

Wise Birding Holidays



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SOUTHERN MOROCCO: Birders' Specialities Tour

Saturday 22nd March - Wednesday 2nd April 2014

Tour Participants: David Carr, Jude Rutherford and Judith Pentreath

Leader: Chris Townend

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Pharaoh Eagle Owl: Fantastic views of two adults near Boumalne Dades.

Egyptian Nightjar: Two birds seen roosting during the day at very close range.

Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater: Great views of two birds catching dragonflies in the desert.

Spotted Sandgrouse: A superb flock in the early evening light of more than 50 birds.

The many sub-species, tagine lunches and sharing tea with our Nomad Guide.



This Pharaoh Eagle Owl was one of two birds we saw and voted bird of the trip!

Saturday 22nd March

The group met at a rather chilly Gatwick airport and after a slight flight delay, we arrived in a pleasantly warm Marrakech airport. Here, our Moroccan driver Youssef awaited us, complete with a shiny 4X4 Toyota Landcruiser that would be our mode of transport for the duration of the tour. Within just 20 minutes, we were soon checked into our Marrakech hotel where we all enjoyed a good meal and sleep before our first full day of birding.

Sunday 23rd March

As is normally the case when waking up in a new country, everyone was keen as mustard to start the new birding day! Awoken by the chirpy song of the **House Bunting** we all enjoyed a good breakfast and caffeine hit! Youssef was waiting for us outside the hotel where we enjoyed our first views of **Pallid Swifts**.

We then headed through the city, south towards our destination of the High Atlas Mountains and the ski resort at Oukaïmeden at around, 2,600m.

As we passed through Marrakech, a few **Magpies** of the race *mauretanica*, also known as **Moroccan Magpie**, could be seen perched up on the street lamps and after a little while, we were winding our way up through the Ourika Valley where we made our first stop. Here, we enjoyed some excellent views of the stunning **African Blue Tit** complete with vivid blue back and striking black cap, it was a completely different bird to those we were familiar with back home. Nearby, a **Hawfinch** posed for us at the top of a tree and the very common, but no less striking male *North African* **Chaffinch** showed well, complete with green back, powder blue head and very different call.

We were soon back in our Landcruiser and continuing our route onwards and upwards where we soon arrived at around 2,600m surrounded by beautiful snow capped peaks and sunshine! We spent the whole morning just slowly wandering the well-worn track into the mountains and took in the fantastic scenery and birds! One of the first target birds was in the bag within just a few hundred yards from leaving the vehicle, a singing male **Seebohm's Wheatear!** This species breeds at high altitude and had recently returned from its wintering range further south. (*Most often considered conspecific with Northern Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe, the Moroccan and Algerian race, "seebohmi" or Seebohm's Wheatear, is actually a very different looking bird.*)

A couple of **Rock Sparrows** also distracted us along with a rather unexpected group of three **Moroccan Magpies** that seemed to be very unconcerned about their high altitude migration from the city! More expected was our next target species with some first class views of a small feeding flock of **"African" Crimson-winged Finches**. (*A different subspecies to those found further east in Turkey.*) The males really were stunning as their fluorescent pink wing flashes gleamed amongst the backdrop of small snow patches that they frequented. Nearby, groups of **"Atlas" Horned Larks** complete with bright yellow faces and tiny black horns shuffled about between snow patches. Pristine male **Black Redstarts** flitted between rocks and a few endemic **Atlas Day Geckos** allowed some close up views. We then slowly re-traced our steps and headed for our lunch but taking time watch the large groups of both **Red-billed Chough** and **Yellow-billed Chough** feeding on the grassy slopes.

We sat outside and relaxed in the sunshine taking in the fantastic mountain scenery whilst enjoying the first of many tasty tagine lunches!

After lunch, we explored another track into the mountains where we had spectacular views of the High Atlas Mountains. New species in the area included **Black Wheatear** and **Rock Bunting** and a superb female **Levaillant's Green Woodpecker** that gave prolonged views as it fed on the ground completely unperturbed by our presence. We also had our fill of perhaps one of Morocco's most iconic birds, the beautiful **Moussier's Redstart** as a number of vivid males gave us all point blank views! A **Barbary Ground Squirrel** was a welcome mammal for the trip as we watched a single animal playing hide and seek in the nearby rocks. We then slowly continued our journey back towards Marrakech. A couple of roadside stops on our return journey produced **Yellow Wagtail** and **Meadow Pipit** in a mountain stream and then a little lower down some excellent views of "**Atlas**" **Coal Tit**, whilst enjoying afternoon tea Moroccan style, very sweet with mint! Whilst sipping our tea we also enjoyed more views of **House Bunting** and **Hawfinch**. We arrived back in Marrakech just before dusk as we watched flocks of **Pallid Swifts** above our hotel.

Monday 24th March

Today was mostly a day of travel, as we headed on our journey east to the edge of the desert plateau and the Dades river valley to our hotel at Boumalne Dades. We set off after a leisurely breakfast and began our route eastward, stopping at some low hills near Toufliht. The highlight here was most definitely birds of prey as we watched a minimum of ten migrant light phase **Booted Eagles** head over us as well as a single **Short-toed Eagle**. A flyover **White Stork** was a pleasant distraction as were a small group of "**Atlas**" **Crossbill** including a female that sat and posed for us. We then continued on our journey, before another brief stop in the cool pine woodlands where a short walk revealed more views of "**Atlas**" **Coal Tit** and a rather frustrating "**Maghreb**" **Short-toed Treecreeper** that was only heard. Another **Levaillant's Woodpecker**, this time a male, was seen very well as it visited a nest hole!

However, we still had a long way to go and so it was back into the vehicles as we climbed over the Tizi N Tichka Pass standing proud at an impressive 2,260m. Once the other side of the Pass, we stopped for a much needed tea/coffee break where we sipped our drinks whilst enjoying the warm sunshine and some good views of a female **Moussier's Redstart** flitting around by the river and our first **Long-legged Buzzard** of the trip. We continued our journey towards Ouarzazate, often referred to as "The Door to the Desert".

Whilst driving into the town, a flock of around 12 **European Bee-Eaters** flew over the vehicle as if to welcome our arrival! Youssef then dropped us off for lunch in Ouarzazate whilst he bought some supplies for the desert section of our adventure. Lunch was a real treat as we were presented with a fantastic array of chicken kebabs and salad that tasted delicious!

