

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



MOROCCO: Birders' Specialities Tour

Friday 18th - Tuesday 29th March 2016

Tour Participants: Kevin Bryan, Roger Wasley, Keith Myatt, Pat Bartley & John Bartley

Leader: Chris Townend

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Pharaoh Eagle Owl: We were spoiled this year with sightings of two adults and 4 juveniles near Boumalne Dades, plus a further adult bird near Rissani.

Egyptian Nightjar: Amazingly close views of a day roosting adult.

Northern Bald Ibis: A minimum of 58 birds were recorded in the Tamri area, including some very close views of a feeding flock.

Desert Sparrow: A pair of birds gave excellent views with a superb desert backdrop.

Moussier's Redstart: Seen at a number of sites and although relatively common in the right habitat, it is always a species that needs to be admired!



Moussier's Redstart is a common but nonetheless stunning species

Friday 18th March

We arrived into Marrakech airport and were met by our two drivers. Here, our Moroccan drivers met us, complete with two 4X4 Toyota Landcruisers that would be our 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.

Saturday 19th March

Today our destination was the High Atlas Mountains and the well known ski resort of Oukaimeden at an altitude of around 2,600M. Whilst waiting to depart, flocks of Pallid Swifts entertained us above the street outside our hotel and as we headed out of Marrakech, we enjoyed our first views of Magpie of the distinctive race *mauretanica*, also known as Moroccan Magpie. Before too long we weaved our way up the Ourika Valley where a stop amongst the cherry trees produced our first stunning African Blue Tit, Rock Bunting and the very attractive North African race of Chaffinch, complete with green back, powder blue head and very different call. Another roadside stop gave good views of the *mauritanus* race of Great Spotted Woodpecker, but not the woodpecker we were hoping for! A juvenile "Moroccan" Crossbill was a good spot by Pat before we headed up to the ski resort area.

At the ski resort we were greeted by both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Choughs before taking the main path through the skiing area. Our first bird was an "Atlas" Horned Lark soon to be followed by a beautiful singing male Seeböhm's Wheatear. Most often considered conspecific with Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, the Moroccan and Algerian race, "*seeböhmii*" or Seeböhm's Wheatear, is actually a very different looking bird. A call from Roger soon directed us to a cracking "African" Crimson-winged Finch and we had found three of our four target species in a matter of metres from each other! A small group of Rock Sparrows and a Mistle Thrush were also seen nearby before we explored the path a little further. More Horned Larks and Crimson-winged Finches made for pleasant distractions with a superb backdrop of mountains, snow and glorious sunshine! Another male Seeböhm's Wheatear showed well before we arrived at an area where good numbers of Atlas Day Geckos allowed some close views. On the walk back Keith did very well to find a Stripeless Tree Frog and a number of "Iberian" Wall Lizards were also present.

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 shortly before the cloud closed in. New species in the area included superb views of Moussier's Redstarts, Black Wheatear, the "Atlas" race of Coal Tit and a male Maghreb Green Woodpecker that gave prolonged views as it sat on top of a telegraph pole! We also had good views of a number of Barbary Ground Squirrels and more Atlas Day Geckos.

We then slowly made our way back to Marrakech, but a stop en route produced four Water Pipits and a White-throated Dipper. A final obligatory stop for tea was much appreciated as we enjoyed the surrounding scenery before arriving back at our hotel for early evening.

Sunday 20th March

Today was mostly a day of travel, as we headed 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 took a short stop at one of the park areas on the edge of Marrakech where we had excellent views of Moroccan Magpie as well as a Woodchat Shrike and a Spanish Sparrow before continuing our journey eastward.

We stopped at some low hills near Toufliht where we enjoyed good scope views of Barbary Partridge, no less than 6 light phase Booted Eagles and best of all, a Lanner Falcon perched up on the edge of an escarpment. Kevin did well to spot a group of Wild Boar in one of the forest rides which allowed some great scope views.

A stop at the Toufliht Forest was very worthwhile with a superb male Maghreb Green Woodpecker as well as "Moroccan" Crossbill, Common Firecrest and Coal Tit. Another tea stop just before the start of the Tizi 'n' Tichka Pass was pleasant in the morning sunshine with Blue Rock Thrush, Long-legged Buzzard, Peregrine and Crag Martin and all whilst sipping tea from the roof terrace! As we pushed on towards Ouarzazate the first Hoopoe and European Bee-eaters were seen en route before a very tasty lunch in a restaurant in Ouarzazate.

As we continued east, the first White-crowned Wheatears and Laughing Doves were seen from the vehicles. The scenery was ever changing and by the late afternoon we were in the stoney Hamada habitat where we stopped to look for our first desert species of the trip. Highlights here included a number of Crested Larks, Desert Wheatears, three Trumpeter Finches, both Desert Lark and Bar-tailed Lark and a beautiful Southern Grey Shrike. We then passed along the picturesque Valley of the Rose and finally arrived at our wonderful hotel in Boumalne Dades just before sunset where we were greeted by Berber Music and dancers plus a friendly House Bunting!

Monday 21st March

Today we were up early and out to our Pharaoh Eagle Owl stake out, but unfortunately we were unsuccessful! We then proceeded onto the Tagdilt Plains and were soon distracted by 60+ Pin-tailed Sandgrouse shuffling around in front of our vehicles. This species of Sandgrouse is often quite scarce in this area, so a count of this size was quite unexpected. Our attention then diverted to mammals as we enjoyed some great views of the appropriately named Fat Sand Rat! We continued to slowly drive the stoney plains and enjoyed views of Buff-rumped (Red-rumped) Wheatear, Desert Wheatear and Temminck's Lark as well as numerous Short-toed Larks. Further slow driving in the Hamada flushed a small group of birds from in front of our vehicles and it was soon obvious they were Thick-billed Larks! It was great to get these often tricky birds so early in the day. We carefully left the vehicles and were soon treated to excellent views of six birds with some well marked males. Once everyone was happy with their fill of the Thick-billed Larks, we continued our journey across the Tagdilt Plains and then our driver Hassan found another key target species, this time a Cream-coloured Courser. A total of five birds allowed excellent views as we carefully approached them, using our vehicles as hides. A Greater Hoopoe Lark sat up and posed for us too, before we took a walk across another part of the plains. The weather seemed to be changing and the wind increased, so Kevin did well to find a Lanner Falcon taking advantage of the wind to hunt. We then sought shelter from the wind and celebrated with tea made by our drivers - Nothing better than tea in the field!

