The Great Bustard

Wadley (1951) who was resident in Ankara from 1943 to 1946 says about the great bustard: “Resident. Very occasionally on the open plains up to five. Numbers appear to be decreasing owing to constant hunting.” Blomfield-Smith (1966) who was resident in Ankara too, mentioned two observations in winter, one of five and one of 28 birds. She does not give the name of the place, but it was probably central Anatolia. Von Aulock (1979), a hunter who was resident in Istanbul, reported that the great bustard was extremely common around his hunting lodge during late autumn and winter: “One can see one hundred individuals at once”. He said that he himself had shot 16 bustards within 30 years. Unfortunately he did not mention the whereabouts of his hunting grounds.

One mounted bird in the museum of the Kuzennteti National Park is without label, but it presumably originates from the surrounding of Manyas Güllü like many of the specimens exhibited at the museum.

The records, detailed below, have usually been listed in terms of "ova", which is the Turkish name for plain, the typical geographic landform of Anatolia. Even central Anatolia is not a plateau, as wrongly stated in many ornithological papers, but a mountainous landscape with a high number of plains intermixed, varying greatly in size. The term "ova" has been introduced into the international geographical literature. The names of the plains have usually been taken from Yeni Türkiye Atlası (1977), but one should keep in mind that there are often several local names for one plain and that there are names for sub-sets of plains. The classification of the natural regions of Turkey follows Erol (1982).

Marmara Region

Meriç Deltaşı

In the Meriç valley near Enez, H. Hols and U. Glimmerveen (pers. comm.) watched two males on 20.4.81. On the Greek side of the Meriç (= Evros) Delta, Bauer and Müller (1969) mentioned three records: one pair in March 1954 (Watson), three individuals in winter 1962/3 (Güttner) and two in January 1968 (Koning and Visser).

Çorlu Ovası

Banoglu and Burr (1952) reported that “hundreds and thousands” of bustards winter in the plain of Çorlu, but leave it during summer.
Yarımadağı
Taylor (1872) was told that an “abundance of bustards” was seen near Gallipoli in the years 1854-55.

Istanbul area
Rigler (1852) included the great bustard in his list of the birds of Istanbul. He also mentioned the species in his chapter on the “nutrition of orientals”. Therefore, we can assume that he saw birds being sold in the market and in game shops. Taylor (1872) also mentioned the great bustard from the food markets of Perä/Istanbul in 1854-55. According to Mathey-Dupraz (1923) the great bustard was a more or less regular migrant at Istanbul. He saw five birds at Üsküdar (“Scutari”) at the beginning of December 1889 and probably the same birds two days later at Kuzgunluk (“Couscoundjouk”). He saw some in a poultry shop in December 1891 and January 1892. Furthermore, two skins were brought to the Museum of the American College in Bebek (Mathey-Dupraz 1923). Migrating bustards had been hunted in the vineyards of Erenköy (“Erenkenj”) at the beginning of this century (Braun 1908), and bustard hunting near Çatalca is mentioned by Banoğlu and Burr (1952).

Karacabey Ovası
Vasvari met the great bustard rather commonly near Karacabey in August 1936 (Vasvari 1938, Keve 1971). Banoğlu and Burr (1952) reported the occurrence of the great bustard at Karacabey Ovası “during summer and winter”. Kaspayran (1960) saw three individuals in the second half of August 1956. Kumerloeve (1970) received information on the bird’s occurrence there in the 1960’s, and a sick juvenile was brought to him there on 4.7.64. The great bustard was said to occur to the west of Manyas Gölü (near Tahirova, north of Sarkinöl) (Kumerloeve 1970). Two birds were seen at Manyas Gölü on 23.-25.4.66 (Bird Report 1966-67). S. Christensen and R. F. Porter saw one there on 25.4.70 and D. S. Flumm three on 31.3.72 (Bird Report 1970-73). Goripur and Parr (1985) observed a group of 18 immature males near the village of Bereketi at Manyas Gölü on 28 and 29.3.81. A stuffed bird in the museum of the Kuşçenneti National Park might be from this region.

Balikesir Ovası
Kumerloeve (1962) saw a few birds at Balikesir Ovası in June 1962.

İnegöl - Bilecik Ovası
Kumerlöwe and Niethammer (1934) observed five individuals “between Bursa and Eşkisehir” which probably means at İnegöl Ovası, on 1.11.1933. Turan (1969) mentioned Yenişehir Ovası as a place for the occurrence of the great bustard.

Lowlands to the west of İznil Gölü
The area around Gemlik was mentioned by Hüs (1974) as a bustard area, based on documents of the General Directorate of Forestry.

 Aegean Region
Sindigi Ovası
One was seen in early December 1981 (Bird Report 1976-81).

Kızılık Menderes valley
Strickland (1836) wrote: “frequents the plains south of Smyrna [=İzmir]”. This might refer to the valley of Kızılık Menderes or the plain stretching from there to İzmir. Von Gonzenbach collected one adult female near Izmir in December (at the end of the 1850’s or the beginning of the 1860’s) (Dresser 1873). Krüger (1875) did not want to rule out breeding of the great bustard in the “great plains near Izmir”, but pointed out that this was not confirmed.

Gediz valley and Menemen Ovası
Kumerloeve (1962) saw one bird in the area of Sahilhü-Marmara Gölü in June 1962. Local hunters know the bustard as an extremely rare visitor, mainly during the winter (Kasparek, pers. obs., 1986).

Büyük Menderes Valley
Fellows (1839) noted a flock of bustards in the Menderes Valley on his way from Sultanhisar to Denizli on 8.5.1838. Schrader (1891), who was resident in Aydın from 1875 to 1876, said that according to local hunters great bustards appeared in hard winters, but he himself never saw any. According to Turan (1969) the great bustard can be found in the plain west of Bafa Gölü and the Mouth of the Büyük Menderes. Hüs (1974) received information from the Directorate General of Forestry that the great bustard occurs in the plain areas around Kocaçav (İnarlı Ovası).

Denizli Ovası
The species was first recorded here by Fellows (1841) who noted it at the ancient Laodikeia north of Denizli. Serter (1972) reported that the great bustard appears here towards and during winter in small groups.

Acipayam Ovası
According to the General Directorate of Forestry (Hüs 1974), the great bustard can be found here.
Like at the Denizli plain, bustards appear in small groups towards winter and may stay into January (Serter 1972).

Kumerloev (1962) saw a few birds between Eber Gölü and Afyon in June 1962. As Afyon Ovası has a direct connection to the basin of the Eber and Akşehir Gölü, see also these accounts (Inner Anatolian Region).

Karamik Saz/ıAt
L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1970-73) saw one individual on 14.1.72. Four individuals were recorded on 3.4.76 (Bird Report 1976-81). Local people said that the great bustard sometimes occurs in the north of the marsh (towards Eber Gölü) and that they had decreased during recent years (“can hardly be found nowadays”) (Kasparek, pers. obs., 1986).

