Assessment of several globally threatened species in Israel for IUCN update 2015

Following a request for information by BirdLife International, the members of the IUCN Red List group in Israel collected relevant data. In general, we lack long-term monitoring data for many species in Israel. This affects our ability to detect temporal trends, especially of migratory species. In recent years monitoring efforts have increased, and we focus our monitoring efforts according to the IUCN Red Lists. We expect better capacity to detect temporal trends within several years.

For the time being, please see our current knowledge on several species of concern. This is based on collation of the available data and on a quick round of expert-opinions.

If you need clarifications or more information, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

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**Yelkouan Sherwater**

Substantial numbers winter off the Mediterranean coast of Israel, and are counted mainly during storms that push seabirds closer to shore. This effort is not standard, so we divided total birds seen in winter by number of observations. There is no significant change in numbers between 2002 and 2011 (figure 2).

![Figure 1: Average daily counts of Yelkouan Shearwater in winter, 2002 – 2011.](image)

**Steppe Eagle**

A substantial, though variable proportion of global population passes through Israel in spring and in autumn. 9 spring counts took place in the Eilat bottleneck between 1977 and 1998, and only in 2015 after a 17 year gap spring counts were resumed. It is worth noting that variable numbers pass in Israel away from the Eilat bottleneck and are not counted. Possibly as a result of few data, no significant change is observed between 1977 and 2015 (figure 2). However, monitoring of Steppe Eagles in spring at Eilat will continue in coming years.

![Figure 2: Annual totals of Steppe Eagle in spring over Eilat Mts., 1977 – 2015.](image)
In autumn much smaller numbers pass through western Israel and are counted during the annual soaring birds count in northern and central Israel, in collaboration with the Israel Air Force. Between 1990 and 2014 a significant decline is noted \((F_{1, 20} = 5.588, p<0.05, \text{figure 3})\). However, it is worth noting that this is a small fraction of the total population that passes in autumn, mostly over Eilat later on in autumn. Inference from the low autumn counts in northern Israel on the general trend in Israel must be cautious.

![Figure 3: Annual totals of Steppe Eagle in autumn over northern and central Israel, 1990 – 2014.](image)

**Pallid Harrier**

Pallid Harrier is a scarce migrant and winter visitor in Israel. It is counted in lower numbers in autumn as part of the IOC / IAF autumn count compared to other bottlenecks such as Batumi. However, annual totals have not changed significantly between 1990 and 2014 (figure 4).

![Figure 4: Annual totals of Pallid Harrier in autumn over northern and central Israel.](image)

In winter the situation is probably not different. Shirihai (1996) estimated up to 50 birds wintering in Israel annually. This number apparently has not changed much. However, the landscape at their
stronghold in the arable fields of the northwestern Negev has changed and now irrigated cultivation is much more widespread there, and as a result fewer Pallid harriers winter there.

**Northern Lapwing**

In the 1980’s it wintered in large concentrations with a total of up to 5000 annually (Shirihai 1996). In recent years numbers seemed to have decreased considerably. No detailed numbers but decreases noted in all parts of Israel where there were concentrations.

**Armenian Gull**

Number of wintering populations declined from about 60,000 in the early 1990’s to about 22,000 – 26,000 in recent years. See attached summary by Amir Ben Dov.

**Turtle Dove**

There is no monitoring data on this species. However, it seems that if there are any declines they are local only, and do not necessarily reflect the general trend in Israel.

**European Roller**

There is no monitoring data on this species, but there are several local indications demonstrating local declines in breeding numbers. No data on migratory populations.

References