Before lunch, we headed towards the village of Ikniouin and checked an area that can be good for migrants. Again, the wind did not help, but we still managed to find Common Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Hoopoe and Thekla Lark. Our picnic lunch was delicious, despite the hail showers, and a group of around 45+ migrating Black Kites were a very pleasant distraction. After lunch we returned to the Pharaoh Eagle Owl site, but the weather was very different to the morning. There was a very strong wind and it was really quite cold! However, we soldiered on and starting checking a wider area and it was Kevin who came up trumps as he located a new nest site complete with an adult bird and amazingly four juveniles! We all enjoyed some scope views and then had a coffee break to warm up and avoid the weather which had deteriorated. After coffee, the weather had improved and the sun was out, so we returned to get

better views of the Pharaoh Eagle Owl family. The adult was still visible at the nest entrance in the rocks and at least one juvenile. Chris then wanted to check one more spot for another key species. This time the scanning paid off as we were all rewarded with good scope views of a pair of Maghreb Wheatear. A fitting end to a great day's birding around the Tagdilt Plains.

Tuesday 22nd March

Once again, we were up and out early today as we visited the Taddilt rubbish dump! This area is quite an eye sore and quite a depressing site with so much plastic visible in the landscape, but can be very good for birds. It was very cold as we watched the sunrise and Keith did well to find a Little Owl sat on top of one of the many rock piles. Both male and female Buff-rumped (Red-rumped) Wheatears showed very well and we all enjoyed some great views of a Sundevall's Jird as it dashed between burrows.

After breakfast we headed to the very impressive Todra Gorge. This is a very busy tourist attraction, but our early start ensured we visited during the quiet time and as we travelled through the gorge passing some amazing scenery we soon arrived at an area good for our next target species. No sooner were we out of the vehicles than a Tristram's Warbler was calling nearby and we spent the next twenty minutes enjoying very close views. A male bird flicked from tiny bush to tiny bush and then bathed in a small puddle formed in one of the rock depressions. A group of around 30+ European Bee-Eaters added a splash of colour to the morning as Eurasian Crag Martins glided above us and a Black Wheatear also showed well. A group of four Barbary Partridge gave excellent scope views, much closer than the two birds seen earlier in the week and a second Tristram's Warbler was a bonus. A well deserved tea stop at the entrance to the main gorge produced Blue Rock Thrush, Serin, Cetti's Warbler and a very tame House Bunting.

Later in the morning we stopped near Touroug where we had our first views of two Fulvous Babblers before heading onto our lunch stop in the aptly named relaxation tent! A short walk around the area whilst lunch was prepared produced our first Spectacled Warbler of the trip. After lunch a quick look at the Oued Ziz near the town of Erfoud produced our first Moroccan Wagtail thanks to Roger along with an obliging Subalpine Warbler, White-crowned Wheatear and a flock of 40+ Black Kite. Shortly after leaving Erfoud we then bumped into a group of 12+ Brown-necked Ravens being hassled by Black Kites.

We were now very much in a desert environment and the spectacular Erg Chebbi dunes were clearly visible outside our ghotel which was to be our base for the next three nights. Once checked in, we then took a short walk to explore a nearby oasis. Here we found the first of many common migrants that included Willow Warbler, Common Redstart, Tree Pipit, Sand Martin, House Martin, Barn Swallow and Red-rumped Swallow and a small group of Yellow Wagtails. Here, we also saw our best views yet of the diminutive Laughing Dove and an African Green Toad in the irrigation channel before we returned to our hotel to see the impressive sunset.

Wednesday 23rd March

Everyone was up early and eager to experience our first full day of desert birding! It was a lovely morning and quite a new experience as we explored the desert in our vehicles, stopping every now and again to check the various Camel enclosures for Desert Sparrows. A Brown-necked Raven sat on the back of a Camel was an amusing sight and despite checking the numerous House Sparrow flocks, our target species was still eluding us. We travelled a little further heading away from the main tracks and into the desert landscape across the dunes to a small camp. Here we took a short walk where a Greater Hoopoe Lark gave excellent views along with a brief Wryneck.

However, it was the pair of Desert Sparrows that really stole the show! We spent the next 45 minutes sitting on a sand dune and watching up to three Desert Sparrows as they sat and posed on a small building, perfectly situated with a desert dune backdrop. At one point, Desert, House and Spanish Sparrow were visible together! We soon had to drag ourselves away, as we had a very important appointment with a local Berber Nomad! After a drive of around 20-30 minutes we arrived in what seemed like the middle of nowhere and were met by our local guide. We were welcomed with a Greater Hoopoe Lark nest that was pointed out and then took a short walk to a small stoney gully where after some pointing by our guide, everyone realised the one of the stones was in fact an Egyptian Nightjar! We spent time watching this amazing bird sat motionless, just metres from us and the scope views were simply amazing! Our next highlight was again, just a short stroll away through the nearby sand dunes where before too long we were rewarded with great views of African Desert Warbler. A total of three birds were seen, two adults feeding a well fledged juvenile.

After all the excitement of the morning, we headed to the town of Rissani to celebrate with a well-earned coffee and tea stop before meeting our next local guide. Here the focus was on Sandgrouse and in particular, the hoped for Spotted Sandgrouse, but it seemed we had arrived just a little too late with a small number of birds having flown off just after we arrived! We decided to have lunch and spend some time in the area, but despite our best efforts the Sandgrouse did not return. Spectacled Warblers and a pair and Trumpeter Finches were pleasant distractions nonetheless.

After our lunch, we explored some other Sandgrouse areas to no avail though the Desert race of Little Owl was very much appreciated by all, as was our second viewing of an adult Pharaoh Eagle Owl in much calmer conditions to our first experience! The light was great and we all enjoyed excellent scope views. A Lanner Falcon gave a brief fly-by and as we headed back towards Rissani we made a stop for a mixed Bee-Eater flock consisting of both European and the stunning Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater. We then made one final check of the sandgrouse areas before returning to our hotel to reflect on a great desert birding day!