The afternoon sun was now behind us and we continued the last leg of our long journey as the habitat began to change and we entered the start of the stony desert known as the Hammada. We continued our journey through this amazing landscape taking in the Berber music (now a regular feature of travelling with

Youssef) and just gazing out of the window. A final early evening stop to experience our first Hammada birding proved very worthwhile. The first birds to greet us were a small group of **Desert Larks** with typical sandy plumage and yellow-based bills. A short wander around on the other side of the road revealed a number of very smart **Desert Wheatears** and Dave's sharp eyes then latched onto a **Spectacled Warbler** that typically remained very close to the ground and finally gave itself up for all to see. The grand finale was watching two **Southern Grey Shrikes** of the very pallid form *elegans*, also known as **Desert Grey Shrike**. The birds were in perfect light as we watched one bird spiking its prey on an Acacia bush. Sadly, we had to tear ourselves away and continue our journey to Boumalne Dades. We arrived for sunset at our wonderful hotel perched high above the Dades River. Once checked into our rooms we all met on the terrace for a well-earned beer overlooking the beautiful Dades river valley below us before enjoying yet more superb food!

Tuesday 25th March

Everyone was up early this morning, as this was sure to be an exciting day as we explored the famous Tagdilt Track! After an early breakfast fit for a king, we were off, on Operation Pharaoh! Judith had already put the pressure on (!) and was keen to see the highly sought after **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** – (*This species was previously, just a desert race of European Eagle Owl, but is now considered a species in its own right.*) So we headed off soon after sunrise and after a while, we were in one of the areas that this bird sometimes uses to roost. It was a calm morning and three birds flew overhead calling, which soon alerted Chris's senses before he shouted "**Thick-billed Larks!**" Frustratingly, the birds continued flying into the sun and somewhat begrudgingly, we had to accept the very unsatisfactory views! We soon re-focused on our main target species and a quick scan of the rocky ridge and bingo, a superb **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** in the scope for all to enjoy. It was a great way to start the morning and it seemed Judith had already made her mind up on her bird of the trip! The bird was face on, allowing the diagnostic dark facial lines and fine sandy barring across the belly to be seen. The much smaller size compared to its European cousin was also apparent. We quite simply enjoyed the bird for a good 30 minutes or so taking in the moment and everyone was very happy. However, we needed to find more key species before the glare of the sun became too harsh.

We took full advantage of our 4X4 vehicles today, covering as much habitat as we could. The species began to fall slowly but surely, with the first of many **Red-rumped Wheatears**, both sexes having the orange toned rump and tail, from where the bird gets its name. We also had plenty of opportunity to enjoy the much smaller but still striking **Desert Wheatear**. Judith did well to find the first **Temminck's Larks** of the trip as a couple of birds scuttled along the desert floor just meters from us. The rather appropriately named, **Fat Sand Rat** caused mild amusement as it basked in the morning sunshine. We were then spoiled with some fabulous views of at least eight **Cream-coloured Coursers** that allowed very close approach in our 4X4 vehicle. Further exploration of this particularly sandy area also revealed a group of five fantastic **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, three males and two females. Youssef did some very careful manoeuvring and the views were simply superb as they continued feeding just metres from us. The grand finale to the morning's birding was both hearing and seeing the beautiful **Greater Hoopoe Lark** as it performed its amazing display

flight. So, with a good morning's haul we headed back towards civilisation, taking in some **Crested Larks** en route before retiring for a late morning coffee break in Boumalne Dades.

After our break from the sun and with thirst quenched, we headed to an irrigated area that can sometimes hold good numbers of migrants. Things seemed quiet at first with a lone **Common Chiffchaff** and plenty of **Crested Larks**, but with a little more effort we managed to find **Western Subalpine Warbler** and a **Woodchat Shrike** as well as some more excellent views of **Spectacled Warbler**. As we slowly wandered back to our vehicle, it soon became apparent Youssef had been busy! As if by magic, he produced an amazing picnic spread out on a small table consisting of lovely bread, olive salad and a superb Berber Tagine! We even enjoyed our first proper nomad Moroccan Tea in the desert surrounded by wonderful scenery and totally undisturbed with only the odd camel and Berber for company!

After lunch, we took another drive around the Tagdilt Track searching for **Thick-billed Larks**. After some time spent searching and scanning, we were about to give up when a small flock suddenly flushed from in front of us and headed off into the distance! Another unsatisfactory view! However, we really could not complain, as it had been a great day and there was still plenty of time to find more birds – Positive mental attitude! We ended our birding day at a seasonal pool, where **Greater Short-toed Lark** was a new addition to the list and we witnessed a large movement of **Common Swifts** and **Barn Swallows** low over the desert landscape. It was a great end to the day. We headed back to Boumalne Dades and our hotel where we enjoyed a great meal and reminisced about the day's great birding in the Hammada.

Wednesday 26th March

After another superb breakfast, we soon had our bags loaded and continued our long journey east to the edge of the Sahara Desert. Of course, there were a number of stops on the way, the first being the rather unsavoury site of the Tagdilt Rubbish Dump! It is a depressing site standing in the Hammada surrounded by rubbish, the majority of which are plastic bags, but we tried to ignore this and focus on the birds! A migrant **Black Kite** flapped towards us against the quite windy conditions and our first decent view of a **Thekla Lark** was good for the lark enthusiasts! A pink blur then whizzed past us, as a group of around 15-20 **Trumpeter Finches** flew low over the stony ground with a couple of birds loitering long enough to see a bit more plumage detail.

Next, we returned to owl gorge, where we spent some time searching for **Maghreb Wheatear** but had no luck. However, it was a case of **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** take two, as we were spoiled again, with yet more superb views of not one but two **Pharaoh Eagle Owls** on the same ledge as yesterday! Jude's ever-watchful eye also found a **Eurasian Wryneck** that sat up in the morning sun on a nearby rock. As ever though, we had a long way to travel still, so we dragged ourselves away and headed to the very impressive Todra Gorge in search of a key species and one that Dave was very keen to see! As we wound our way up through this stunning gorge, we were all in awe of the scenery and before long, we had reached the spot. No sooner were we out of the vehicle than a bird was

singing and Dave was straight onto our target – **Tristram's Warbler!** (*A North African endemic that winters in the lowland desert habitats before returning to higher altitudes to breed.*)

We then spent the next 45 minutes enjoying a pair of these very striking *Sylvia* warblers as they put on quite a show whilst playing hide and seek in the numerous Oleander bushes. Once we all had our fill, we returned through the gorge and celebrated the *Sylvia* in the shade of a cafe with a mandatory Moroccan Coffee! Whilst we sipped our tea, we had the added bonus of watching an adult **Bonelli's Eagles** circling above us! Excellent scope views were had whilst the side show of **Blue Rock Thrush**, **House Bunting** and a "shouting" **Cetti's Warbler** all added to the pleasant ambience of this great site.

