

Short Communication**First Documented Breeding Evidence of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* in Jordan**

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Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* has long been considered a resident species in southern Jordan, although breeding has not previously been documented. On 24 July 2025, at 18:20 h, a family group consisting of two adults and two chicks was observed at Aqaba Bird Observatory (ABO), southern Jordan (Figure 1). The chicks remained in close association with the adults, were observed walking throughout the observation period, and were still too small to be capable of sustained flight, indicating that they were still dependent on parental care. A total of 17 adult Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse were recorded at the observatory on the same day. The record was subsequently reviewed by the Jordan Bird Records Committee (JBRC), which accepted it as the strongest evidence to date and a strong indicator of breeding by the species in Jordan. This observation contributes important information on the breeding status of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, and further highlights the conservation importance of Aqaba Bird Observatory for resident desert birds.

Keywords:

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, *Pterocles lichtensteinii*, breeding evidence, Aqaba Bird Observatory, Jordan, Jordan Bird Records Committee, resident birds.

Observation

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* is a desert-adapted species inhabiting arid and semi-arid landscapes across parts of the Middle East and northeastern Africa (Porter & Aspinall, 2010; BirdLife International, 2024). In Jordan, it has been recorded mainly in the southern desert region; however, evidence of breeding has remained undocumented (RSCN, 2025). On 24 July 2025, at approximately 18:20h, the authors observed a family group of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse at Aqaba Bird Observatory, southern Jordan. The group comprised two adults accompanied by two chicks. The birds were observed walking together within the observatory, with the chicks remaining in close proximity to the adults throughout the observation. The chicks were noticeably small and had not yet developed the ability to fly, indicating that they were still dependent on parental care and were unlikely to have dispersed any significant distance from their hatching site. These observations strongly suggest that breeding had occurred locally.

During the same survey, a total of 17 adult Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse were recorded within the observatory. The occurrence of a family group together with this relatively high number of adults suggests that the site provides suitable habitat during the breeding season and may support a local breeding population.

The observation was submitted to the Jordan Bird Records Committee (JBRC), which reviewed the documentation and accepted

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Figure 1. A family group of two adults and two chicks observed at Aqaba Bird Observatory.

the record as a strong indicator of breeding by Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse in Jordan (JBRC, 2026). To our knowledge, this represents the strongest breeding evidence available for the species in the country.

Significance of the record

The observation provides important new information on the breeding status of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse in Jordan and substantially improves current knowledge of the species' distribution and ecology in the country. The presence of two dependent, flightless chicks accompanying two adults constitutes compelling evidence of local reproduction, and supports the conclusion that breeding occurs in the Aqaba region.

The record also emphasizes the ecological significance of Aqaba Bird Observatory, where artificial wetlands are embedded within a surrounding arid landscape, creating a diverse habitat that supports both migratory and resident bird species. Continued monitoring during the breeding

season is recommended to determine the size and status of the local population, identify breeding territories, and improve understanding of the breeding ecology of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse in Jordan.

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