## Short Communication

# Breeding Record of Pharaoh Eagle-Owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*) in the Eastern Desert of Jordan

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A breeding record of the Pharaoh Eagle-Owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*) was documented in March 2024 in the eastern desert of Jordan near the (Lat 32.986963°, Long: 38.376970°) in an area locally known as the Eastern Risha. The nest was located at the margin of a gully (runoff area), a typical habitat for this species that is offering shelter and camouflage. Observations confirmed the presence of three eggs, indicating active breeding at the site. The breeding activity was first confirmed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, by the authors as a direct observation evidence of the nest and eggs (Figure 1).

Historically, the Pharaoh Eagle-Owl has been recorded in different areas of Jordan, particularly in arid and semi-arid habitats (Jennings, 2010). Notable sightings include areas such as Wadi Rum, the Azraq wetlands, and various desert escarpments, with reports often emphasizing the species' preference for rocky outcrops and wadis (Amr and Disi, 2011; Andrews, 1995). Despite being relatively uncommon, the Pharaoh Eagle-Owl is considered a resilient species that thrives in suitable habitats across the Middle East. Breeding records, however, remain sparse, making this observation evidence to document the breeding that may help in understanding the species ecology in Jordan. The species is characterized by its large size, striking ear tufts, and mottled plumage, which provide excellent camouflage in desert environments (Jennings, 2010). Its diet mainly consists of small mammals, reptiles, and occasionally birds, reflecting its adaptability to the arid desert ecosystem. Previous breeding records in Jordan have often been associated with rocky cliffs and secluded wadis, underscoring the importance of these habitats for reproduction (Andrews, 1995).



Figure 1: Photograph of the Pharaoh -Owl nest and eggs before the flash flood.

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Early in April, three chicks were hatched, however, an event of heavy rainfall triggered a flash flood in the wadi, which destroyed the nest, and killed all the chicks.

Similar incidents have been documented in other regions, where nests of the same species have been wiped out by flash floods, demonstrating a recurrent threat to the breeding success of ground-nesting birds in arid and semi-arid habitats (Andrews, 1995). Comparative records from Wadi Rum and the Azraq wetlands highlight instances of nest loss due to extreme weather events, further emphasizing the species' vulnerability despite its ecological adaptability (Andrews, 1995). The Pharaoh Eagle-Owl's adaptability to harsh desert conditions is remarkable, yet the challenges posed by environmental instability demand continued research and conservation attention.

### References

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