Mediterranean Region
Acıgöl
Selous (1900) reported that an egg of the great bustard was brought to him during his stay at Çardak in May 1899. Other records are: Sept. ’68: A.R. Kitson and R. F. Porter (Bird Report 1968-69) - no data; 5.1.69: 12 birds (H. Hoekstra and F. J. Koning, pers. comm.); 21.12.69: 25 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm.); 16.1.71: 11 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm. and Bird Report 1970-73); 8.4.73: One male (A. J. Dijksen and Y. K. Tempelmans-Plat, pers. comm. and Bird Report 1970-73); 27.9.74: 2 birds near Dazkiri (M. Jennings, pers. comm. and Bird Report 1974-74); 3.5.81: 15 adult males between Dazkiri and Başmakçı (Gorup and Parr 1983, 1985); 5.5.86: 5 birds (2 of these adult males) near Başmakçı (Dijksen and Kasparek 1988); 10.5.88: one each between Başmakçı and Dazkiri and between Başmakçı and Dinar (S. A. Linderström, L. Nordbjerg and T. & S. Kjargaard, pers. comm.).

Burdur Gölü
Kumerloev (1962) noted some birds at the north side of Burdur Gölü in June 1962. Seven birds were noted on 21.11.77 (Bird Report 1976-81).

Bozova (Korkuteli)
22 great bustards were recorded south of Korkuteli (which lies on a southern spur of Bucak Ovası) on 8.1.72 (Bird Report 1970-73).

Söğüt Gölü
Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw three mature males and two females on 1.5.81.

Status of bustards in Turkey
Gengi Ovası (Eğridir Gölü, Hoyran Gölü)

Yeşiţova
H. Hoekstra and F. J. Koning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1968-69) saw one individual between Yarıtlı and Yeşiţova, close to Yeşiţova, on 6.1.69.

Tefenni Ovası (Karatas Gölü)
10 individuals were seen near Karamanlı on 8.1.72 (Bird Report 1970-73). N. Koch (pers. comm.) saw five birds near Karatas Gölü on 18.5.80.

Beştehir Gölü
W. Klein and F. Dellmuth noted four individuals at Beştehir Gölü on 26.4.69 (Bird Report 1968-69).

Dalaman and Köyçeğiz lowland
According to Huş (1974), the great bustard is present in the marshland around Köyçeğiz and around the Dalaman river (information based on documents of the General Directorate of Forestry).

Antalya Ovası
According to statements of local people, the great bustard is a winter visitor in the area of Antalya (Kumerloev 1970).

Taurus mountains
Danford (1878) observed flocks of great bustards at Sebil ("Zebil"), southeast of Çamlıyayla (about 35 km north of Mersin), in February 1876 and collected specimens near Pozanti (= Anascha, Anasclia) on 24.3.1876. Six birds were seen at Ulukışla on 21.5.70 (Bird Report 1970-73). These records are from highly mountainous areas which do not fit the usual habitat of the great bustard. In the case of Ulukışla, I could not verify that it really was the town in the Taurus mountains and not the village of the same name southeast of Tuz Gölü. Another possibility is that the birds were not seen in the immediate vicinity of Ulukışla, but at Erğlı Ovası, north of it.

Sülfız Ovası (Göksu Deltaşı)
Kumerloev (1970) was informed by local people that the great bustard was a
winter visitor here. D. S. Flumm saw four birds on 22.2.72 (Bird Report 1970-73) and N. Lenz (pers. comm.) one male at Paradeniz Gölü on 9.3.85.

Seyhan/Ceyhan lowland (Çukurova)
Ainsworth (1842) noted the "large bustard" in the Adana area at the end of November 1839. Schrader (1891) saw one individual near Mersin on 22.2.1885 and groups of up to 4-6 during the following weeks (or days?). Kumerloeve (1961) recorded two birds at Toprakkale on 24.5.53 and 1-2 individuals between Adana and Karataş on 23.7.53. He also heard from local people that the great bustard breeds in the area of Tarsus - Adana - Yakapnar (Misis) - Karataş. In winter, the great bustard could also occur occasionally at Çukurova (Kumerloeve 1961, 1970). For example, hundreds of bustards were seen in the vicinity of the Tann Verdi state farm during winter 1955/56 (Kumerloeve 1961) and one male was hunted between Toprakkale and Osmaniye in 1960 (Kumerloeve 1970). D. S. Flumm (Bird Report 1970-73) saw three birds near Tuzla on 3.3.72 and L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Köning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1974-75) found feathers of a bird, probably shot, at Akyatan Gölü on 18.2.74. Kulelykder (1972) published a photograph of a hunted bustard, probably shot in the Adana area. However, a search of the area in spring 1981 by Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) failed to locate any birds; they found that there had been a considerable increase in urban encroachment onto the Adana plains, as well as extensive agricultural intensification.

Amik Ovaşı
Kumerloeve (1967) heard from local people that the great bustard breeds and winters here.

Inner Anatolian Region
Çankırı area
This locality was mentioned by Turan (1969) as a great bustard area.

Eskişehir Ovaşı (Porsuk valley)
Kummerlöwe and Niethammer (1934) saw two birds in the Porsuk valley east of Eskişehir on 28.9.1933. Local people told Kummerlöwe (1970) that the species had occurred at the end of April 1967. Öner (1974) stated for the neighbourhood of Eskişehir “The great bustard is found only by chance and when seen, it is hunted.”

Mürtet Ovaşı (west of Ankara)
Danford (1880) observed the species in or near Temelli (he gave a placename which cannot be identified) in April 1879. Kummerlöwe and Niethammer (1935, 1939) saw 35-40 birds at Ovaçay, east of Ayas, on 24.10.1933. At Ayas, Vittery noted a female on 4.5.69 (Bird Report 1968-69).

Polatlı area
Huş (1974) included the Polatlı area in his list of Turkish bustard sites which is based on information from the General Directorate of Forestry and Bilker (1984) described a bustard hunt where 7 individuals were killed, apparently at the beginning of the 1960s.

Yukan Sakarya Ovaları (area of Çifteler)
Kumerlöwe (1962) noted a few birds in the area of Emirdağ - Çifteler in June 1962. Çoşkun and Sümer (1968) mentioned the great bustard from the Balıkdamı area. One was recorded there on 10.1.76 and one individual near Çifteler on 31.5.80 (Bird Report 1976-80). Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw a single bird near the village of Gülçayır, between Svrhisar and Emirdağ, on 31.3.81.

Haymana Ovaşı
Banoglu and Burr (1952) mentioned this locality as a place where the great bustard is present throughout the year.