Fully refreshed and with another two key species in the bag, we continued our long journey east towards the desert and the small town of Merzouga. The journey was entertaining as always with the ever-changing and dramatic scenery. The larger stone boulders and stones started to break up into finer material and sand became a more common sight. Our next stop was lunch and once again, Chef Youssef prepared our lunch whilst we took a stroll in some nearby suitable birding habitat. Here we enjoyed some good general birding with views of more **Trumpeter Finch**, **Woodchat Shrike**, a fine male **Black-eared Wheatear** found by Dave and our first scope view of a perched **Laughing Dove** thanks to Jude. We then returned to another one of Youssef's superb picnic lunches whilst sitting in the shade of nearby trees.

We continued eastward to the town of Rissani where a group of **European Bee-Eaters** perched on roadside wires was a welcome site as we stopped to admire them. We then continued our journey deeper into the desert to see if there was any water in the seasonal lake, known as Dayet Srji. It soon became apparent there was no water, so we explored the area by vehicle picking up a few more **European Bee-Eaters** and **Black-eared Wheatears** in the wonderful evening sunlight. The finale for the day were three **Brown-necked Ravens** that strutted around on the sand and then took flight. We then headed for our desert hotel on the outskirts of Merzouga. We watched the sun disappear behind the Erg Chebbi sand dunes and saw the amazing site of an **Osprey** migrating over them! We then enjoyed a tasty dinner and a few drinks whilst chatting about what tomorrow may bring!

Thursday 27th March

The cool morning temperature was very pleasant indeed, as we tucked into coffee, orange juice and some lovely crepes! This morning our main task was to find **Desert Sparrow!** We headed off to our usual site taking full advantage of our 4X4 Toyota Land Cruiser as it made easy work of the sand dunes! We arrived at a nomad camp where we carefully checked the small groups of **House Sparrows** for their pallid cousin. As we waited amongst a spectacular backdrop of orange sand dunes and camels, we were soon watching a beautiful pair of **Desert Sparrows**. (*In recent years, Desert Sparrows appear to have declined in number, ousted from the various Sparrow nest boxes at Auberges by the seemingly increasing numbers of House Sparrows.*) The birds were very confident coming to seed and sometimes fighting with the more common **House Sparrows**. We just sat and watched the pair for a good 45 minutes whilst also

pleasantly distracted by a migrant male **Common Redstart**, many **White-crowned Wheatears** and two **Southern Grey Shrikes** that looked exquisite with the sand dunes as their backdrop.

Once happy with our **Desert Sparrow** experience, we continued further into the desert where we had arranged a meeting with one of the nomads. We were soon in the middle of nowhere, greeted by our nomad contact and following him across the desert. Our man was very confident that our major target would soon be delivered, and within a couple of minutes, we were soon watching perhaps one of Morocco's most sought after species, the cryptic **Egyptian Nightjar**. It was roosting under a tiny bush and we were able to study this beautiful bird in the scope just metres away from us and quite unperturbed by our presence. *(The subspecies in Morocco is **saharae**, believed to be the largest of all the subspecies and probably one of the most sought after desert specialities in Morocco. Thanks to good communication with local nomads, this species is now regularly found roosting during the day. In previous years, it has always been more difficult to find when trying to locate calling birds at night.)*

Once again, we took our time enjoying the amazing **Egyptian Nightjar** encounter and once happy with our photographs, we began to take a slow walk through the sand dunes in the hope finding a few more specialities. We had not walked more than about 100 metres when all of a sudden a bird with a falcon like jizz flew low over the dunes and seemed to land behind a tamarisk bush. After a couple of minutes we located it on the sand and to our amazement, it was a second **Egyptian Nightjar**! No sooner had we clapped eyes on the second nightjar than we were soon distracted by a singing **African Desert Warbler** that popped up in front of us! It really did not get much better than this and we all savoured the views of this amazing five minute desert birding experience. We then continued our walk and had some brief views of a group of noisy **Fulvous Babblers** that Dave managed to get a view of before they rather selfishly vanished into quite thick vegetation.

We had been invited for refreshment at our nomad's house where we drank tea and relaxed for a while before he took us to his small fertile allotments. Here our day just got better with a group of **Bar-tailed Larks** that were somewhat eclipsed by some amazing views of six **Thick-billed Larks**! The views were just fantastic and once again, we just immersed ourselves in the moment. Even Judith had to admit, these larks were quite impressive despite having the word lark in the name! As it began to get warmer, we found some shade and watched more migrants including a very obliging **Eurasian Wryneck**, **Common Redstart** and **Western Subalpine Warblers**. The birds were in such an alien habitat, highlighting just what a tough journey these migrant passerines have to endure. After all this birding excitement, we were in need of some lunch and a lie down(!) so we returned to our hotel and did just that!

After lunch and a siesta, we took a drive west of the town of Rissani and it was time to phone another nomad! Once again, we headed off the main road and across the desert landscape and soon met our man as well as a superb flock of around fifty **Spotted Sandgrouse**! Sandgrouse are always great to see, and **Spotted Sandgrouse** is no exception with their vivid yellow throats showing superbly in the late afternoon sunshine. Whilst we enjoyed these beauties, we

seemed to have attracted a small gathering of local fossil sellers and we enjoyed some local bartering. However, there was one more surprise in store, as our nomad friend led us to our third species of sandgrouse for the trip! This time a much smaller group of eight **Crowned Sandgrouse**.

It really was too easy and once again, we had outstanding views as Youssef carefully manoeuvred our 4X4 closer and we watched as the birds preened in front of us. We then took a leisurely drive back to our hotel and checked an area that sometimes holds breeding **Lanner Falcons** and although we had no luck with the falcons, a **Red Fox** spotted by Dave was a nice addition to the mammal list before returning to our hotel for dinner.

Friday 28th March

Today we explored a different area of the desert landscape hoping for migrants and other desert species. We headed to the remote village of Begaa where the various tress and cultivated areas produced some good birding. There were plenty of **Western Subalpine Warblers** along with **Common Redstarts**, **Common Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warbler** and a very showy **Common Nightingale**. We then proceeded to investigate a more secluded area away from the wind and this produced a typically elusive **Bluethroat** and a couple of **Tree Pipits**. However, the roosting **Eurasian Scops Owl** won bird of the morning. This tiny owl posed beautifully in a small Palm tree and we watched with fascination as it became slightly more alert though still motionless as an oblivious cat wandered below the tree!

