustbins, and the city was literally overrun with rats. The municipal authorities were obliged to act and in an astonishingly successful campaign eradicated the rat population in a very short time. Part of the campaign's success came from compelling householders by law to place all refuse in plastic bags, which then have to be deposited in tough plastic bins supplied to all buildings. Until 1982 the house crow would have had a chance to flourish in Kuwait, but it appears to have "missed the boat". Forgive the pun, but it brings me to the question of dispersal. In most instances this bird seems to have arrived in its numerous, adopted locations around the Indian Ocean as a result of being transported by ship. Some may well arrive in Kuwait in this manner but, as I stated in the Sandgrouse article, it appears quite likely from the timing of its occurrences that the house crow is also a passage migrant. Figure 6 extends the records reported in 1985 and shows even more clearly that this bird occurs regularly in spring and possibly autumn. These timings would be compatible with natural dispersal from established populations in the southern Gulf.

The article in Sandgrouse also reports that the crows were collecting wire for nest building and comments on the nesting sites chosen. C.W.T. Pilcher.

PROGRESS SO FAR: BROWN-NECKED RAVEN

The brown-necked raven is probably the most widespread bird in Arabia. It is found, on some offshore islands, at the top of the highest mountains and in the remotest of deserts. Because of this wide range, records collected for this species give a good indication of the coverage the project has achieved so far. The up-to-date position for this species can be seen at Fig 7. A good number of squares have been blanked and others upgraded since the similar map which appeared in Phoenix 5, but there are still large parts of Arabia which have not yet been touched by the survey. If there is still no record for a square then the chances are there are very few other records from the locality. Alitases should, therefore, make special efforts to once to the blank squares and report their findings.

NEW BOOKS

In this column it is hoped to give details of all new books which are, in some way, relevant to the study of birds in Arabia or to the Arabian/Middle Eastern environment generally. Most titles mentioned are available in good book shops in Arabia, Europe and North America but some are on restricted distribution or privately published and those wishing to quote the ISBN or ISSN number should check with the author, publisher or distributor mentioned. Those ordering through a library or some other agent are best advised to quote the ISBN or ISSN number shown. The list is in no particular order, which sometimes include post and packaging. In general, recommendations made about the worth of books dealt with are based on format, content and standard of preparation. A recommendation does not necessarily mean good value for money. Readers are asked to provide details of new books not mentioned in this survey.

BIRDS OF MADINAT YANBU AL SINAIYAH AND IT'S HINTERLAND by Peter J. Baldwin & Brian S. Meadows, 1988

An unusual book as far as Arabian ornithological books go, it focuses on one small area, the new town of Madinat Yanbu al Sinayih on the Red Sea coast, 300 k north of Jeddah. It is part of the Jeddah 250 k industrial complex, an oil pipeline from the Eastern Province to Yanbu where the oil is refined. The book aims and occupies one tenth of the pages and discusses the new town and the nearby industrial areas of MYAS, a number of new raptors, and a radius of 75 k from the town. The book is totally bilingual with an Arabic introduction, tables and illustrations which exactly mirror the English at the front. All text throughout the book is in both Arabic and English. Introductory chapters pay special attention to habitats. Important areas are dominated by the brooding Jubail Radwa, the haunt of grackles and fanned ruffled ravens. Below the jebel are the gardens and cultivated areas below the land slopess away to barren plains of acacia flats where the black-crowned finch lark, great grey shrike and cream-coloured courser are to be found. In the industrial areas of MYAS, a number of interesting birds have been observed in recent years by the authors who have brought together eight years of records in this book. The new town includes three conservation areas of coastal mangroves, protected against a backdrop of huge industrial development. Within the town itself, which includes much landscaping, ornamental gardens and artificial lakes, olivaceous warbler and mallard have bred, so too has the rose-ringed parakeet. The book also includes a list of the birds of MADIN, both resident and migratory. Barbary falcon may breed around the reinery. The Yanbu mangroves are one of the few places on the Red Sea coast where the African reed warbler is known to breed and the clamorous reed warbler is also to be found. One particularly interesting discovery was of chukar partridge in the foothills, the southernmost record in western Arabia. Migration aspects take up a good part of the book and the local checklist of nearly 300 species is mostly of migrants. The checklist shows the monthly occurrence of each species throughout the year. Interestig visitors to the area have included white-headed duck Oxyura luteocephala as well as groups of 50+ honey buzzard Pernis apivorus, a species which is decidedly scarce anywhere in Arabia. The species accounts vary tremendously, from one sentence covering status and numbers occurring to over 150 words. There are 100 or more colour photographs,