Ankara area
Kummerlöwe and Niethammer (1935) mentioned four young in the Ankara area on 16.10.1933 and obtained more records in the same period. The species is also present in the Ankara area according to information from local people received by Kumerlöwe (1970). Serter (1972) reported the occurrence of the great bustard in the Ankara district, too. Although bustards can be seen in November and December, they ought to leave the area during January. As no exact locality for these places was published, see accounts for Mogan Gölü, Çubuk Ovaşı, Mürtet Ovaşı, and Kızılirmak valley around Kalezik.

Çubuk Ovaşı
Gesteraanus (1959) saw and photographed a female with one young north of Ankara on 27.6.51. Vittery saw five individuals at the Esenboga airport on 30.4.69 (Bird Report 1968-69).

Kızılirmak valley around Kalezik
Based on documents at the General Directorate of Forestry, Huş (1974) mentioned this locality as a bustard site.

Mogan Gölü
The regular observations of A. Vittery at the lake and south of it during February/March resulted in the following records: 27.3.67: 6 birds (Bird Report 1966-67); 25.2.68: 2 birds (Bird Report 1968-69); 11.3.68: 12 birds (Bird Report 1968-69); 30.3.68: 2 birds (Bird Report 1968-69); 8.3.69: 27 individuals (Bird Report 1968-
Max Kasparek

Gheyselinck (1979) saw one bird near the village of Ulukaşla at the southeast corner of lake Tuz (Note: this village is different from the town in the Taurus mountains) in the second half of September 1979. Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw one immature male in rape fields south of Şereflikoçhisar on 28.4.81. Four males and one female were noted at the eastern side of Tuz Gölü on 27.2.80 (Bird Report 1970-73). A. M. Blomert (pers. comm.) observed 2 birds 24 km to the east of Aksaray on 24.1.88. Turan (1969) wrote that the great bustard can be found in the Tuz Gölü area especially around Şereflikoçhisar, where it breeds. It should also be frequent around Aksaray.

Karaman Ovası
Turan (1969) mentioned Karaman Ovası as a place where the great bustard was still frequent.

Ereglı Ovası (Konya Ereglış)
Under this name I include the area bordered in the west and north by Meke Dağ and Karaca Dağ; in the northeast, the town of Bor is used as a limit. B. Korf collected one male at Ereglı in December 1931 (v. Jordans and Steinbacher 1948). Warncke (1965) saw small groups of males several times south of Saçgeçidli (=Hortu, west of Ereglı) in April/May 1964. On the same day, Lehmann (1971) noted 9 individuals there. In the area of Tatlıkuyu Köyü, one displaying male was seen on 25.4.65 (Lehmann 1971), and birds were seen at the end of April 1965 (Kumerloeve 1970). One bird was seen near Çakmak, northeast of Ereglı, on 28.4.76 (Bird Report 1970-73) and one male flying south of Akgöl on 6.5.79 (Lehmann 1971). Again near Çakmak, D. Haase (pers. comm.) saw a male at the end of May/beginning of June 1985. One 27.12.85, H. Jacoby (pers. comm.) noted 3 individuals between Ereglı and Aksaray.

Devleti Ovası (Sultan Marshes)
The following records are mainly from the area between Ovaştlık and Yeşilhisar, that is, from the southeast corner of the plain: only the records from 1970 are from the north side of Yey Gölü. 12.1.70: 6 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm.); 24.11.70: 1 bird (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm.); 6.1.73: 18 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm.); 10.5.75: 1 bird (Bird Report 1974-75); 18/19.4.76: 1 bird (Bird Report 1974-75, N. Koch, pers. comm.); 6.4.79: 9 birds (G. Konermann, pers. comm.); 5.5.79: 1 bird (S. Woldhek, pers. comm.); 15.5.79: 1 bird (E. Bezzel, N. Koch et al., pers. comm.); 16.5.79: 5 birds (E. Bezzel, N. Koch et al., pers. comm.); 17.5.79: 6 birds (E. Bezzel, N. Koch et al., pers. comm.); 22.5.79: 2 birds (N. Koch et al., pers. comm.); 17.6.82: 1 bird (R. Akçakaya, S. Barış and C. Bilgin, pers. comm.); 26.9.82: 6 females (pers. obs.); 30.5.83: One 2 or 3 year-old male (Ch. Husband, M. Siering et al., pers. comm.); mid-March '84: 3 birds (M. Akbulut, pers. comm.). These records have been reviewed by Kasparek (1985). According to local hunters, the population has decreased during recent decades. Although there are records from the spring of recent years, the species does not seem to breed in the area (Kasparek 1985).

Malays (Seýfe) Ovası
The records listed here all stem from the southern part of the plain. 12.12.69: 13 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm., also Bird Report 1968-69 and Husband and Kasparek 1984); 10.1.70: 61 birds (L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning, pers. comm., also Husband and Kasparek 1984); 21.10.83: 39 birds (de Roder 1984, also Husband and Kasparek 1984). There is no doubt that the great bustard breeds here, although there are only autumn and winter records: the author has been given an exact description of the eggs and display behaviour by local people. Even hunters from Ankara know the area as a good bustard site (Husband and Kasparek 1984).

Yozgat-Yerköy-Sungurlu area
Bayasal (1977) described a great bustard hunt in the Yozgat area at the end of the 1930s. Erard and Etchécopar (1968) observed 7 birds near Yerköy (southwest of Yozgat) on 25.3.67. One individual on 17.6.67 was apparently seen west of Yerköy ("160 km east of Ankara") (Bird Report 1966-67). Turan (1969) mentioned the Yozgat and the Sungurlu area as a bustard site.

Yenipazar area
Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw one and at some distance from it two more immature males near Sefaatlı in the Yenipazar area on 26.4.81. Saryyüce (1982) has described the decline of the bustard population in the area between Sungurlu and Sorgun during recent decades.

Sivas Ovası
Great bustards are present at Sivas Ovası and at Kızılırmak above Sivas according to Turan (1969). Serter (1972) reported the occurrence of the great bustard in Sivas province (Sivas Ovası?), where one could see bustards even in November and December, but not in January.

East Anatolian Region
Pınarbaşı Ovası
Aslan (1971) saw seven great bustards on this plain near Beserek Köyü and shot one of these on 30.8.65.
Elazığ Ovası and Euphrates valley

According to information from locals (1964/65) the great bustard occurs around Elazığ throughout the year, with young seen at Hazar Gölü (Kumerloeve 1967). Turan (1969) reported the bird's occurrence in the vicinity of Elazığ and published a photograph of a male which was shot there. Gülgülin (1970) said the great bustard at Hazar Gölü was "extremely rare". Dellmuth (Bird Report 1970-73) watched five individuals near Elazığ on 4.5.70 and Harrison (Bird Report 1970-73, Aşan Project 1972) saw one bird at Aşan on 14.9.72. At the Aşan site the Keban dam was constructed and the area is now flooded. Harrison was told that the great bustard is quite common in late autumn when parties of 8-10 birds are seen most days by the village herdsmen; not more than one or two are killed in any one year.