We then headed back towards our hotel to investigate the large irrigated Palms and small crop plots. The place was buzzing with migrants and every step seemed to produce something different. Small groups of buzzing **Tree Pipits**, **Eurasian Hoopoes**, and small flocks of **Yellow Wagtails** including the race *iberiae* also known as **Spanish Wagtail**. The soft tacking call of **Western Subalpine Warblers** seemed to be coming from every Almond tree whilst **Woodchat Shrikes** and **Northern Wheatears** continued the migrant theme. A **Lanner Falcon** then circled above us briefly before we took the short walk to our hotel for some lunch. Though not before studying a number of **Crested Larks** that were fine examples of the long-billed race and a potential split to the trip list, **Long-billed Crested Lark**. Larks eh Judith – don't you just love them!?

We had lunch outside with views of the Erg Chebbi dunes and whilst enjoying our lunch in the shade of the hotel, a cracking **Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater** did the decent thing and gave us a low fly-by! After lunch, we all headed to the hotel roof terrace in the hope of relocating the **Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater** but it seemed to have given us the slip, so everyone took a siesta whilst Chris continued to look.

After the post lunch siesta, Chris brought good news about the Bee-Eater and we took a short walk to the edge of the town where we had fantastic views of not one, but two **Blue-cheeked Bee-Eaters**. One bird caught a dragonfly (a Vagrant Emperor) and then proceeded to show it off to its presumed mate for the next five minutes, enticing the bird nearer. All this just a few metres from us as the birds flew out and back to the same telegraph wires. Simply stunning! With our cheeks now well and truly "blue" we took a short drive across the

desert and spent our last afternoon in the same vicinity as where we had seen the **Egyptian Nightjars**. Here, we wandered amongst the dunes and had some much more prolonged views of two **African Desert Warblers** as the birds jumped and scuttled across the sand! The now expected **Desert Wheatears** and a few **Bar-tailed Larks** also kept us entertained before we headed back for our last desert sunset.

Saturday 29th March

Sadly, it was time to leave the tranquillity of the desert as we had another long journey ahead of us and we retraced our steps west, to Ouarzazate. However, everyone was keen to make the most of their last morning in the desert and so we took the short walk to the irrigated Palms and cultivated area before breakfast. It became obvious just by walking a couple of hundred metres from the hotel that there were plenty of new migrants around. Most notable were a group of at least 15 **Northern Wheatears** and in with them was a cracking male **Seebohm's Wheatear**. It was clearly en route to its High Atlas breeding grounds and seemed to be taking advantage of a large camel tick! There were still plenty of **Tree Pipits** around as well as more **Common Redstarts** and numerous **Woodchat Shrikes**. As usual though, time was pressing and we needed to be ready for our scheduled 08.00hrs departure, so we headed back for more breakfast crepes and coffee!

After leaving Merzouga, we were en route for Rissani where we stopped to do some more birding along a dry river bed. Here our focus was to look for **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** – (*The race in Morocco is reiseri sometimes referred to as Saharan Olivaceous Warbler.*) The birds tend to like tamarisks of which there were many along this particular river bed. It did not take long to find a singing bird, but actually seeing it proved a challenge, though with a little patience we all had some good views along with a migrant **Western Bonelli's Warbler**. As we returned to our vehicle, a **Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater** zoomed overhead calling as if to wish us a good journey! We then travelled for just under two hours where we hoped to find another of the Moroccan specialities, **Scrub Warbler** – (*Scrub Warbler has a large distribution area that extends from western Asia through the Arabian Peninsula and into the Atlantic coast of North Africa. There are eight subspecies – two in southern Morocco, "theresae" in the west and "saharae" in the east.*)

On arriving at the site, we wandered around listening out for the bird's distinctive song but all seemed quiet. A couple of **Southern Grey Shrikes**, **Desert Larks** and the odd **Desert Wheatear** were the only real distractions until Dave got lucky with a brief view of a **Scrub Warbler**! We all headed towards his sighting but as is so typical of the species, it vanished from sight and then an almighty hailstorm ensued! So rather unfortunately, we had to head for cover and leave the site! We then continued our journey back towards Boumalne Dades taking in another of Youssef's beautifully prepared desert picnics en route.

Nearing Boumalne Dades, we had a second attempt for **Maghreb Wheatear** but unfortunately, very strong winds scuppered any chances and so we continued our journey west. The rest of the afternoon was spent travelling with the usual banter, occasional tea stop and of course the fantastic and ever changing

scenery. The main bird highlight on this travelling day was a flock of 60+ **Black Kites** that were on the ground sheltering from the wind around 50Km west of Boulmalne Dades. We arrived at our wonderful hotel on the edge of Ouarzazate at around dusk, greeted with Moroccan tea and everyone relaxed into the ambience that they were now, very much accustomed to!

Sunday 30th March

Today was to be our longest travel day as we headed to the Atlantic Coast of Agadir. However, we were right on the doorstep of a great birding site, so after a very full breakfast we were soon birding the Mansour Reservoir within minutes. As we approached the reservoir, it became obvious that water levels were very low and we spent quite some time scanning the water's edge for waders and wildfowl. New trip species came thick and fast with **Common Shelduck, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe, Eurasian Spoonbill** and a lone **Greater Flamingo!** There was also a good selection of waders that included **Dunlin, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper** and best of all two **Collared Pratincoles** found by Jude. These two beauties just sat on the mud and posed for us in the scope. Raptors were also present with a couple of **Western Marsh Harriers** and an **Osprey** sat on the mud. However, it was probably a flock of **Black-winged Stilts** that were most memorable as they glided past us against the hugely impressive backdrop of the High Atlas Mountains.

We continued our journey west stopping en route for **Maghreb Wheatear** at various points and despite our best efforts; yet again we had no luck. Ironically, we did have yet another male **Seebohm's Wheatear** instead! Another roadside stop at a small stream was very good for migrants where highlights included **Eurasian Wryneck, Whinchat, Common Redstart** and both **Yellow and White Wagtails**.

