Although little known, Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, also known as Bruce's or Pallid Scops Owl, is widely distributed in Iraq and countries adjacent to the southeastern borders of the western Palearctic, eg Iran, Pakistan and the central Asian USSR. The subspecies *O. b. pamelae* in the Arabian peninsula is nowadays considered to be conspecific with African Scops Owl *O. senegalensis* (Gallagher 1986, Brooks et al 1987, Rod Martins in litt; contra Cramp 1985). Breeding range and distribution of Striated Scops Owl in the Middle East are unclear and inadequately defined. There are a few records for Israel, Jordan and Syria but without any proof of breeding. For Turkey, no records were available until 1982 when this species was discovered at Birecik, Sanliurfa, near the banks of the Euphrates. This paper deals with the species' occurrence in Turkey since 1982, including some aspects of its vocalizations, behaviour and identification.
Striated Scops Owl in Turkey

**occurrence**

During the night of 12 April 1982, while camping in a small stand of poplars on the shore of the Euphrates at Birecik, participants of a Swiss excursion to southeastern Turkey heard Stock Dove *Columba oenas*-like calls. The following morning, they discovered the source of these sounds being a pair of Striated Scops Owls. A third bird was found roosting only 20 m away from the others (Hüni 1982). From 11 to 15 April, H Ebenhöh observed the pair every night, and he noticed copulation on 11 April. Until at least 21 April, the pair was seen and heard by several birders (Steffen Gysel and M Siering in litt). From 9 to 11 June 1983, a pair of Striated Scops Owl was reported from the small public tea-park south of the center of Birecik by Rod Martins, Chris Murphy and Craig Robson (Rod Martins in litt). On 12 April 1984, Norbert Koch observed two copulating birds along the Euphrates at Rumkale near Savasan Köyü, 5 km north of Halfeti, Sanliurfa. Until at least 8 May, the species' presence was noted at this new locality.

In the spring of 1985, the Striated Scops Owls in the tea-park were seen regularly, achieving fame as an attraction for numerous foreign birders. On 2 July 1985, the two tea-park owls had four fledged juveniles (PB). (The same number of fledged juveniles was recorded in a palm grove at Abu Habba, Iraq, on 2 July 1971; Čtýroký 1987.) From 1 to 6 April, one to three birds were heard singing at Savasan Köyü (Klaus Witt in litt). On 3 July, at a third locality in an orchard 6 km north of Birecik, PB, Paul Gnodde and Jan van der Laan discovered two fledged juveniles.

From 12 to 21 April 1986, again one to three Striated Scops Owls were heard and seen in willows and poplars at Savasan Köyü (J Berg and Chris Husband in litt), and for the second year in succession, the tea-park owls raised four juveniles which were seen from 9 to 11 June (Ruud Schenk in litt). During the summer, however, at least one juvenile was shot (Hadoram Shirihai pers comm).

In 1987, the Striated Scops Owls were seen again both at Savasan Köyü (15 April-1 May) and in the tea-park in Birecik. At both localities a nest was found. At Savasan Köyü, one individual apparently bred in an old nest of Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*, c 8 m above the ground in a poplar. The pair's day roost was a few metres away from the nest. From 28 April onwards, only one of the birds was seen roosting, suggesting that the other was breeding (MK). In the tea-park, during 3-5 and 28-31 May, the pair occupied a hole c 10 m above the ground in an old tree right above numerous tables with crowds of people, loud music and full neon light (ABvdB, Jon Eames in litt). On 4 July, two adults were seen with five juveniles (T Lund in litt). Moreover, there is an observation of two scops owls on 4 October 1987 (Willie Leurs pers comm).

In 1988, in the tea-park, two Striated Scops Owls were seen on 11 April and three on 15 April (Liewe J Dijksen in litt). On 1 and 2 June, during the day, two adults were seen sleeping next to the nesting hole in presumably the same tree as in May 1987. About 30 min before dark, they started to carry food into this hole with intervals of 2 to 15 min (Hans Schekkerman in litt).
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121-122 Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, adult, Birecik, Turkey, May 1987 (Arnoud B van den Berg)
**Striated Scops Owl in Turkey**

Presumed to be of this species were two adults and four large downy young seen on four dates during the first week of July; on 5 July, in the southern section of the park, also three Scops Owls *Otus scops* were heard which showed that not all scops owls in the park are Striated Scops Owl (Dave G Mc Adams *in litt*). The last record of Striated for 1988 was on 5 August when an adult and a juvenile were observed (Sybrand de Bruin pers comm).