Malatya Ovası

Vasvari saw bustards near Malatya on 4.7.1937 (Keve 1971). Kumerloeve (1967) got information from local people in 1964/65 which stated that the birds were there throughout the year.

Ovacık (Munzur Mountains)

Turan (1969) mentions the presence of great bustards in the small plain around Ovacık (Ovacık means "small plain") at the foot of the Munzur mountains.

Muş Ovası

T. Karabağ saw great bustards in summer 1956 (Kumerloeve 1961). Local people later (1964/65) confirmed the presence of the species (Kumerloeve 1967). Serter (1972) mentioned Muş Ovası as a breeding area, from which bustards leave during winter. Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) observed 15 birds (1 adult male, 3 immature males, 11 females) 14 km east of Muş on 21.4.81, one single male 5 km north of Muş on 22.4.81 and one immature male and 5 females near Yoncalı köyü, northwest of Muş, on 22.4.81. On 26.6.87 a female with two toung was seen near Muş (T. Macke, M. Pietsch, et al., pers. comm.). Based on documents of the General Directorate of Forestry, Huş (1974) listed Muş Ovası as a bustard area.

Bulanık/Malazgirt Ovası

Kumerloeve (1967) heard from local people (1964/64) that the great bustard occurs around Bulanık and around Malazgirt. Huş (1974) included Malazgirt Ovası in his list of Turkish bustard sites, based on information received by the General Directorate of Forestry. Van der Ven and Gheyselinck (1981) recorded six birds in the Murat river valley near Bulanık on 8.10.80. Grace, Fitzharris et al. (pers. comm.) saw 2 individuals there on 22.5.85, P. A. Bertilsson, E. Hirschfeld and R. Simonsson saw 3 males at Bulanık on 7.6.87 (pers. comm.), and J. Eames (pers. comm.) saw 2 males near Balotu village on 13.6.87.

Status of bustards in Turkey

Kurakçıan Ovası and Basıurt Ovası

Çalıskan (1974) reported that the great bustard was formerly common in both plains, but is now found only in small numbers, especially at Basıurt Ovası around the villages of Mahmutlu and Körüşuf. N. Koch (pers. comm.) saw one female on the west side of Kurucu Geçidi to the west of Bingöl on 14.7.81.

Van Gölü

a) Records without exact locality

Kumerloeve (1967) was told by local people that the bustard occurred at Van Gölü, L. J. Dijkstra and F. J. Koning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1968-69) saw four birds at Van Gölü on 3-5.12.69 without specifying the locality. Askâ (1970) says that the great bustard is common at several places in Van Province.

b) Van Gölü: south side

Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw a party of 12 females near Zive (= Zive) on 13.4.81. Local hunters claimed that the great bustard was a breeding bird and up to 1,000 birds could be seen during summer and autumn. Ch. Husband et al. (pers. comm.) saw an immature male between Van and Bendimahi on 24.6.85. In the same area, at Çoparlar Köyü, Ch. Bräuning (pers. comm.) observed one female, behaving as though she had young on 7.6.87. R. Jürgens et al. (pers. comm.) saw one bird a few kilometres north of Van on 5.6.88. Although the plain around Tavrun is small, topographically not very suitable and is mainly occupied by a military camp, it seems to have some importance for bustards. Kumerloeve (1967) noted two birds between Tavrun and Bilişi on 30.6.65, Dellmuth saw one male to the west of Tavrun on 7.5.70 (Bird Report 1970-73) and N. Koch (pers. comm.) saw two birds on the military camp on 25.6 and one on 26.6.84. Huş (1974) mentioned the Ahlat area (at the shore of Van Gölü north of Tavrun) as a bustard site, based on documents at the General Directorate of Forestry.

c) Van Gölü: north side

Kumerloeve (1969) noted 3-4 great bustards to the north of Erıcığ on 3.7.68 and Huş (1974) got information on the occurrence of the great bustard in the Erıcığ area by the General Directorate of Forestry. A. Noeske (pers. comm.) watched 2 great bustards near Sodali Göl on 24.6.84, T. Macke (pers. comm.) 10 individuals at Gölünüzü near Sodali Göl on 8.6.86, and R. Jürgens et al. (pers. comm.) saw one between Sodali Göl and Adıcevaz and 4 at Sodali Göl on 11.6.86. R. Jürgens (pers. comm.) again saw 11 birds near on Gölünüzü on 11.6.88. T. Macke, H. Pietsch et al. (pers. comm.) saw 3 males at the lake on Suphan Dağı.

Eşek Gölü

Records are as follows: 14.6.68: 5 birds (Kumerloeve 1969); 29.9.80: 8 birds (van der Ven and Gheyselinck 1981, van der Ven and Kasperek 1983); 10.10.80: 21 birds.

**Yüksekova (Hakkari)**

Turan (1969) mentioned this plain as a locality for the great bustard. M. v. Bechtoldsheim (pers. comm.) saw one male southwest of Yüksekova on 9.7.82.

**Patnos-Tutak Ovası**

Baysal (1977) gave a report of bustard hunting in the vicinity of Tutak in the years 1945-47. Great bustards ought to have been present from spring until the first cold days in autumn, and not rare at that time. "If a hunter wished, he would be able to shoot several bustards every day". Baysal himself for example shot 12 bustards in two years (October). Kumerloeve (1967) received information (1965) on the occurrence of the great bustard there. Five birds were seen near Patnos and Malazgirt on 19.5.75 (Bird Report 1974-75), one mature male and a party of 13 females at Yüncüler Köyü west of Patnos on 20.4.81 (Goriup and Parr 1983, 1985) and Ch. Murphy (pers. comm., see also Murphy 1984) saw three males along the same route (15 km west of Patnos) on 24.6.83. About halfway between Patnos and Malazgirt, just north of the road, Schmid and Schubert (1985) saw one male between 8 and 10.6.84. South of Tutak on the road to Patnos, E. Bezzel et al. (pers. comm.) noted two flying individuals on 19.6.86. As this plain has some connections with the plain of Malazgirt, see also that account.

**Ağrı Ovası**

Serter (1969) reported bustard hunting between 1950 and 1953. A report on bustard hunting in the Ağrı province cited by Serter (1972) was not available. It probably refers to Ağrı Ovası, perhaps to the Patnos-Tutak Ovası. Serter (1972) reported the birds' presence in the Ağrı Ovası, where they leave during the winter and come back in May, when displaying males can be seen. Brüning (pers. comm.) saw one bird at Cumacıyan to the north of Ağrı on 1.7.86.