Thursday 24th March

We awoke to somewhat windy conditions and a slight sand storm, so after breakfast we took another walk to the nearby oasis which turned out to be a good move. As we neared the palms and sought some shelter from the wind, we soon found many migrants doing the same! on the edge of the palms, Black-eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike, Common Nightingale and our first "long-billed" Crested Lark all showed pretty well. A flock of 25+ European Bee-Eaters tried to seek shelter as they huddled in a nearby tree and then a Seeborn's Wheatear appeared on fence. The latter species migrating to its breeding grounds in the mountains. Within the shelter of the Palms a very obliging Eastern Olivaceous Warbler fed at our feet, regularly dipping its tail, along with Willow Warblers, Tree Pipits, Sardinian Warblers, Subalpine Warblers, Serins, Yellow Wagtails of varying races and an Orphean Warbler. Not a bad start!

At around 8am we returned to meet our drivers and to try another area for Sandgrouse. It was quite hard work in the windy conditions as particles of sand were forever blowing past. More Cream-coloured Coursers and a lone Booted Eagle were the highlights, so we decided to head towards the village of Tisaardmine for coffee. We then headed off behind the Erg Chebbi dunes to explore the amazing lunar-like landscape. We spent the late morning birding an agricultural area within the desert which was good for migrants. Lots of Common Redstarts, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Common Nightingale and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler along with a very showy Southern Grey Shrike. Thanks to a local Berber, we then took advantage of a local agricultural building for our picnic lunch and enjoyed further views of "Long-billed"

Crested Lark and Short-toed Lark and a lone Trumpeter Finch before continuing our journey across the amazing landscape. Travelling across the ever changing desert environment was a highlight on its own and as expected, birds were few and far between other than the odd Greater Hoopoe Lark, Bar-tailed Lark and Desert Wheatear. We finally reached the small village of Begaa where we spent the afternoon looking for migrants in the company of what seemed like the entire village community of children! Despite the sometimes noisy company(!), we still managed to find good numbers of common migrants as well as Fulvous Babblers and probably best of all, a posing Rufous Scrub-Robin.

The day was then rounded off nicely with some home made tea by our drivers whilst watching a very obliging Western Bonelli's Warbler feeding just metres from us and a family party of Southern Grey Shrikes.

Friday 25th March

After breakfast we took a walk to the nearby oasis in somewhat different conditions from the previous day with bright sunny and calm weather. Here we enjoyed some great views of the expected common migrants such as Common Redstart, Common Nightingale, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, European Bee-Eater and a very showy Orphean Warbler as it worked its way along a brash pile in the company of a Common Redstart. Laughing Doves and "Long-billed" Crested Larks were once again present, but the best bird of the morning was frustratingly only heard! The distinctive call of Spotted Sandgrouse flying over eluded everyone and must have been just out of view! A minimum of three migrating Seeborn's Wheatears gave some very close views as we returned to the hotel and then we loaded our vehicles and headed towards Erfoud.

Near Erfoud a scan for Bonelli's Eagle produced only Short-toed Eagle, Brown-necked Raven and a group of five White Storks. We continued our journey back west, stopping again near Touroug before taking a diversion north to try for Scrub Warbler. On arrival at the site, it did not take too long to find the main target species. Typically it remained low to the ground refusing to show out in the open for long, scuttling on the ground more like a mouse than a bird! Kevin also had what was more than likely a second bird. Other highlights here included more Spectacled Warblers, Black-eared Wheatear, a brief Wryneck and four Thick-billed Larks flew over whilst enjoying lunch.

The rest of the afternoon was spent travelling as we still had a long journey ahead of us. However, we still managed a brief stop at the Ikninou road junction near the Tagdilt track where the late afternoon light allowed our last views of Temminck's Lark and Buff-rumped (Red-rumped) Wheatears. We finally arrived at our very comfortable hotel on the edge of Ouarzazate where we were greeted with tea and enjoyed a very tasty evening meal and a great night's sleep!

Saturday 26th March

Today was to be the longest travel day of the tour with our final destination being the coast at Agadir and a journey of over 350 Km. Therefore, we spent the morning out of the vehicles as we explored part of the huge Mansour Reservoir, just a few minutes drive from our hotel. Here, we spent a good 2.5 hours walking the edge of the reservoir with an impressive backdrop of snow-capped mountains in the distance. During the morning, we managed to rack up a number of new birds for the trip. Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, stacks of yellow wagtails including the distinctive Iberian race, numerous Great Crested Grebes, Little Grebe, a single Great Egret was a good bird for the site as were two Marbled Ducks that showed briefly. Walking along the edge of reservoir a little further we found Eurasian Spoonbill and Greater Flamingoes, Moroccan Wagtails and Marsh Harrier.

A final check of one corner of the reservoir was worthwhile as we enjoyed good views of at least six hawking Collared Pratincoles, Osprey, a small group of Avocet and at least eight Glossy Ibis. The rest of the morning was spent travelling west and the habitat slowly began to change and by lunch time we were surrounded by rolling hills and Argan trees where we enjoyed another great picnic lunch. Here, a very showy singing Orphean Warbler entertained us along with singing Thekla Lark. We then continued our journey towards the coast passing through the fertile Souss valley.

By early evening we finally arrived in a very busy and bustling Agadir in contrast to the solitude of the desert. We checked into our hotel and relaxed with a cool beer ready for the final part of of Morocco birding adventure!

Sunday 27th March

After breakfast we headed south to the well known birding site of the Oued Massa. As we passed through the suburbs of Agadir, we made a brief stop for some provisions which allowed us some great views of both Little Swift and Pallid Swift, both which seemed to be nesting nearby. Within an hour, we were birding the Massa river where a stop at a small bridge produced a flock of Glossy Ibis and Night Heron plus Common Sandpiper, Stonechat and good views of the highly distinctive White-breasted form of Great Cormorant, also referred to as Moroccan Cormorant.

We then spent the morning walking the trail to the mouth of the estuary. After a little way along the trail, two small hirundines were flying towards us and a careful check soon revealed them to be Plain Martins! This was a total surprise, as there seem to have been very few sightings at this site during the last year, so we were very lucky! We continued along the trail seeing Moussier's Redstart, Sardinian Warbler, Thekla Lark and a group of Eurasian Spoonbill on the estuary. Our first singing Black-crowned Tchagra was then heard only and two European Turtle Doves showed well. As we neared the estuary mouth we spent some time scanning the gull flock. It consisted mostly of Yellow-legged Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a small number of adult and immature Audouin's Gulls as well as a few Gull-billed Terns and Sandwich Terns.