The earliest date on which Striated Scops Owl has been observed is 1 April; it has not been seen after October, suggesting that the Turkish population might be migratory. Copulations were observed between 11 April and 5 May, and recently fledged juveniles were seen once from 9 to 11 June and three times between 2 and 4 July. Although until present only three breeding sites have become known, it seems likely that a survey would reveal additional territories in the extensive irrigated orchards along the Euphrates both in Syria and southern Turkey.

**vocalizations**

On 18 April 1987, about 17:00, ABvdB and Dirk Moerbeek found the Striated Scops Owls roosting high in a tree. In the evening of that day, both birds were very vocal and a number of times they were seen copulating. The rather fast and repetitious, low-pitched and pigeon-like *who* was very soft and almost inaudible even at distances under 10 m. The duetting of hoots at two different pitches described on 1 April 1985 by Klaus Witt (*in litt*) was not heard, nor was the two-note call described in June 1983 by Rod Martins (*in litt*).

The hoot of one bird was repeated about seven times per second. This sound is regarded as the territorial call of the male (Roberts & King 1986). Another sound, a short nasal and repetitious *ièw*, given three to four times in five seconds, was equally soft but higher in tone and more conspicuous. The latter was also given as a response to playback of the song. Almost certainly, it was given by the female: a moment earlier the birds were observed during copulation. During each copulation, a rather explosive and fast *tzir tir tir ir* was given, reminiscent of a cricket or bat. This is probably the sound described as a warbling *tsirr-va-va-a* by Heinzel *et al* (1972). If this is true, this sound is not erroneously attributed to the species (*contra* Roberts & King). All vocalizations were so soft that even at close range they could easily be missed, especially in such a noisy urban environment as at Birecik.

**behaviour**

In the dark hours of 3-5 May 1987, ABvdB observed both Striated Scops Owls actively hunting and flying for distances of 10-50 m in the neon light of the busy park. No singing was heard. The birds sometimes perched in the lower canopy or in the lower half of pilons while stared at by some of the c 100 visitors of the tea house. Again a few copulations were seen (and heard) and a number of times one of the birds was seen bringing food to the other. For five minutes, one bird disappeared in a natural hole at c 10 m height in an old tree, in bright artificial light. Despite the crowds, it seemed little or not disturbed by
people. The birds were regularly seen preying on beetles and other insects which were not only taken from the bark and trunks of trees but also from underneath people's chairs (cf Cramp). When eating, the owl sat with its eyes closed, holding its prey in one foot like a parrot.

**Identification**

Problems in identifying Striated Scops Owl may occur since the species is sympatric with the similar Scops Owl. For instance, Scops Owl is very common around Savasan Kəyũ where up to six singing males were found at a stretch of c 1 km (MK), and has also been observed in the tea park at Birecik. Identification of juvenile Striated Scops Owl is easy as the underparts are completely barred unlike in adult or juvenile Scops Owl. Identification of adults, however, is more difficult. The plumage of Striated Scops is pale greyish without conspicuous large white spots on the upperparts. In contrast to the slightly smaller Scops, Striated Scops never shows any rufous colour in its plumage. The underparts of Striated Scops show distinct longitudinal black shaft-streaks and indistinct fragmented crossbars. The subspecies of Scops in eastern Turkey, O s cycladum and O s turanicus, are more like Striated Scops than European subspecies in showing a generally paler and greyer plumage with narrower and more contrasting streaks (cf Cramp). On the other hand, Scops does have large and conspicuous white spots on scapulars and smaller ones on hindneck, mantle and wing coverts, and shows numerous
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cross-marks between the longitudinal streaks on the underparts. Striated Scops has a pale face while Scops has a darker and greyer face almost colorless with the crown, and the iris of Striated Scops is probably paler yellow than in Scops. While the foot feathering of Scops is limited to the tarsus leaving the toes naked, in Striated Scops it extends further down onto the bases of the toes. On the third toe, feathers run out even along the top of the second phalanx (Marshall 1978). This feature, however, is usually hard to discern. Therefore, the song remains the best way to identify both species since Striated Scops has nothing reminiscent of the well-known loud song of Scops, the monotonous tiiuuu repeated about every four seconds.

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samenvatting

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