We continued our day of travel taking in the ever-changing scenery and odd tea stop and we soon found ourselves in a very different habitat to the last few days. We stopped amongst the famous Argan Trees, endemic to this part of the world and harvested for the nuts they produce, which is pulped into an oil, known for its medicinal properties. Here, we headed out for our now familiar routine of birding before lunch. A stroll along this lush area revealed some good views of a singing **Thekla Lark** and a couple of very obliging **Stone Curlews** that very slowly walked away once they realised we were watching them! We then enjoyed another of Youssef's great salads whilst being entertained by a group of goats attempting to access the nuts from the Argan trees. A singing male **Orphean Warbler** also showed very well indeed.

After lunch, we continued our journey westward deeper into the lush fertile Souss Valley and the coast of Agadir. The landscape was green and lush and the only new species from the vehicle was a hunting ringtail **Montagu's Harrier**. We soon arrived into the hustle and bustle of Agadir and a familiar friend, the **Moroccan Magpie**, greeted us again - a species we had not seen since leaving Marrakech. We arrived at our Agadir hotel in plenty of time and this was to be our base for the next three nights.

Monday 31st March

Today we headed south of Agadir to the Oued Massa Estuary and part of the combined Souss-Massa National Park. Here we were back in the land of the commoner urban species such as **Moroccan Magpies**, **Spotless Starlings** and **Pallid Swifts**. Our first stop was by a small bridge over the Oued Massa River where we had some good views of **Purple Heron**, **Sardinian Warbler** and best of all two **Marbled Duck** that flew down river right in front of us! Also on the river were a few **Cormorants** of the highly distinctive **White-breasted form** and the *maroccanus* subspecies, a few **Sedge Warblers** and a number of **Stripe-necked Terrapins**.

We then headed back to the main reserve entrance where a lone **Squacco Heron** was the first for the trip. After arriving at the main entrance to the reserve, we waved good-bye to Chef Youssef and agreed a time to return for our now regular picnic lunches! We walked along the start of the trail above the Massa River where an impressive flock of at least 110 **Glossy Ibis** were feeding. This was a good count and presumably related to the burgeoning population in Spain. We spent the morning slowly ambling along the main trail whilst making regular stops to scan the Massa Estuary. However, there was one particular target species in mind and after a few minutes of walking, Chris alerted everyone to the very striking song of the bird, a **Black-crowned Tchagra**. The bird continued to sing out its cheerful whistling song and with a little patience slowly revealed itself in a nearby tree. It performed very well and it was good to see the bird so well before the temperature increased and activity ceased. **Moussier's Redstarts** and **Laughing Doves** were constant distractions along the path as was the odd **Black-eared Wheatear**. On the estuary was an adult **Eurasian Spoonbill** as well as a small selection of waders that included **Spotted Redshank**. As we neared the mouth of the estuary, a **Caspian Tern** gave us a close flyby and we found some shade, which gave us a good view over to a large sand bank at the mouth of the estuary. Here, we were able to scan through a large mass of mostly **Lesser Black-backed** and **Yellow-legged Gulls**, but with some careful searching a number of beautiful **Audouin's Gulls** were clearly visible and of various ages. Also on the sand bar were **Little Stint**, **Sanderling** and **Kentish Plover** and at least 115 **Sandwich Terns**. We then slowly ambled back to our vehicle where trusty Youssef had once more produced an amazing lunch for us amongst the shade of some trees as well as the now compulsory Moroccan Tea!

After lunch, we took a little time to explore further down river and despite the rising temperatures; we still managed to find a few new species. A singing male **Girl Bunting** sat up in a riverside tree and a singing **Western Olivaceous Warbler** or **Isabelline Warbler** showed pretty well in some nearby bushes. The views allowed the finer plumage details along with heavier bill and thicker legs to be seen compared with the **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** seen earlier in the week. It seemed bird activity was lulling, so we returned to our hotel for a siesta and an evening meal and then ventured out for some night birding!

This time, it was a visit to the famous birding spot of the Souss Estuary where we spent an hour loitering with intent near King's Palace at dusk! Birding here is always a bit of a challenge as the Palace guards always get a little nervous and blow their whistles on a regular basis! However, luck was on our side, as no

sooner had we ventured from our vehicle than a **Red-necked Nightjar** flew out from its roost and gave us all a brilliant fly past view in the torch beam. We loitered for a little longer and heard the diagnostic call of other birds, but with the mosquitoes just emerging, we decided to call it a night happy with the key target species under the belt!

Tuesday 1st April

Today was our final full day in Morocco, so we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at our hotel, before packing the vehicles ready for our return journey to Marrakech. However, we had an important date with another key target species first! Today we were heading to the north of Agadir, and the beautiful coastline of Tamri, the home of the **Northern Bald Ibis**, but Chris was keen to play it cool! Therefore, a little birding along the Souss Estuary was the first port of call.

It was a pleasant temperature today as we scanned the muddy edge of the estuary. Here we added a few new waders that included both **Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits** and **Grey Plover** as well as a couple of cracking **Moroccan Wagtails**. *(This endemic race of Pied Wagtail "subpersonata" is strikingly different to that of Pied Wagtail and considered by most to be a full species.)* We then wandered along the edge of the estuary towards the mouth where four **Marbled Ducks** flew past us, allowing everyone more prolonged views. Judith was particularly pleased with this, having not seen the birds on the Massa so well. A little further towards the mouth of the estuary and we were treated to a group of eight **Slender-billed Gulls** including some pink-flushed adults sat amongst a group of **Sandwich Terns** and a single **Common Tern**. Feeling happy with our haul, we slowly ambled back amongst some scrub where a superb **African Blue Tit** performed in front of us, but the real star of the show was a **Rufous Bush-Robin** that perched up on top of a small bush and then vanished! Luckily, our usual perseverance paid off and the bird showed again a couple of times allowing everyone to get a look at this great bird. We then met Youssef and began another quest, that was, Operation **Northern Bald Ibis**. *(The Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis was once widespread across much of Southern and Central Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. However, it has undergone a huge decline over the last 400 to 500 years and there are now just two populations, a migratory population in Turkey, and another, resident population, in coastal Morocco. Good numbers remained in Turkey up until the mid 1900s, but became extinct in 1992 leaving just the Moroccan population, until 2002 when a tiny number were re-discovered in Syria. Urbanisation, disturbance and changes in farming practices are the main threats faced by the Moroccan birds. The National Park has successfully blocked building on their breeding and feeding areas. This, together with local wardens, employed by SEO/BirdLife, monitoring and raising local awareness of the bird's plight, has led to a slow increase in the Moroccan population, believed to be just over 100 breeding pairs.)*

As we drove along the winding coast road, we stopped to look at some roosting gulls on a beach where there were a number of very close **Audouin's Gulls** of varying ages. We did not spend too long here as the pressure was well and truly on as all eyes were eager to find our first **Northern Bald Ibis**. Every now and again, we would stop and scan for birds along the coast road, but with no luck and then Youssef pulled it out of the bag! A small flock just off the road.

