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# First record of White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*, Linnaeus, 1758) in Libya

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## ABSTRACT

The White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) is a widespread resident species across South and Southeast Asia and parts of the Middle East, but it has not previously been documented in Libya. Here, we report the first confirmed record of *H. smyrnensis* in Libya, based on a single individual observed in the Wadi Annagha Protected Area, Derna region, northeastern Libya, in late January 2025. This observation represents a significant westward extension of the species' known range in North Africa and contributes to the understanding of avian distribution and vagrancy patterns in the southern Mediterranean.

التسجيل الأول للرفراف أبيض الحنجرة (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)

، (Linnaeus، 1758) في ليبيا

صالح بورزيقة<sup>1</sup>، رزق الله هاشم<sup>1</sup> وخالد التائب<sup>3</sup>.

يُعدّ الرفراف أبيض الحنجرة (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) نوعًا مقيمًا واسع الانتشار في جنوب وشرق آسيا وأجزاء من الشرق الأوسط، ولم يُسجَل وجوده سابقًا في ليبيا. نعرض هنا أول توثيق مؤكّد لهذا النوع في ليبيا، استنادًا إلى رصد فرد واحد في محمية وادي الناقة بمنطقة درنة، شمال شرق ليبيا، في أواخر يناير 2025. ويمثّل هذا الرصد امتدادًا غريبًا مهمًا للنطاق المعروف لتوزيع النوع في شمال أفريقيا، كما يسهم في فهم أنماط الانتشار وحالات الشرود في حركة الطيور بمنطقة جنوب البحر المتوسط.

## Introduction

The family Alcedinidae is represented in Libya by a limited number of species, reflecting the country's arid climate and scarcity of permanent freshwater habitats (Bundy, 1976). To date, only two kingfisher species have been recorded in

Libya: Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), a scarce Palearctic winter visitor, and the Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), a rare and irregular visitor in Cyrenaica (Smart *et al.*, 2006; Isenmann *et al.*, 2016). The White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) has not previously been

reported from Libya. *Halcyon smyrnensis* is a large, conspicuous kingfisher inhabiting a wide range of freshwater and coastal environments. Its distribution extends from the Middle East through the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia. In North Africa, the species is considered extremely rare, with records largely confined to the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The present note documents the first record of this species in Libya.

## Materials and Methods

### Study area:

Wadi Annagha, near Derna: It is located at the western entrance of Derna, which is about 100 km east of the city of Al-Bayda (32°42'34.8"N 22°32'57.8"E) (fig. 1).

### Methods

A binocular (Kite 10 X 42) and digital camera (*Nikon COOLPIX P1000*) were used for watching and documenting the bird. For bird's identification, Svensson *et al.*, (2009) was used.



Fig. 1. Position of Wadi Annagha

## Results

A single White-throated Kingfisher was observed in the Wadi Annagha Protected Area, Derna region (Cyrenaica, north-eastern Libya), during the last week of January 2025.

The bird was seen perched on an electric wire in open habitat near freshwater, allowing clear views of diagnostic features (fig. 2: a, b). These included a large red bill, dark brown head and upperparts, bright white throat and breast, and contrasting dark wings and tail.

The individual was solitary and remained perched for several minutes before flying off. No vocalizations were noted. Photographic documentation was obtained, confirming the identification.



Fig. 2. White-throated Kingfisher, a. ventral view. b. dorsal view (© BUIRZAYQAH).

## Discussion

This observation constitutes the first confirmed record of *Halcyon smyrnensis* in Libya and adds a third species of kingfisher to the national avifauna. The presence of this species in Cyrenaica may represent a case of vagrancy or range expansion, possibly facilitated by dispersal along the eastern Mediterranean corridor.

In Libya, *Alcedo atthis* is known as a scarce wintering Palearctic migrant, mainly recorded along the coast and in wetlands, while *Ceryle rudis* has only a few recent records in Cyrenaica (Isenmann *et al.*, 2016). The occurrence of *H.*

*smyrnensis* further highlights the importance of eastern Libya as a contact zone for Afro-Palearctic and Middle Eastern avifaunal elements (EGA-RAC/SPA, 2012). Continued ornithological surveys, particularly in protected areas and wetlands of Cyrenaica, are likely to yield additional significant records and improve knowledge of bird distribution in Libya.

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