ground. Although these limited descriptions do not allow a positive identification, we believe that his information on the size of the birds, the location and structure of the breeding colony, as well as the described hunting behaviour and type of prey, all indicate gull-billed tern as being the most likely species.

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Corn Bunting confirmed breeding in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia

During the winters of 1991/2 and 1992/3 we frequently observed small flocks of corn buntings Miliaria calandra at the Al Sharqiyah Agricultural Development Company in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. This site, which is situated at approximately 50 km southwest of Jubail (PA30), consists of a large fenced area (10 km x 10 km) with about 95 pivot fields on which cereals, hay and alfalfa is cultivated. Prior to 1994 we did not visit this site any later than March. On a visit on 10 March 1993, there were at least 30 corn buntings observed during a visit that covered some 20% of the total cultivated area. Alerted by possible breeding records in the UAE in 1993 (Richardson, 1993; Phoenix 10:3), we decided to visit this site on a regular basis during the spring and summer of 1994 and the following observations were obtained:

--- January-February: At least 100 corn buntings were counted in approximately 30% of the cultivated area. Most records were of flocks of 3 to 30 birds but on 21 February, eight singing males were detected in growing wheat fields.

--- 25 March: By this time the cereal fields were already being harvested. At least 28 singing males were located on four ripened wheat fields and eight hay fields.

--- 14 April: All cereal fields had been harvested and two of the hay fields had been cut. However 19 singing males were located on the remaining six mature hay fields. At least seven individual corn buntings and a flock of five were observed on the harvested fields.

--- 24 May: There were still eight singing males on three mature hay fields. Furthermore several single birds and pairs were flushed, as was a group of three birds consisting of a pair with a very recently fledged juvenile that could hardly fly.

--- 16 June: No singing was heard. We observed a small flock of nine birds including at least three juveniles, which we recognised at a very short distance by the very fresh flight feathers and pale edges on the fresh feathers of the upperparts, in contrast to the very worn flight feathers and narrower, greyer edges in the adults.

--- 8 October: No corn buntings were observed during a short visit to the fields.

Although we obtained only limited conclusive proof of successful breeding these records indicate that the corn hunting is an established breeding bird at this site. The presence of numerous singing males throughout March, April and May, as well as the many records of paired birds and the frequently observed territorial disputes, suggest that the total potential breeding population consists of several dozen pairs. However, it seems very likely that many nests are destroyed during the early harvesting of the cereals and the regular cutting of the hay fields. Because of this total breeding success may remain very low and individual pairs could well make several, unsuccessful, breeding attempts in a season.

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N.B. Song and copulation by corn buntings was recorded in February and March 1993 at Hamraniyah (VB28) Ras al Khaimah (C Richardson) and nest building near al Ain (VB25) UAE in May 1994 (S Aspinall). Ed.

New exotic breeding birds

The following species, which have been introduced to Arabia either through the pet trade or as ornamental species in gardens and parks, have now bred in a feral state on at least one occasion. It is important the ABBA project should keep track of feral breeding species, however unlikely they may seem in the Arabian environment. Some may multiply and spread to become a widespread and permanent part of the Arabian Avifauna and it will be important to know of their origins. Others may be potential economic pests. Either way it is important that observers report further breeding or attempted breeding activities. The ABBA species code for reporting purposes is shown against each.

2036 Grey crowned crane Balearica regulorum There was a free flying feral population breeding successfully on Sir Bani Yas island (SB25) UAE in April 1994, (D Robinson). The protected conditions that prevail on the Sir Bani Yas are unusual and although this species is quite capable of getting to the mainland it is unlikely to remain unmolested there to breed successfully.

2035 Common peafowl Pavo cristatus Juveniles Jebel Ali hotel grounds (VA26) July 1994, also thought to breed Abu al Abyad island, TB25 (S J Aspinall) and over 100 present, possibly breeding, Sir Bani Yas island (SB25), April 1994, (D Robinson). Unlikely to breed in other than a protected environment.

364 See-see partridge Anmoperdix griseogularis Introduced population breeding feral on Sir Bani Yas island (SB25) April 1994, (D Robinson). This species is widespread in Iran and if it reached the mainland would probably find a suitable niche and multiply. It might then present a threat to its very close relative, the sand partridge Anmoperdix heyi.

2037 Barbary dove Streptopelia risoria This dove is a form of the African collared dove Streptopelia