During our return along the trail, we focused again on Tchagras and had a distant scope view of a bird so we needed to improve on views! We had yet another superb tagine lunch thanks to our drivers and all in the company of a small roosting group of Black-crowned Night Herons and Moroccan Magpies. After lunch we explored a more agricultural area and some nearby pools. Here, Corn Buntings and Zitting Cisticolas were very common and a walk through a shaded area produced Kingfisher and Stripe-necked Terrapins and Kevin did well to find some Moroccan Painted Frogs. A small bridge adjacent to a reedy wetland area produced a number of good birds including at least 6 Squacco Herons and a male Little Bittern as well as good views of a singing Western Olivaceous Warbler. However, it was the Black-crowned Tchagra that made the afternoon as a singing male sat up and posed in a fig tree giving excellent scope views. The final excitement was a male Montagu's Harrier that floated past nearby fields picked out by Keith. We then headed back to our hotel for an early dinner.

After dinner, we headed back out to try for Red-necked Nightjar adjacent to the Oued Souss. This has been a traditional site for many years and due to the fact that the site is also adjacent to the King's Palace it can often be a little frustrating as the security guards can become a little annoyed by the presence of binoculars and telescopes in the near vicinity! However, this year it was refreshing to see the guards were a little more relaxed and we remained until dusk to the sound of calling Stone Curlews. However, it was only Roger who was stood in the right place as he watched a single Red-necked Nightjar in flight at dusk, but sadly it was never to be seen again!

Monday 28th March

Today was Bald Ibis day, but first of all we re-visited the Souss Estuary where we added a few new waders to the trip list including Eurasian Oystercatcher, a good count of 12 Grey Plover and a group of seven Garganey including three handsome drakes. Sadly, no sign of any hoped for Marbled Duck or Slender-billed Gulls.

By now, everyone was beginning to get a little apprehensive that it was our last day and we still needed to see one of the world's rarest birds! So we headed north along the coast to Tamri, a well known spot for the Northern Bald Ibis. As we slowly drove along the scenic coastal road, we were all on high alert for this critically endangered species and before too long, we had our first views of a small group of around 12 birds in flight as they gracefully glided above the Atlantic Ocean.

However, we needed to really see these great birds on the deck, so we continued a little further to a regular feeding area and by using our vehicles as a hide, we were soon face to face with a larger group as they slowly shuffled across the sand dunes foraging just metres away from us. It was great to see them so close and to appreciate the subtle purple/green sheen of the plumage, the striking bald head and amazing head plumes flowing in the breeze! Our final count of Ibis for the day was a minimum of 58 birds (including the odd group flying over) which is pretty impressive when the entire breeding population in Morocco for 2015 was only 116 pairs!

Other birds in this area included some close views of Stone Curlew and two Northern Gannet out to sea before we enjoyed our final tagine lunch nearby in the company of Woodchat Shrike and Black-eared Wheatear.

The rest of the day was spent travelling back to Marrakech via Essaouira and the coast road which made for a pleasant scenic diversion. There were no new birds on our journey, with the highlight being the ever changing scenery which is always a big part of our Moroccan birding adventures. Of course, we had one obligatory last tea stop in a nearby town and we then arrived back in to the hustle and bustle of Marrakech for one final evening meal at our hotel with time to reflect on the trip's best birds!

Tuesday 29th March

After a civilised breakfast time, we were picked up and transferred to Marrakech airport for our mid morning flight back to the UK. The final bird highlight was in the airport terminal where we watched a pair of Pallid Swifts on the nest through the glass of the terminal building just feet away from us.

Many thanks to tour participant Roger Wasley for allowing the use of some of his excellent photos in this report: Crimson-winged Finch, Maghreb Green Woodpecker, North African Chaffinch, Greater Hoopoe Lark, Tristram's Warbler, Pharaoh Eagle Owl with juvenile and Moroccan Magpie

Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Morocco £200 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund. This will be used to support a conservation project in the future, yet to be determined.

For the last three years Wise Birding Holidays has been supporting a number of small conservation projects. However, we now believe that to make a bigger difference to conservation it seems best to pool the donations from most of our tours into one central fund. Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from such smaller donations. Please visit our [Conservation News](#) and [Latest News](#) links to find out more.



The High Atlas Mountains at Oukaïmeden (above) and
“African” Crimson-winged Finch (below)





Atlas Day Gecko (above) and “Atlas” Horned Lark (below)





Maghreb Green Woodpecker (above) and “North African” Chaffinch (below)





Greater Hoopoe Lark (above) and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (below)





The scenic Todra Gorge (above) and Tristram's Warbler (below)





Pharaoh Eagle Owl with one of 4 chicks (above) and Temminck's Lark (below)





Impressive Desert scenery close to our hotel near Merzouga





Egyptian Nightjar (above) and a pair of Desert Sparrows (below)





African Desert Warbler feeding young (above) and Cream-coloured Courser (below)





**“Long-billed” Crested Lark (above) and a migrant
“Seebohm’s” Wheatear (below)**





Common Redstart and Orphean Warbler (above)
and Rufous Scrub-Robin (below)





Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (above) and Western Bonelli's Warbler (below)





**This Northern Bald Ibis (above) was one of 58 birds seen
and Moroccan Magpie was seen on a number of occasions (below)**





More photos from this and other tours can be viewed on our Flickr site:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/129663578@N06/albums>