**Dogubayazıt Ovası**

Kumerloeve (1967) recorded three great bustards between Dogubayazıt and İğdır on 15.5.65. Asga (1972) reported that the great bustard is present in small numbers in the plains south of mount Ararat during the summer but they leave during winter. Similarly Serter (1972) states: "Breeding area, but absent during winter, leaving the area at the first cold of the first snowfall, coming back in May". Recently, R. Jürgens et al. (pers. comm.) recorded two individuals in the marsh north of Dogubayazıt on 18.6.86.

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**Aras valley at the Soviet frontier**

Turan (1969) mentioned the occurrence of the great bustard at Iğdır Ovası. According to Asga (1972), the great bustard is a summer visitor in small numbers on the plains east of Mount Ararat (= Ağrı Dağı). M. v. Bechtoldsheim, N. Koch and M. Siering (pers. comm.) observed two females coming from the Soviet Union, 15 km west of Iğdır, on 17.6.81.

**Aras valley around Horasan**

Erard and Erchepopor (1968) noted the great bustard in the Aras valley near Horasan on 10.6.67.

**Aras valley near Kağızman**

No records are available from here, but van der Ven (1982) observed the species close to it: he saw 8 birds at Turna Gölüü, a very small lake east of Paslı Geçidi on 26.9.81.

**Çıldır Gölüü**

Although the Çıldır Gölüü is surrounded by relatively dissected hilly land, the great bustard occurs there. Kumerloeve (1967) refers to a local who observed 9 individuals near Kenarbel Köyü in 1964. Vielliard (1968) noted two birds there on 23.8.67.

**Kars area**

Kumerloeve (1967) heard from local people that the great bustard occurs in the vicinity of Kars and Göle and that four of five birds were shot near Sankarmuş.

**Kayacık Gölüü**

Kumerloeve (1967) saw 13 individuals on 12.11.64.

**Erzurum Ovası**

The first record of the great bustard in this area is by Calvert who mentioned the species in his list of the birds of Erzurum in 1854 (in Curzon 1854). In addition, Sandwith (1856) noted the species in the Erzurum plain in 1854. According to the hunting statistics of 1964/65, about 50-60 birds were shot in the Erzurum Ovası each year (Kumerloeve 1967).

**Southeast Anatolian Region**

**Plains east of Diyarbakır**

Kumerloeve (1967) was told by local people in 1964/65 of the occurrence of the great bustard around Silvan (to the north of Batman) and near Diyarbakır. A bustard hunt near Diyarbakır has been recorded (Anonymous 1979b). K. Warncke
recorded one bird east of Diyarbakır on 19.8.72 (Bird Report 1970-73) and Ch. Murphy (pers. comm., Murphy 1984) saw three males and one female with an about 10-day-old chick at Çöltepe between Bismil and Batman on 14.6.83.

**Birecik area**

Although there is little flat land around Birecik, north of the town, Kumerloewe (1970) heard from local people that the bustard occurs there and H. Ebenerhöhl et al. (pers. comm.) saw one bird on a hillside between Birecik and Halfeti on 1.4.83.

**Urfa Ovası**

The Urfa plain is not clearly separated from the huge plain along the Syrian border at Ceylanpınar - Nusaybin. The first record there is by Weigold (1913) who noted two individuals in the steppe east of Urfa on 23.4.1911. According to information from local people (1964/65, 1970) the species is present there (Kumerloewe 1967, 1970). L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1970-73) saw five individuals at Camildere on 30.12.72. P. Thompson and P. Jacobsen recorded four birds "between Birecik and Viranşehir" on 17.5.75 (Bird Report 1974-75).

**Ceylanpınar - Nusaybin plains**

Kumerloewe (1967, 1970) got information (1964/65, 1970) on the occurrence near Nusaybin and Viranşehir. The occurrence at Viranşehir is also mentioned by Turan (1969). K. Warnke saw one adult female "behaving as if she had young" to the west of Viranşehir on 14.5.75 (Bird Report 1974-75) and Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw a total of 8 birds in this area on 9.4.81. The presence of bustards at Nusaybin was reconfirmed by Grace, Fitzharris et al. (pers. comm.) who saw one bird there on 18.5.85. In the vicinity of the Ceylanpınar state farm, situated at the Syrian border, Kumerloewe (1970b) saw three birds in May 1967 (or May 1968?) and got information that a rather good population still existed (see also Kumer­loewe 1970b). In the Middle School, he saw a stuffed bird which was hunted in autumn 1967. Turan (1969) pointed out the frequency of the great bustard around Ceylanpınar. T. Gürpınar saw up to 51 individuals (mostly in groups of 4 to 11) in March 1969. M. Kuhn (pers. comm.) observed one great bustard in the steppe west of Ceylanpınar on 2.5.80 and Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) counted a total of 45 birds (4 adult males, 22 immature males, 15 females and 6 others) during a very brief tour around the statefarm on 9.4.81. The largest group comprised 27 individuals. They were informed by the farm managers that the great bustard bred there and that during the winter, 800 to 1,000 birds might be present.

**Black Sea Region**

**Amasya Ovası**

Hus (1974) included this area into his list of Turkish bustard sites, based on information by the General Directorate of Forestry.

**Kızılırmak Deltaşı**

Turan (1969) mentioned the Bafra area as a bustard site. L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning (pers. comm.) saw two birds at Karabağaz Gölü on the west side of the Kızılırmak Delta on 11.12.69.

**Yeşilirmak Deltaşı**

The great bustard is present around Terme and around Çarşamba according to Turan (1969).

**Suşehri area**

Turan (1969) listed this locality as a bustard site.

**Merzifon Ovası**


**Çorum Ovası**

The great bustard is present at Çorum Ovası according to information from local people given to Kumerloewe (1970). In addition, Turan (1969) mentioned the Çorum area as a bustard site. M. Siering (pers. comm.) watched three females or immatures 20 km northeast of Çorum (Duvenci Ovası) on 6.8.81 and L. J. Dijksen and A.-H. Blomert saw one bird between Çorum and Sungurlu on 9.1.88.

**Çoruh valley**

In the Çoruh valley near İspir, to the north of Erzurum, the species is present according to local information (Kumerloewe 1967). At Bayburt Ovası, between Kale and Bayburt, Sandwith (1856) saw a flock of bustards at the end of 1854.

**ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT BUSTARD BREEDING RANGE**

A plot of all available records (Figure 1) suggests that the great bustard has apparently always been almost completely absent in the Black Sea region, probably owing to a lack of suitable habitat there: the whole region comprises steep mountains with few plain areas in between them. With hardly any exceptions, the river valleys are also narrow and do not provide suitable places for bustards. The coast falls steeply into the sea and few deltas (Kızılırmak Deltaşı, Yeşilirmak Deltaşı)
are situated along the coast line. Only in the central Black Sea region are plains found and these apparently have been bustard sites in former times.