After a few quick manoeuvres by Youssef, we were soon watching the flock walk towards us as we remained in the vehicle so as not to disturb them. There were at least 12 birds and we were treated to some fantastic views, as they fed unaware of our presence. Clearly, not the most beautiful of birds, but impressive creatures nonetheless as they possessed a subtle beauty with their flowing head plumes and purple/green sheen to their feathers. We spent some time watching their feeding habits and just took in the great scene with the Atlantic Coast as an impressive backdrop.

With the Ibis in the bag, we headed for a celebratory coffee in the nearby town of Tamri, before for the last time Youssef prepared us probably his best tagine of all. The Egg Berber Tagine and in the great setting of Tamri beach! Here we did a little more birding by the Tamri River where **Little Ringed Plover**, **Northern Gannet** and **Ruddy Shelduck** were the highlights before it was time to hit the road. A final stop en route at Cap Rhir Lighthouse produced a couple of **Barbary Partridge** and a pair of **Peregrine Falcons**. It was then a leisurely drive of just over 3 hours back to where our adventure began; the city of Marrakech. We arrived back at the hotel where our trip started and we enjoyed another meal and a few drinks with plenty of memories of our Moroccan Birding Adventure!

Wednesday 2nd April

After a leisurely breakfast Youssef took us on the short drive to Marrakech airport where we checked in for our return flight to Gatwick.

Many thanks to David Carr and Jude Rutherford for allowing the use of some of their photos in this report and for their generous donation of a pair of binoculars to our regular nomad guide in the desert.

Conservation Donation – Following the successful conclusion of this tour, a £120 donation from Wise Birding Holidays was made to the Northern Bald Ibis Conservation Program:

The Northern Bald Ibis is critically endangered with an adult population believed to be little over 100 breeding pairs therefore making it one of the rarest birds in the world, with 95% of the population found in Morocco. Our tours here donate money to an ongoing research project between SEO (Sociedad Española de Ornitología) and the local conservation authorities, particularly the Souss-Massa National Park, with strong support from the RSPB. The project has been running for around 15 years supporting a dedicated team of local wardens who are deeply involved in the protection and scientific monitoring of the species. Knowledge on seasonal movements outside the National Park and neighbouring areas is very limited with known sightings recorded regularly at places as far as 700 km north in Tetuan or 1200 km down South in Mauritania.

The main known threats for the species are the increase in the construction of hotels and vacation homes close to the breeding and feeding areas as well as increased levels of disturbance. Therefore, improving knowledge on the species' range and movements is essential for its survival. Our donation will go directly to help with GPS satellite tagging and wardening of sites to reduce disturbance.

Some bird highlights from the High Atlas Mountains.....



*Female Levaillant's
Green Woodpecker,
Oukaïmeden.*



*Atlas Horned Lark,
Oukaïmeden.*



*Crimson-winged
Finch, Oukaïmeden.
One of 20+ birds.*

Some more highlights from the High Atlas Mountains.....



Male Moussier's
Redstart,
Oukaimeden.



Barbary Ground
Squirrel, Oukaimeden.



Male
Seebohm's Wheatear,
Oukaimeden.

Some bird highlights from the Hammada and Desert.....



Male Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Tagdilt Track. One of five birds in total.



Male and female Spotted Sandgrouse, near Rissani. Part of a flock of 55+ birds!



Male Crowned Sandgrouse, near Rissani. One of eight birds.

Some bird highlights from the Hammada and Desert continued.....



This male Desert Sparrow seen, was one of the highlights of the tour.



African Desert Warbler showed very well whilst in the desert.



Cream Coloured Courser performed well on the Tagdilt Track.

Some bird highlights from the Hammada and Desert continued....



This Thick-billed Lark was one of a group of six birds that showed extremely well.



This Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater with Vagrant Emperor was a real performer near Merzouga.



One of two Egyptian Nightjars seen on the tour. A very sought after species and it did not disappoint!

Some bird highlights from the Souss-Massa NP....



African Blue Tit
was a common but
very impressive
bird.



This Black-crowned
Tchagra taken by
tour participant
Dave Carr showed
well along the
Massa Estuary.



The critically
endangered
Northern Bald Ibis
was a great end
to our tour.

Some of the people and landscapes.....



Some of the people and landscapes.....



Some of the food, people and celebrations.....



WISE BIRDING HOLIDAYS

BIRD LIST: Southern Morocco: Birders' Specialities Tour

22nd March -2nd April 2014 **176 Species Recorded**

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
1	Common Shelduck	<i>Taorna tadorna</i>		A single bird on the Mansour Reservoir (MR)
2	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	-	Recorded on four days
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	-	Recorded on two days
4	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	-	A total of 6 birds: 2 on the Massa River and 4 on the Souss Estuary (SE)
5	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	-	Recorded only at Mansour Reservoir
6	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	-	Two birds seen near Cap Rhir Lighthouse
7	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	-	Recorded on one day
8	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	-	Recorded at Mansour Reservoir only
9	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	-	Recorded on the coast near Agadir
10	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Two forms are found in Morocco: <i>sinensis</i> and <i>maroccanus</i>	Recorded on three days
	"White-breasted" Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Distinctive <i>maroccanus</i> subsp. is common on the coast	Recorded on two days - best views at Massa River
11	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	-	Recorded on six days
12	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	-	Recorded on three days
13	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	-	A single bird at the Massa Estuary (ME)
14	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	-	Recorded on four days
15	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	-	Recorded on four days
16	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	-	A great count of 110+ birds at the Massa Estuary
17	Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	-	A total of 12 birds recorded on the coast at Tamri
18	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	-	Recorded on two days: max. count of 6 birds at MR
19	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	-	Only a single bird recorded when at the MR
20	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	-	Recorded on two days: singles at Merzouga & MR
21	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>	-	Min. 10 birds migrating near Toufliht on the 24th
22	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	-	A single adult at Todra Gorge on the 26th
23	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	-	A single bird at Tagdilt and a flock of 60+ on 29th