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Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
1	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	1	Two birds seen on the 20th distantly and very close views of 4 birds in the Todra Gorge
2	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	2	At least one bird heard calling on the 27th near the Oued Massa
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	3	Recorded on the 26th at Mansour Reservoir
4	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	4	Recorded on the 23rd and the biggest count was 20+ at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
5	Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	5	Two birds were scoped distantly at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
6	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	6	A total of 7 birds including 3 drakes were seen at the Oued Souss on the morning of the 28th
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	7	Recorded on three days
8	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	8	Recorded only at Mansour Reservoir
9	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	9	Large numbers at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
10	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	10	Recorded only at Mansour Reservoir where at least 60 birds were present
11	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	11	Recorded on nine days
12	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	12	Recorded on five days
13	European Turtle-dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	13	Two birds seen well at the Oued Massa on the 27th and another heard on the 28th
14	Eurasian Collared-dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	14	This highly successful colonist was recorded daily
15	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	15	Recorded on five days with the best views near our hotel in the desert
16	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>	16	Despite searching many areas, we missed this species for the first time! A bird was heard near our hotel on the 25th
17	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>	17	A surprise count of 60+ birds giving excellent views on the Tagdilt Plains on the 21st
18	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>	18	A single bird was seen by Roger at dusk on the 27th at the traditional site beside the Oued Souss
19	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	19	As usual, outrageously close views of a day roosting bird in the desert on the 23rd and a trip highlight!
20	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	20	Small groups seen around the outskirts of Agadir on the 27th and 28th
21	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	21	Recorded on five days with the best views at Marrakech airport where a pair were nesting
22	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	22	Migrants passing through on three days
23	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	23	A single bird was seen on the 26th
24	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	24	A single bird seen on the 27th at the Oued Massa
25	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	25	Recorded on two days
26	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	26	Recorded on three days with much lower counts this year. Maximum count 5 birds on the 25th
27	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	27	Recorded on the 26th and 27th at Mansour Reservoir and the Oued Massa
28	Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	28	Recorded at the traditional site of Tamri with a maximum count of 58 birds
29	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	29	Recorded on the 26th and 27th at Mansour Reservoir and the Oued Massa. Max. count of 16+ at Oued Massa
30	Common Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	30	A single male was a good find and seen well on the 27th at the Oued Massa
31	Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	31	A group of 10+ birds were seen whilst having lunch on the 27th at the Oued Massa

Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
32	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	32	A minimum of 6 birds were seen well at the Oued Massa on the 27th
33	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	33	Recorded on seven days
34	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	34	Recorded on three days
35	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	35	A single bird at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th was a good find by Keith
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	36	Recorded on three days
37	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	37	Two birds seen at sea whilst travelling towards Tamri on the 28th
38	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	38	Recorded on three days including the distinctive Moroccan White-breasted form
39	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	39	Heard on the 26th and 27th and 2 birds showed very well whilst watching Northern Bald Ibis on the 28th
40	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	40	Six birds at the Oued Souss on the 28th
41	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	41	Six birds at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
42	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	42	Recorded at Mansour Reservoir and the Oued Souss on the 26th and 27th
43	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	43	A good count of 12 birds on the 28th at the Oued Souss
44	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	44	Recorded on the 27th and the 28th
45	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	45	Recorded on three days at a number of wetland sites including Mansour Reservoir
46	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	46	Recorded on three days at a number of wetland sites including Mansour Reservoir
47	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	47	Recorded on the 26th and 27th with a max. count of 2 birds on the Oued Souss
48	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	48	Recorded on the 26th, 27th and 28th. Mostly single birds
49	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	49	Seven birds were present at the Oued Souss on the 26th
50	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	50	Recorded on the 26th and 27th at Oued Souss and Oued Massa
51	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	51	A single bird seen at the Oued Massa on the 27th
52	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	52	Three birds at the Oued Massa on the 27th
53	Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	53	Recorded on four days with a max. count of 5 birds on the 21st at the Tagdilt Plains
54	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	54	Nice to see 6 birds hawking at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
55	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	55	Recorded on the 26th and 28th
56	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	56	A first year bird at the Oued Souss on the evening of the 26th
57	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	57	Good numbers of varying ages recorded on the 27th and 28th
58	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	58	Recorded on the 26th and 27th
59	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	59	Recorded on the 26th, 27th and 28th
60	Common Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	60	Recorded on three days with an impressive 100+ birds at dusk at the Oued Souss on the 27th
61	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	61	A bird roosting on the 26th at the Oued Souss
62	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	62	Recorded on three days

Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
63	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	63	Recorded on three days with some great views
64	Eurasian Scops-owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	64	A bird was heard calling on the night of the 25th by some of the group
65	Pharaoh Eagle-owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	65	4 juvs and an adult at a new nest site near Boumalne Dades on the 21st and another adult on the 23rd near Rissani
66	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	66	Two birds at Mansour Reservoir on the 26th
67	Short-toed Snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	67	A single bird on the 25th near Erfoud
68	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	68	Recorded on five days with a max. count of 6 birds on the 20th near Toufliht
69	Western Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	69	A single bird recorded on the 26th at Mansour Reservoir
70	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	70	A cracking male on the 27th near the Oued Massa
71	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	71	Recorded on 4 days with a max. count of 2 birds on the 25th
72	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	72	Recorded on three days with a group of 45+ birds seen migrating in a hail shower on the 21st
73	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	73	Recorded on five days
74	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	74	Recorded on seven days
75	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	75	This cracking species was recorded on three days with some great views
76	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	76	Recorded on five days with a max. count of 35+ on the 22nd
77	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	77	A single bird at the Oued Massa on the 27th
78	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	78	Single migrants recorded on two days in the desert
79	Maghreb Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus vaillantii</i>	79	Male birds seen well at Oukaïmeden on the 19th and a real poser near Toufliht on the 20th
80	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	80	This distinctive “dusky” looking <i>mauritanus</i> race was recorded on the 19th and 20th
81	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	81	Recorded on eight days
82	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	82	Single birds recorded on three days including a perched bird on the 20th
83	Barbary Falcon	<i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	83	A single bird seen well at dusk whilst watching Pharaoh Eagle Owl
84	Greater Hoopoe-lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	84	Great views of this great lark and recorded on three days with a max. count of 4 birds on the 24th
85	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>	85	Recorded on three days
86	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	86	Recorded on five days
87	Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>	87	Recorded on three days with our best views on the Tagdilt Plains where 6 birds showed well on the 21st
88	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	88	Recorded on six days
89	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	89	Great views of this “Atlas” subspecies at Oukaïmeden on the 19th
90	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	90	Recorded on two days
91	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	91	Recorded on eight days, including the highly distinctive “Long-billed” form in the desert Tafilalt region
92	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	92	Recorded on six days
93	Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	93	Two birds at the Oued Massa were a surprise on the 27th after a lack of sightings in recent months

Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
94	Collared Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	94	Recorded on four days
95	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	95	Recorded daily
96	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	96	Recorded on five days
97	Northern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	97	Recorded on four days
98	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	98	Recorded on two days
99	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	99	Recorded on two days
100	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	100	Recorded on two days
101	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	101	Recorded on three days with good numbers of migrants in the desert
102	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	102	Five bird on the 19th at Oukaïmeden on the 19th was a good count
103	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	103	Recorded on six days
104	Moroccan Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba subpersonata</i>	104	Good views of this distinctive race at Mansour Reservoir and near Tamri
105	Yellow Wagtail	-	105	Recorded on four days and including the Iberian and Blue-headed races
106	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	106	Recorded on two days
107	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	107	Recorded on seven days
108	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	108	A single bird near Oukaïmeden on the 19th
109	Northern Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	109	A single bird heard on the 19th
110	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	110	Recorded on the 19th and 20th
111	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	111	Recorded daily
112	Blue Rock-thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	112	Recorded on four days
113	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	113	Migrants recorded on three days in the desert and Todra Gorge
114	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	114	Recorded on the 19th only
115	Rufous Scrub-robin	<i>Erythropygia galactotes</i>	115	Great views of a bird near Begaa on the 24th
116	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	116	Recorded on four days
117	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	117	Recorded on six days
118	Moussier's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	118	Fabulous views of this stunner on four birds with a max. count of 12 birds on the 19th
119	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	119	Recorded on the 27th only at the Oued Massa
120	White-crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	120	Recorded on six days
121	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	121	Recorded on four days
122	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	122	Recorded on two days
123	Seeböhm's Wheater	<i>Oenanthe seebohmi</i>	123	Recorded on three days with birds at the breeding grounds of Oukaïmeden & migrants in the desert on the 24th/25th
124	Mourning Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>	124	A pair of birds gave good scope views despite the wind on the evening of the 21st

Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
125	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	125	Recorded on four days
126	Buff-rumped (Red-rumped) Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	126	Recorded on three days around Tagdilt Plains
127	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	127	Recorded on six days
128	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	128	Two birds on the both at Toufliht
129	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	129	Recorded on the coast on the 26th and 27th
130	Streaked Scrub-warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	130	At least one bird showed well albeit briefly on the 25th at the traditional site NE of Goulmima
131	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	131	Recorded on three days
132	Eurasian Reed-warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	132	Recorded on three days
133	Isabelline Warbler	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>	133	A singing bird showed very well at the Oued Massa on the 27th
134	Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	134	Recorded on three days
135	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	135	Recorded on three days
136	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	136	Recorded on five days
137	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	137	Recorded on five days
138	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	138	Recorded on four days
139	Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	139	Recorded on four days
140	Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia nana</i>	140	Three birds showed well on the 23rd as two adults fed a juvenile
141	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>	141	Two birds in the Todra Gorge on the 22nd showed very well
142	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	142	Recorded on five days
143	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	143	Recorded on six days
144	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	144	Recorded on six days
145	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Turdoides fulva</i>	145	Recorded on four days with some good views of 6+ birds on the 24th
146	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	146	This distinctive "Atlas" race was recorded on two days
147	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	147	Recorded on two days whilst in the Atlas
148	African Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	148	Some great views of this stunning bird on our first two days
149	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	149	Heard on the 20th at Toufliht
150	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	150	Recorded on seven days with a max. count of 20 birds on the 24th
151	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	151	Recorded on eight days
152	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	152	Two birds seen on the 27th at the Oued Massa. A singing bird finally posed in the scope during the afternoon
153	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	153	This distinctive race of Moroccan Magpie was seen well on five days mostly in Marrakech and Agadir
154	Yellow-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	154	Recorded at Oukaïmeden only
155	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	155	Recorded on two days at Oukaïmeden and the Tizi n Tichka Pass were 100+ birds was the max. count

Wise Birding Holidays Bird Checklist for Morocco 18th - 29th March 2016

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Notes
156	Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	156	Recorded on four days whilst in the desert. Max. count of 12 birds on the 22nd
157	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	157	Recorded on two days
158	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	158	Recorded on four days
159	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	159	Recorded daily
160	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	160	Recorded on three days
161	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	161	A pair of these pallid sparrows plus one other was enjoyed in the desert on the morning of the 23rd
162	Common Rock-sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	162	Recorded at Oukaïmeden only
163	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	163	This distinctive green-backed N. African race recorded on six days. The nominate <i>coelebs</i> also recorded on the 19th
164	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	164	Recorded on seven days
165	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	165	Recorded on two days
166	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	166	Recorded on four days
167	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	167	Recorded on three days
168	Crimson-winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys sanguineus</i>	168	A minimum of six birds showed very well at Oukaïmeden on the 19th
169	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	169	Recorded on six days with a fairly low max. count of just 6 birds on the 23rd
170	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	170	This Moroccan race was recorded near Oukaïmeden on the 19th incl. juveniles and Toufliht on the 20th
171	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	171	Recorded on the 27th and 28th near the coast
172	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	172	Seen well at Oukaïmeden on the 19th
173	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	173	Heard singing on the 19th and the 27th
174	House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>	174	Recorded daily

Wise Birding Holidays
 Bird and mammal watching tours



Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



Wise Birding Morocco Tour March 2016

Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians by tour participant, Kevin Bryan

A. SUMMARY OF SPECIES RECORDED

MAMMALS

Barbary (North African) Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i>
Sundevall's Jird	<i>Meriones crassus</i>
Sand (Fat Sand) Rat	<i>Psammomys obesus</i>
Eurasian Wild Pig (Wild Boar)	<i>Sus scrofa</i>

REPTILES

Stripe-necked (Spanish) Terrapin / Mediterranean (Spanish Pond) Turtle	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>
Bibron's Agama	<i>Agama impalearis</i>
Böhme's Agama	<i>Trapelus boehmei</i>
Atlas Day Gecko	<i>Quedenfeldtia trachyblepharus</i>
Duméril's Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus dumerilii</i>
Fringe-fingered (Spiny-footed) Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus erythrurus</i>
Andalusian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis vaucheri</i>

AMPHIBIANS

Moroccan Painted Frog	<i>Discoglossus scovazzi</i>
Common (Giant, Mediterranean Common, Spiny) Toad	<i>Bufo spinosus</i>
African (North African) Green Toad	<i>Bufotes boulengeri</i>
Mauritanian (Berber) Toad	<i>Amietophrynus mauritanicus</i> / <i>Sclerophrys mauritanica</i>
Mediterranean (Stripeless) Tree Frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>
Sahara Frog	<i>Pelophylax saharicus</i>

B. DETAILED ACCOUNTS

B.1 MAMMALS – Photos Appendix 3

Order: RODENTIA – Rodents

Family: Sciuridae (Squirrels)

Barbary (North African) Ground Squirrel *Atlantoxerus getulus*

One of only two species of squirrel found in Morocco; both of which are ground squirrels.