Thrace, that is Turkey-in-Europe, has a number of large plains. However, no breeding grounds of bustards are situated there now nor seem to have been there in the past. Although occasional breeding cannot be ruled out, Thrace never seems to have been part of the main breeding range. This is surprising, as the great bustard breeds in Bulgaria and on the opposite side of the Marmara Sea. Its presence in Thrace would have been a link between the populations in Anatolia and Bulgaria.

Similarly, the whole coastal zone between the Dardanells in the northwest above the Aegean to the south coast as far as Mersin has never been a breeding area for bustards. Even the bird-watchers resident in Izmir and Aydin during the last century did not record the great bustard in the great valley plains of Gediz, Kütük Menderes and Büyük Menderes during the breeding season. Breeding apparently only occurred at Çukurova, the large plain around Adana.

The breeding range in Turkey had its western limit in the vicinity of Manyas Gölü and Apolyont Gölü (Karacabey). These areas are only slightly above sea level. At present, we do not know how close the link between this population and that of Central Anatolia was: no records exist for the several plains in between both areas, and from those areas where bustards have been observed, we do not know whether these were real breeding places or whether the bustards occurred occasionally. Thus it is possible that the population at Karacabey has been isolated from that of Central Anatolia for some time. Whereas, central Anatolia and the inner parts of the Mediterranean Region were occupied more or less completely in former days, wherever suitable habitats were found, this was not the case in the inner Aegean Region. Here, the great bustard was either absent or only very sparsely distributed.

The distribution of great bustards in eastern Anatolia is not uniform: they are very sparsely distributed in its western half, but densely distributed in its eastern half. A satisfying explanation for this cannot be offered, as there is no pronounced difference in landscape (distribution of plains) or climate. The range has a natural boundary in the north formed by the Eastern Pontic Mountains (Doğu Karadeniz Dağları) and in the south formed by the Hakkari Mountains. In the middle part of the eastern Anatolian Region, the bustard population is more or less contiguous with that of the southeast Anatolian Region. There, the main area is the Syrian Table-land along the Syrian border and some places in the floodplains of rivers (for example, of the River Tigris).

It can be seen from the above, that the boundaries of the breeding range cannot be wholly equated with natural boundaries. Breeding places of the great bustard are found from sea level (western Anatolia) up to about 1,800 m above sea level in the extreme east. Nearly all the plains of the inner Mediterranean Region,
69); 29.3.69: 1 bird (Bird Report 1968-69).

_Bala Ovası_
Serter (1972) described a bustard hunt there in about 1961, when 4-5 bustards may have been seen and shot.

_Balaban valley_
Ainsworth (1842) observed the great bustard near the village of Karghali (Kargul) in the Bala area in 1839 ("plain abounded with bustards of both the large and the smaller species"). The name of the village cannot be synonymized with a modern one. He also reported of the peasants: "their horses being employed to hunt down bustards".

_Akşehir/Eber Ovalan_

_b) West of Tuz Gölü (Kulu Gölü, Cihanbeyli)_
Ainsworth (1842) noted "flocks of bustards" in the Kulu ara on 19.4.1839. Erard and Etchécopar (1968) saw one pair and a group of 40 individuals near Kulu on 14.6.7 K. Bucher, J. Eggers, H. and J. Müller-Reich and P. and U. P. Streese (pers. comm.) found some bustard feathers north of Kulu on 27.3.72. L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1974-75) noted one bird between Kulu and Cihanbeyli on 21.2.74. On 3.5.78, D. Holman saw one individual and on 9.5.79, two individuals were seen at Kulu Gölü (Bird Report 1976-81, Kasparek 1987). Gorup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw one bird flying eastwards near Tavşancılı on 24.8.81. Turan (1969) points out that the great bustard is a breeding bird around Tuz Gölü, especially around Kulu Gölü.

c) East to south of Tuz Gölü (Şerefli Koçhisar to Sultanhanı)_
Ainsworth (1842) noted "a flock of large bustards" between Şerefli Koçhisar and the lake on 19.4.1839. In summer 1895, Sarre (1896) saw bustards east of Sultanhanı several times, but did not succeed in hunting them. In 1898 or 1897 Oberhummer and Zimmer (1899) noted small parties of bustards near Aksaray, Sultanhanı and Obruk (about 33 km southwest of Sultanhanı). G. Groh (pers. comm.) saw two males at the east side of Tuz Gölü on 19.5.71. K. Bucher, J. Eggers, H. and J. Müller-Reich and U. P. Streese (pers. comm.) saw 10 individuals (including at least three males) on 26.3.72. L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning (pers. comm.) noted 8 birds 15 km south of Şereflikoçhisar on 14.12.72. On the "east side of Tuz Gölü" they recorded 5 birds on 10.1.73 and 6 on 21.2.74 (pers. comm., also Bird Report 1974-75). Lehmann (1974) found a great bustard egg within a colony of herring gulls Larus argentatus, on an island in Tuz Gölü in spring 1972. One bird was seen at the south end of Tuz Gölü on 3.5.77 (Bird Report 1976-81). Van der Ven and the lake on 19.4.1839.
Present distribution
At present, the great bustard is confined to two main areas: central Anatolia and east/southeast Anatolia (Figure 2). No recent records are available for areas in between. Apart from these populations, there are two records from the Marmara Region. Although one, at the Meriç Delta, is from April and involved two males, breeding seems unlikely. Only a few records are available from previous years and they all fall during the winter. The other record comes from Manyas Gölü. Special attention has to be paid to this area in the future. In former times, about the 1930s, this was a well-known breeding area and a small breeding population remaining there even now cannot be ruled out, although the most recent record was only of a group of immature males (Goriup and Parr 1983, 1985).

Breeding apparently occurs in the plains of the upper Sakarya River around Çifteler. In the vast plains around Tuz Gölü, the great bustard certainly still breeds. However, this is assumed on the basis of the number and the season of records: no place where displaying males, nests or females with young can be seen regularly is known. In particular, the areas to the west of Tuz Gölü around Kulu and in the east around the village of Ulukışla should be searched for breeding places.

Another breeding place is apparently at Malya Ovaşı where Seyfe Gölü is situated. Although only there is one autumn record during the last decade, reliable information from local people puts breeding beyond doubt. The area most suitable for bustards within the Malya plain would be to the north of Seyfe. Some immature males at Sefaatli (Yenipazar) in 1981 presumably belonged to the population at Malya Ovaşı.

At Develi Ovaşı (Sultan Marshes) the probability that great bustards still breed is rather low. Displaying males were last seen in 1979. The intensive birdwatching activity in the area during recent years should have yielded more records than are available, if there really was a breeding population present. However, the plain around Gölcük, towards Nığde to the south of the Sultan Marshes, urgently needs a survey for this species, as the individuals appearing in the Sultan Marshes may come from there.