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
24	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	-	Recorded on three days and mostly single birds
25	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	-	A single bird whilst travelling on 30 th
26	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>cirtensis</i> , sometimes referred to as "Atlas" LLB	Recorded on five days
27	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	The resident subspecies is <i>punicus</i>	Recorded on two days
28	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	-	Recorded on nine days
29	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>brookei</i> , sometimes referred to as <i>Mediterranean Peregrine</i>	Our only sighting was a pair nr Cap Rhir Lighthouse
30	Barbary Falcon	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	-	Some good views of 4 birds over three days
31	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is the very pale <i>erlangeri</i> form	A single bird soared above us whilst watching migrants near our hotel on the 28th
32	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	-	Recorded on one day
33	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	-	Recorded on two days
34	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	-	Only recorded on the Souss Estuary on 2 days
35	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	-	Two birds on the Souss Estuary on the 30th
36	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	-	Recorded on five days including the desert
37	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>saharae</i>	Two birds seen well on the 30 th whilst travelling to Agadir and heard on 3 days
38	Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	-	Ten birds seen very well on the Tagdilt Track
39	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	-	Two birds at MR was a good find by Jude
40	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	-	Recorded on two days
41	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	-	Recorded on two days
42	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	-	Recorded on four days
43	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	-	Two birds on the Souss Estuary on the 1 st April
44	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	-	At least 3 birds on the sand bank at the Massa Est.
45	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	The most numerous subspecies found in Morocco is <i>schinzii</i>	Recorded on two days
46	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	-	Three birds seen on the sand bank at the ME

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
47	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	-	Recorded on just one day at MR
48	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	-	A single bird on the 31 st at the ME
49	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	-	Recorded on one day
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	-	Recorded on three days
51	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	-	A single bird on the ME
52	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	-	Recorded on two days
53	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		A single bird on the Souss Estuary
54	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		A single bird on the Souss Estuary
55	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	-	Recorded at MR
56	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>		Eight birds seen well on the Souss Estuary
57	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	-	Numerous on the coast
58	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	-	Small numbers on two days. A max. count of 30+ birds en route to Tamri including colour-ringed birds
59	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Both <i>grasellsii</i> and <i>intermedius</i> forms occur in Morocco	Numerous birds on the coast
60	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	-	Recorded on two days on the coast: max. count 115 birds on the Massa Estuary
61	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	-	Recorded on 3 days with 15+ on the Souss Estuary
62	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		A single bird on the Souss Estuary
63	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	-	A single bird on the Massa Estuary
64	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	-	Great views of 5 birds on the Tagdilt Track
65	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>	-	Great views of a flock of 55+ birds near Rissani
66	Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>	-	Great views of 8 birds near Rissani
67	Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	-	Recorded on ten days
68	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>excels</i>	Recorded on four days
69	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		Recorded on two days
70	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	-	Recorded on nine days
71	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>phoenicophila</i>	Recorded on six days with the best views at the ME
72	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	-	A single bird singing on the 23 rd

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
73	Pharaoh Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	-	A single adult on the 25 th and 2 adults on the 26 th both near Boumalne Dades
74	Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	-	A great bird was watched near Begaa in the desert
75	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>	-	Good views in torchlight of a bird by the Souss Estuary
76	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>saharae</i>	Fantastic sightings of 2 birds roosting during the day on the 27 th
77	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	-	Recorded on seven days with 200+ birds on the 25 th
78	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>brehmorum</i>	Recorded on six days mostly around Marrakech/Agadir including birds on the nest
79	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	-	Lee had a single bird over the Massa Estuary
80	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	-	Recorded on three days around towns/cities
81	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	-	Recorded on three days
82	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		Recorded on two days
83	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	-	Recorded on eight days: max. count of 15+ birds on the 26 th
84	Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	The subspecies breeding in Morocco is <i>chrysocercus</i>	Recorded on two days in the desert areas totalling 4 birds
85	Levaillant's Woodpecker	<i>Picus vaillantii</i>	-	At least 2 birds in the High Atlas and a male seen at the nest near Toufliht
86	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	The race in Morocco is <i>mauritanus</i>	Heard only on the 24 th
87	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	-	Some great sightings of singles on five days
88	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Five races occur in Morocco, including 2 "Long-billed" races.	Various races recorded on six days, including the Long-billed form on two days
	"Common" Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	The <i>riggenbachii</i> race, found in the Souss Valley is the race most likely to be encountered on this tour.	
	"Long-billed" Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	<i>macrorhyncha</i> (TAFILALT REGION)	<i>Recorded on two days</i>
			<i>randonii</i> (HIGH & MIDDLE ATLAS)	

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
89	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	Three races occur: <i>erlangeri</i> in the north, <i>aguirrei</i> in the south and <i>ruficolor</i> in the west.	Recorded on at least four days
90	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	-	Recorded on six days: max. count of 15+ birds
91	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>payni</i>	Recorded on four days
92	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>arenicolor</i>	Recorded on three days: max. count of 15+
93	Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>	-	A total of 17+ birds recorded on three days: 10+ flying over the Tagdilt Track region, 6 birds showed superbly in the desert and a single from the vehicle on the 30 th whilst travelling west from Ouarzazate
94	Horned Lark (Shore Lark)	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	The <i>atlas</i> race is endemic to the Atlas Mountains, sometimes referred to as " <i>Atlas</i> " Horned Lark	Recorded only at Oukaïmeden with a minimum count of 15+ birds
95	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	-	Recorded on three days mostly around the Tagdilt Track
96	Greater Hoopoe-Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	-	A total of 9 birds recorded on the 25 th
97	Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	-	Recorded on four days
98	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>theresae</i>	Recorded on at least two days
99	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	-	Recorded on ten days
100	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	The subspecies breeding in Morocco is <i>meridonalis</i>	Recorded on three days
101	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	-	Recorded on two days
102	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	-	Recorded on four days with a max. count of 8+ on the 28 th
103	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	-	Recorded on four days
	Moroccan Wagtail	<i>Motacilla subpersonata</i>	-	This highly distinctive race was seen well on the SE
104	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Numerous races occur in Morocco	Recorded on seven days, and assigned to races: <i>M f iberiae</i> , <i>M f flave</i> and <i>M f flavissima</i>