Almost a nation-state endemic; found across a wide swathe of Morocco, part of northern Western Sahara and part of north-west Algeria. Introduced to Fuerteventura (Canary Isles). A colonial and diurnal rodent preferring open and rocky areas.

Several seen on Sat 19 March on the visit to the Oukaïmeden ski lift area (near the entrance to the Toubkal National Park). Also recorded on our journey to the coast on the 26th March.

Family: Muridae (Mice, Rats, Gerbils, etc)

The largest family of both rodents and mammals overall. Well represented in Morocco by a good variety of species and forms. However, field identification – without capture and examination – is very difficult without knowing the jizz.

Sundevall's Jird *Meriones crassus*

Jirds are a gerbil type Murid. There are four jird species in Morocco.

A widespread jird (from Western Sahara to Pakistan). Predominantly nocturnal but with some diurnal activity. Our early morning sightings were in Tagdilt on Tue 22 March.

According to Aulagnier (2008); "Unlike other jird species, the entrance to the burrows is not hidden by vegetation", as was clearly the case.

We saw other jird-like mammals on other days; speciation was not attempted.

Sand (Fat Sand) Rat *Psammomys obesus*

Another gerbil type Murid rather than a 'rat'.

Seen on many occasions on 21 and 22 March in Tagdilt.

A colonial and mostly diurnal species that lives in burrows in sandy rocky areas in the vicinity of succulent plants (upon which they feed). It is found across N Africa and the Middle East.

A dead road casualty was photographed alongside a UK 50p coin (see Appendix 3).

Order: ARTIODACTYLA – Even-toed Ungulates

Family: Suidae (Pigs)

Eurasian Wild Pig (Wild Boar) *Sus scrofa*

Good numbers seen on the King's land from a roadside stop (the first Barbary Partridge (*Alectoris barbara*) site) on Sun 20 March.

Despite one of its' common names, this species has a wide distribution across Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

The sub-species observed was *S. s. algira*. As adults, immatures and non-striped juveniles, these presented a rich dark-brown chocolate coloration; a really quite attractive form.

At minimum; the following were observed at one sighting:- 7 adults with 4 young (2 striped 2 un-striped), 3 adults with 4 young (unstriped) and 2 adults. All the 'adults' would have been females or immature males.

B.2 REPTILES – Photos Appendix 4

Despite Morocco's considerable riches in this respect; relatively few reptiles were seen.

Order: TESTUDINES (CHELONII) – Turtles (includes 'turtles', 'tortoises' and 'terrapins').

Family: Geoemydidae – approx 70 species of Turtles (the largest / most varied turtle taxon)

Stripe-necked (Spanish) Terrapin / Mediterranean (Spanish Pond) Turtle *Mauremys leprosa*

Formerly part of *M. caspica*; which has a much larger distribution.

The N African sub-species is *M. l. saharica* (the Saharan Pond Turtle).

Large numbers seen – in various states of repose – in the large pond in the 'pools' agricultural area (in the Massa estuary area (near the Sous Massa National Park)) on Sun 27 March 2016. Mainly carnivorous.

Order: SQUAMATA – Lizards, Snakes and Amphisbaenids

Family: Agamidae – Agamid Lizards / 'Dragons'

Bibron's Agama *Agama impalearis*

Seen on 22 March (Tagdilt) and 26 March (Argan Tree area) [note: the Argan Tree, *Argania spinosa*, is endemic to Morocco].

An attractive and variable agama; made more so by the colouration of the males.

Böhme's Agama *Trapelus boehmei*

Two were seen on Wed 23 March at the Egyptian Nightjar site. They were very cryptic and flattened themselves to further enhance their camouflage.

Family: Sphaerodactylidae – a family of geckos with no defining English vernacular

Atlas Day Gecko *Quedenfeldtia trachyblepharus*

Endemic to Morocco in Toubkal massif and surrounding mountain areas at elevations of around 1,200 to 4,000m. Regarded as near-threatened; although, as was apparent, it can be quite abundant where it occurs. An attractive reptile.

Seen on Sat 19 March on the visit to the Oukaïmeden ski lift area (near the entrance to the Toubkal National Park).

Family: Lacertidae – Wall Lizards / True Lizards / 'Lizards'

Duméril's Fringe-fingered Lizard *Acanthodactylus dumerilii*

The similar Long Fringe-fingered Lizard *A. longipes* has a different dorsal pattern (as evidenced by photographs in 'Amphibians and Reptiles of Morocco and Western Sahara www.moroccoherps.com'); it also has a more restricted range.

An attractive long-fingered lizard that can move rapidly across the sand.

Seen on 23 and 25 March on our desert sorties from our lodge in Merzouga / Hassilabied.

Fringe-fingered (Spiny-footed) Lizard *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*

Three sub-species occur in Morocco. On Sun 27 March we saw a number of *A. e. belli* in the Oued-Massa area. Another attractive species with a much larger range than the two species mentioned above.

Andalusian Wall Lizard *Podarcis vaucheri*

Found in north-western North Africa and in southern Spain.

Seen on Sat 19 March on the visit to the Oukaïmeden ski lift area (near the entrance to the Toubkal National Park). A very slim long-tailed lizard. Previously a subspecies of the Iberian Wall Lizard *P. hispanica* (ie *P. h. vaucheri*).

B.3 AMPHIBIANS – Photos Appendix 5

Order: ANURA – Tail-less amphibians (ie 'frogs and toads' – although these are taxonomically incorrect common names)

Family: Alytidae (Disc-tongued Frogs)

Moroccan Painted Frog *Discoglossus scovazzi*

Previously considered a subspecies of *D. pictus* (ie *D. p. scovazzi*) [ie a sub-species of the Mediterranean Painted Frog]. It's now recognised as a full species.