The situation at Ereğli Ovaşı is also difficult to judge. An observation of a male near Çakmak seems encouraging. Breeding appears to be unlikely around Akgöl, which is continuously visited by birdwatchers, but may occur in the northeastern part of the plain towards Bor which is usually passed over by ornithologists.
The situation at Konya Ovası is similarly unclear. There are no records from the last decade and only two records from earlier years. However, many hunters describe that plain as one of the best bustard sites in Turkey and the area looks so suitable for bustards to the human eye that this statement seems beyond doubt.

At Açığöl, breeding may still occur. The most recent breeding season record is from 1988. Some records come from areas south of Açığöl, such as Söğüt Gölüü and Karataş Gölüü, so breeding at one of these places cannot be ruled out.

The great bustard certainly still breeds in southeastern Turkey in the large plain south of the line Urfa/Akçakale - Nusaybin. Recent records confirm the presence of the species there. However, the area is difficult to access or inaccessible in most of its parts, being the border area to Syria. So, bird-watchers can be only active at a few points like Ceylanpinar and the great bustard remains under-recorded. Good places seem to be for example in the west of Ceylanpinar near Gümüşüşuyu as along the borderland up to Akçakale. The occurrence in southeast Turkey includes the valley of River Tigris (Dicle Nehri) where breeding was proven in the Bismil area in 1983. This is only the breeding record from Turkey during the last decade.

A fairly good number of bustard records stems from Eastern Turkey. They are concentrated at Muş Ovası (Karasu Valley) and in the northeast of it, in an area confined by the towns Malazgirt, Patnos, and Tutak (Valley of River Murat and its tributaries). Also at some places around Van Gölüü (Gevşel, Sodali Gölüü, Erçek Gölüü), the occurrence was confirmed during the last decade, in some cases even recently.

In the marshes north of Dogubayazıt at the foot of Mount Ararat ( Ağrı Dağı) and the plain north of this mountain (İğdır Ovası), bustards are still occurring. One record regards a bird coming from the Soviet Union and demonstrates clearly the overlap of the population between both countries.

One recent record at Yüksekova in the Hakkari Mountains cannot be interpreted as it is the only one there, even older records are missing.

Seasonal movements
It is evident from some records outside the breeding range (e.g. near Istanbul and Ankara) that there is some movement especially during winter. The date of observation is not known exactly in all cases, but the records furthest away from the breeding grounds occur in December and January (see Figure 3). These records have been superimposed on a map of the mean temperatures during January, taken from the Harita Genel Müdürlüğü (Yeni Türkiye Atlası 1977). Three temperature classes were used: areas with mean temperatures below -8°C, areas with mean temperatures between -8°C and 0°C and areas with mean temperatures higher than 0°C. With very few exceptions, all records of the great bustard are within those areas where the mean temperature in January does not

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Figure 3: Winter distribution of the great bustard in Turkey. Large dots show records from December and January; triangles indicate areas vacated by bustards during the winter.

*Area where mean January temperature is below -8°C*

*Area where mean January temperature is between -8°C and 0°C*

*Area where mean January temperature is above 0°C*
fall below freezing point! Even in Inner Anatolia, areas with frost are avoided, and warmer places within this region are preferred. This finding is supported by the evidence of Serter (1972), who stated that the Ankara region (which is on the border of the 0° isotherm), bustards are present throughout November and December, but leave during January. The regular observations of A. Vittery at Mogan Gölü in the Ankara District show that bustards are present again from the end of February onwards.

The coverage of Turkey by birdwatchers is rather limited and takes place mainly in the western parts of the country and in the warmer seasons. A high proportion of the winter records, for example, stem from the winter counts carried out by L. J. Dijksen and F. Koning. However, eastern Turkey was (with one exception) not included in the winter counts. This poor coverage must be taken into account when looking at the distribution of bustards during winter. However, resident hunters in the areas of Sivas, Muş, Tutal, Ağrı, Dogubayazıt, and the Aras Valley east of Mount Ararat say that great bustards occur only in summer, and leave during the first cold days of autumn, returning in May. The existence of this migration pattern is also supported by records from Greece. During the last century, great bustards appeared on the Cyclades islands, on several occasions during winter (Bauer et al. 1969).

THE LITTLE BUSTARD

Occurrence of the little bustard

Istanbul area

Rigler (1852) mentioned the little bustard in his list of the birds of Istanbul and also mentioned that the species was eaten: he probably saw the species only on the market. Taylor (1872) included the little bustard in the list of birds which he saw in the markets of Pera (Istanbul) in the years 1854-1855. According to Mathey-Dupraz (1923), the little bustard was an irregular winter visitor in Istanbul. He saw three individuals between Şişli and Zincirlikuyu ("Chichili" and "Zindjirli Koulook") in the middle of January 1889. Between mid-December and the end of January, he saw bustards in poultry shops. The American College at Bebek had one male and four females in its collection (Mathey-Dupraz 1923). Moreover Braun (1908) stated that the little bustard "Can often be found in the game shops of Istanbul".

Karacabey - Bursa area

This was where Vasvari (1938) found the species common in August 1936 and May 1937. In spring, seven displaying males were shot in an area of about 60 ha. Vasvari himself confirmed breeding and from others he learnt that the little bustard was common especially during autumn (Vasvari 1938, Keve 1971). Schweiger (1965)
saw a male at Görükle between Karacabey and Bursa at the beginning of May 1962. From the local forestry mission he was informed (in 1959) that the little bustard was a rare, but regular visitor of that area. From the Karacabey area, Kumerloeve (1970) got information on 66 hunted little bustards (but gives no further details). Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) were informed by local people in 1981, that the little bustard still occurred in the area.

İzmir area

Strickland (1836) reported that the little bustard was “abundant during winter in the poultry shops” of İzmir. It was also seen by von Gonzenbach (1857, 1858, 1859, 1860). A female which he collected near İzmir on 20 December 1865 and a male which he collected there in February 1863 were sent to Dresser’s private museum (Dresser 1872). The little bustard clearly occurred in this area from the beginning of December to mid-February. Von Gonzenbach also reported the regular occurrence of the species on the great plains of Menemen during winter where, for example he saw one individual on 9 November 1856. Krüper (1875) did not want to rule out the breeding of the little bustard in the “great plains” but noted “this is not confirmed”. Krüper and Hartlaub (1875) made a similar statement and pointed out that the species “is hunted every winter”. They mentioned two stuffed birds in the museum of Athens from the İzmir area, one of 23 December 1858, the other of 5 September 1860. One bird which was shot on a plain near İzmir on 18 November 1979 is now in the collection of the Ege Universitesi İzmir (Siki 1982, Kasparek pers. obs.).