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
105	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	-	Recorded on one day
106	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	-	Recorded on two days when in the High Atlas
107	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	-	Recorded on five days, but only seen on three days
108	Rufous Bush Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>		A single bird showed well by the Souss Estuary
109	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	-	A single migrant near Begaa on the 28 th
110	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	-	Recorded on four days
111	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	-	Recorded on two days
112	Moussier's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	-	Recorded on five days with some fantastic sightings
113	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	-	Recorded on five days with a notable movement on the 29 th
	Seebohm's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe seebohmi</i>	This high altitude and distinctive dark-throated Wheatear was previously lumped with N. Wheatear	Recorded on three days. A singing male at Oukaimeden as well as migrants (all males) with 2 on the 29 th and one on the 30 th
114	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	-	A single bird was seen on the 29 th near Goulmima
115	Western Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	-	Recorded on six days
116	White-crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	-	A common bird of the desert regions recorded on six days
117	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	The subsp. in Morocco is <i>syenitica</i> and is duller than in Europe	Recorded on four days
118	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>homochroa</i>	This great looking wheatear was recorded on five days
119	Red-rumped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	-	This strikingly large wheatear was a common sight on the Tagdilt Track and recorded on two days
120	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		A single migrant on the 30 th en route to Agadir
121	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	-	Only recorded on the coast on the 31 st
122	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	-	Recorded on our first full day only
123	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>deisleri</i>	A total of 4 birds recorded at Oukaimeden

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
124	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>mauritanicus</i> sometimes referred to as " <i>Moroccan</i> " Blackbird. Females are very dark in colour.	Recorded on ten days
125	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	-	Recorded on one day with great views near Todra Gorge
126	Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	The race in SE Morocco is <i>saharae</i> sometimes referred to as " <i>Maghreb</i> " Scrub Warbler	A rather frustrating view for Dave only near Goulmima
127	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	-	Recorded on five days
128	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	-	Recorded on two days
129	Western Orphean warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	-	A singing male showed very well en route to Agadir
130	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	-	Recorded on four days but only seen on two days
131	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	-	Recorded in the stony desert areas on four days
132	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	-	The commonest migrant warbler recorded on six days
133	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>	-	Recorded on two days: max. count of 2 birds
134	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>maroccana</i>	A pair in the Todra Gorge showed exceptionally well
135	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	-	Recorded on two days and seen on one day
136	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>cisticola</i>	Recorded on both the Massa and Souss Estuaries
137	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	-	Recorded on four days, but only seen on one day
138	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	-	Recorded on one day

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
139	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus pallidus</i>	The race in SE Morocco is <i>reiseri</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>Saharan</i> " <i>Olivaceous Warbler</i>	This species was heard singing and seen well along the river Ziz with a total of 3 birds seen
140	Isabelline Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus opacus</i>	The alternative name for this species is, <i>Western Olivaceous Warbler</i>	Two birds were seen well along the Massa River
141	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	-	Recorded on five days
142	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	-	Recorded on just one day along the river Ziz
143	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	-	Recorded on two days
144	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>balearica</i>	Heard only near Toufliht in the Pine forests
145	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		Recorded on one just one day
146	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>excelsus</i>	Recorded on four days
147	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	The <i>atlas</i> subspecies is endemic to Morocco and is sometimes referred to as " <i>Atlas</i> " <i>Coal Tit</i>	Recorded on the first two full days
148	African Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>ultramarines</i>	Recorded on three days
149	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>mauritania</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>Maghreb</i> " <i>Short-toed Treecreeper</i>	Heard only on the 24 th in the Toufliht Pine Forests
150	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	There are 2 forms in Morocco sometimes referred to as " <i>Desert Grey Shrike</i> "	Recorded on five days
	"Desert" Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	<i>elegans</i> (INLAND)	
			<i>algeriensis</i> (COASTAL/SOUSS VALLEY)	

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
151	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	-	A seemingly common migrant recorded on seven days
152	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>cucullata</i>	At least 2 birds seen well and heard singing on the Massa Estuary
153	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>		Recorded on eight days
154	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Turdoides fulva</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>maroccanus</i>	Recorded only on the 26 th where 6 birds showed briefly near Wadi Derkaoua
155	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>mauretanica</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>Moroccan</i> " <i>Magpie</i> and has distinctive blue bare skin behind eye.	Recorded on five days in Marrakech and Agadir. Three birds at Oukaimeden was a bit of a surprise!
156	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		Recorded on the 23 rd only
157	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>barbarus</i>	Recorded in the High Atlas and one other day
158	Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	-	Recorded in the High Atlas on one day
159	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>tingitanus</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>North African</i> " <i>Raven</i>	Recorded on four days
160	Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	-	Recorded on three days, exclusively in the desert; max. count 10 birds
161	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	-	Recorded on five days
162	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	-	Recorded on ten days
163	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>barbara</i>	Recorded at Oukaimeden only
164	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>saharae</i>	A pair seen very well on the 27 th and Chris had a single male on the 28 th
165	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	The distinct "green-backed" subspecies in Morocco is <i>africana</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>North African</i> " <i>Chaffinch</i>	The <i>africana</i> race was recorded on four days

	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SUBSPECIES and RACE NOTES	NOTES
166	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	The resident race in Morocco is <i>mediterranea</i>	Recorded on two days
167	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	The resident subspecies in Morocco is <i>parva</i>	Recorded on four days
168	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris voousi</i>	Two resident subspecies occur in Morocco: <i>vanmarli</i> in the north-west and <i>voousi</i> in the Atlas Mountains	Recorded on one day
169	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	-	Recorded on five days
170	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	The resident subspecies is <i>buvryi</i>	Recorded on the first two full days
171	Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>poliogyna</i> , sometimes referred to as " <i>Moroccan</i> " <i>Crossbill</i>	Recorded in the High Atlas and near Toufliht
172	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	The subspecies in Morocco is <i>zedlidzi</i>	Recorded on four days: max. count 20+ on the 26 th
173	Crimson-winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys sanguinea</i>	The local race <i>aliena</i> is endemic to Morocco and Algeria	A group of at least 20 birds seen very well at Oukaïmeden
174	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	-	A singing male seen well along the Massa River
175	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	-	A minimum of 6 birds at Oukaïmeden
176	House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>	-	Recorded on nine days

WISE BIRDING HOLIDAYS

SPECIES OTHER THAN BIRDS: Southern Morocco: Birders' Specialities Tour

22nd March -2nd April 2014

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Barbary Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i>
Fat Sand Rat	<i>Psammomys obesus</i>
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>
Dumeril's Fringe-toed/Long Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus dumerilii/longipes</i>
Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauretanica</i>
Atlas Day Gecko	<i>Quedenfeldtia trachyblepharus</i>
Stripe-necked Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>
Bibron's Agama Lizard	<i>Agama impalearis</i>
Desert Locust	<i>Schistocerca gregaria</i>
Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Moroccan Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis belia</i>
Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>

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