A number of individuals seen in a small water cistern in the 'pools' agricultural area (in the Massa estuary area (nr the Sous Massa National Park)) on Sun 27 March 2016.

An attractive frog that befits the name. Endemic to Morocco and the Spanish enclaves.

Family: Bufonidae (True Toads)

Common (Giant, Mediterranean Common, Spiny) Toad *Bufo spinosus*

Previously considered a subspecies of *B. bufo* (ie *B. b. spinosus*) [ie a sub-species of the 'Common' Toad as understood in the UK]. It's now recognized as a full species within the *B. bufo* complex. A particularly large individual – presumably a female – was seen on blanket weed in a large irrigation storage tank on 22 March (Ikniouen / Boumalne Dades).

Widespread in both Europe and Asia as well as western North Africa.

African (North African) Green Toad *Bufotes boulengeri*

Formerly *Bufo boulengeri* and *Pseudepidalea boulengeri*.

This is a 'Green Toad' formerly part of the *Bufo viridis* (now *Bufotes viridis*) group.

Large numbers of these toads were seen; particularly at the Hassilabied village oasis area over the period Tue 22 (late pm) to Fri 25 March (mid am). They were also found at a number of other sites. Within the Hassilabied area they were found in (or near) the irrigation channels – particularly at dawn, dusk and at night-time – with a preference for the concrete-lined channels. They occupied similar sites at other locations that were visited during this period. Found across a large swathe of North Africa.

This species was subject to informal counting before dawn (05:15-05:45) on Thu 24 March. The count took place along approx 100m of a single irrigation channel (approx 30cm x 15cm). A total of 68 AGTs were counted. A further 48 'other' toads were counted but could not be speciated. The 48 may have included AGTs that were difficult to discern.

Mauritanian (Berber) Toad *Amietophrynus mauritanicus* / *Sclerophrys mauritanica*

Seen between 22 and 25 March at the Hassilabied oasis site.

Found across most of Morocco and also northern Algeria and Tunisia.

Superficially similar to the African Green Toad and therefore not always easy to tell apart.

Family: Hylidae (Tree Frogs and Allies)

Mediterranean (Stripeless) Tree Frog *Hyla meridionalis*

A singleton found by Keith on Sat 19 March on the visit to the Oukaïmeden ski lift area (near the entrance to the Toubkal National Park).

It was not in or near the immediate vicinity of a tree or other dense or tall herbage. The animal was found in sparse rough grass by the edge of a 'garden' wall. It was, however, out of the sun. Young animals are more likely to occur on or near the ground; this particular individual was quite small. The side stripe will not go beyond the front legs; in other regional species (eg the European Tree Frog *Hyla arborea*) it will go to the rear legs.

A small frog species with the characteristic disc-shaped climbing pads on the fingers. Supposedly nocturnal. A nice find.

Family: Ranidae (True Frogs)

Sahara Frog *Pelophylax saharicus*

A large and predominantly aquatic frog. The Eurasian Marsh Frog *P. ridibundus* – an introduced alien in the UK – looks very similar. This genus of ‘green water frogs’ never strays far from water. Found across North Africa and introduced to the Canary Islands.

Particularly large individuals (presumably females) were seen on 21 and 22 March (at Toufliht) and Ikniouen / Boumalne Dades respectively). In both cases in large irrigation storage tanks.

All trip references to sightings of ‘Edible Frog’ at various sites on 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 March were this species (mostly males).

A robust and rapacious species; even the tadpoles (seen on 22 March) are large (>10 cm) and look like salamanders at a distance.

Appendix 1 **References and Bibliography – Mammals**

- Aulagnier S., Haffner p., Mitchell-Jones A., Moutou F. and Zima J. 2008. Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. A & C Black, London.
- Duff A. and Lawson A. 2004. Mammals of the World A Checklist. A & C Black, London.
- The IUCN List of Threatened Species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>
- Wilson D.E. and Mittermeier R. A. (eds.). 2011. Handbook of The Mammals of the World. Vol 2: Hoofed Mammals. Lynx, Barcelona.
- Wilson D.E. and Reeder D.M. (eds.). 2005. Mammal Species of the World A Taxonomic and Geographic Reference Third Edition. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Note: Taxonomy was based on Duff and Lawson (2004); itself, based on earlier versions of the major reference work by Wilson and Reader (2005).

Appendix 2 **References and Bibliography – Reptiles and Amphibians**

- Arnold E and Burton J. 1978. A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe. Collins, London.
This is a rather old addition of the Collin’s guide. Although the taxonomy has changed; the biology is still largely sound and useful. Useful despite the range limitations.
- Numerous websites were also used, including:-
 1. Amphibians and Reptiles of Morocco and Western Sahara www.moroccoherps.com
 2. iNaturalist.org www.inaturalist.org/
 3. Amphibiaweb www.amphibiaweb.org
 4. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

Note: Taxonomy was based on a mixture of 1, 2 & 3 above for Amphibians and 1 & 2 for reptiles.

Appendix 3: Mammal Photos

Sundevall's Jird *Meriones crassus*



Tail Length \approx HB Length

Entrance to the burrows is not hidden by vegetation

Sand (Fat Sand) Rat *Psammomys obesus*

Dorsal View



Ventral View



Notice that the whiskers are quite long. The scale is such that the real diameter of a 50p is 27.3 mm.

This gives the following dimensions:-

- Body Length – 158 mm
- Tail Length – 113 mm
- Total Length – 271 mm
- Tail as a % of Body – 71.5%

These data are pretty consistent with the details in *Aulagnier et al* (2008) and, along with other information, offer a fairly confident identification.

Appendix 4: Reptile Photos

Atlas Day Gecko *Quedenfeldtia trachyblepharus*



Chris Townend

Duméril's Fringe-fingered Lizard *Acanthodactylus dumerilii*
Roger Wasley



Fringe-fingered (Spiny-footed) Lizard *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*
Chris Townend



Appendix 5: Amphibian Photos

Mediterranean (Stripeless) Tree Frog
Hyla meridionalis



Chris Townend

Mauritanian Toad
Amietophrynus mauritanicus



Chris Townend

Sahara Frog
Pelophylax saharicus



Roger Wasley



Chris Townend

African Green Toad *Bufootes boulengeri*



Roger Wasley



Chris Townend

Moroccan Painted Frog *Discoglossus scovazzi*



Keith Myatt