Inner Anatolia

Ainsworth (1842) saw the little bustard near the village of Kargılı (exact location unknown) in the Kırşehir area in 1839. Danford (1880) noted this species at “Baluk Kujundje” in April 1879. This locality cannot be translocated on a modern map, but from Danford’s itinerary it should be Temelli/Ankara or a village close to it. B. Korf collected four males and three females at Ereğli/Konya in December 1931 (von Jordans and Steinbacher 1948). Wadley (1951) met a pair south of Tuz Gölü on 21 April 1946 and Maas Gesteraanus (1959) one on the shore of Tuz Gölü on 30 June 1961. Maas Gesteraanus recorded one more “in the steppe between Ankara and Kayseri” (he travelled via Beynam and Kırşehir) on 21 July 1951. Ganso and Spitzer (1967) saw two individuals in marshland near Aksaray on 14 July 1966. A decomposing bird was found at Karamuk Sağılgı by A. J. Gaston on 12 July 1969: it might have been newly fledged (Bird Report 1968-69). A. J. McNeill saw five individuals on a mountain-side near Kütahaya on 17 May 1970 (Bird Report 1970-73). K. Warncke met a female 20 km east of Aksaray on 23 May 1972 (Bird Report 1970-73) and R. Akçaşkaya, S. Barış and C. Bilgın saw one bird in the steppe near Ovaçlılık in the Sultan Marshes on 31 October 1982 (pers. comm., also Kasparek 1985). According to S. Tarhan (1983), the little bustard still occurs at Konya Ovası.

Seyhan/Ceyhan lowland (Çukurova)

Ainsworth (1842) wrote in his journal after leaving Adana on December 1839: “As we travelled over the plains beyond, we observed flocks of many thousand small bustards”. Schrader (1891) recorded the little bustard at Mersin in the years 1882-85 as a winter visitor, “not uncommon and usually in pairs”. Huş (1974) wrote that the little bustards spent the winter near Mersin, Adana and Yakapınar (Miais).

Erzurum Ovası

Dickson and Ross (1839) noted the little bustard as very common on the ploughed fields and around the edges of the marshland of the Erzurum plain. They wrote that the birds arrived in September and departed in the middle of November. Furthermore, Calvert included the little bustard in his list of the birds of Erzurum (Curzon 1854) and Sandwith (1856) watched the species in 1854. It was “not uncommon” at Erzurum Ovası in the 1910s and was “much sought after by gunners”, according to McGregor (1917). In the 1960’s, Kumerloeve (1967) was told by local people that the little bustard occurred in the area.

Urfa and Ceylanpmar Ovalan

Tristram found the little bustard in the neighbourhood of Urfa in 1881 according to Weigold (1913) and Kumerloeve (1961), but Tristram himself did not mention this species in his report (Tristram 1882). Misonne (1956) met the little bustard in the Urfa area in 1955. Kumerloeve (1967, 1970) heard from local people that the species once occurred around Urfa, Viranşehir and Ceylanpmar, but had disappeared. Other information from local people on the occurrence at Ceylanpmar were treated with suspicion by Kumerloeve. However, T. Gürpinar observed small flocks between Urfa and Ceylanpmar in March 1969, and on one occasion, he saw a party of 119 (an astounding observation) in the Gümüşsuyu area west of Ceylanpmar (Bird Report 1968-69). Goriup and Parr (1983, 1985) saw two males in summer plumage at Ceylanpmar on 19 April 1981.

Eastern Anatolia

A collection of birds of the Trabzon area by Abbott (1834) contained little bustards, and Chantré (1883) collected it in the area of Diyarbakır. Kumerloeve (1967) was informed by local people that it occurred in the areas of Diyaban (southeast of Ağrı), Malatya, Elazığ and Muğ; for example, at Cencige (Erzincan) in 1951, and in January 1958 a freshly shot bird was seen at Gavur Gölü (Elazığ). Further evidence of the occurrence of little bustards in the Elazığ-Bingöl area comes from Çalışkan (1974). He stated that the species had been common at
Basıyrıt Ovası and at Karakoçu Ovası, but was now rare, although still found mainly around the villages of Mahmuth and Kötüysuf of Basıyrıt Ovası. Aska (1870) wrote that the little bustard was present in the Van area, but in small numbers, leaving the area in October. One record near Tatvan on 19 November 1971 is not without doubt (M. Jennings, pers. comm.), although it was listed in the Bird Report (1970-73) without any comment. Gorlip and Parr (1983, 1985) saw one mounted specimen of a male in the Van hunters’ club room and were informed by local people in 1981 that the little bustard was still present in the Bulanık area.

Analysis and discussion of distribution

From the classical breeding area of the little bustard (Figure 4) in the vicinity of Karacabey, western Anatolia, where Vasvari found up to seven displaying males on 60 ha in the 1930s, the latest record stems from the 1960s. Although some evidence for the bird’s presence was obtained again in 1981, the species seems to have largely disappeared from there. In eastern Anatolia, the little bustards was not rare in the Erzurum plain at least until the 1910s. After then, there is only one observation by a hunter, without any details. Today, no breeding places of the little bustard are known, and only a few modern records from the breeding season exist. Nevertheless, it does not seem impossible that the little bustard still breeds perhaps irregularly at a few places in central, eastern and southeastern Anatolia.

POPULATION TRENDS IN AND PROTECTION OF BOTH BUSTARD SPECIES

There are no precise data on population changes. A report on the Present situation of the hunting resources of our country (Anonymous 1979) stated: “The numbers of the great bustard and the little bustard ... are decreasing quickly”. Turan (1969) wrote in a report on the great bustard that a decline of the population had been noted “especially during the last five years”. Hunters in particular have bemoaned the declining populations (e.g. Baysal 1977, Çalışkan 1974), although hunting has been blamed for the decline (Saryçice 1982). The times when great bustards were sold in the markets of Istanbul and İzmir (Rigler 1852, Strickland 1836, von Gonzenbach 1858, 1860, Taylor 1872, Braun 1908), have long since passed. In fact, even at that time, von Gonzebach (1852) expressed concern about the decrease of “both bustards” as a consequence of hunting.

As described above (and see Figures 1 and 2), the area of distribution of the great bustard has diminished considerably, especially at the edges of the former range. At places where bustards occurred in small populations or only occasionally, no recent records exist. Moreover, many wintering grounds along the coasts have also been abandoned during the last few years. One of the main reasons for the decline is certainly hunting. In former times, like in the 1940s and 1950s, the great bustard was protected by law only during the breeding season: hunting was completely forbidden from March to August (Banoglu and Burr 1952). Since the 1970s, the great bustard has been protected throughout the year. It is possible that they have an important impact on the remaining populations.

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