

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



WESTERN SAHARA: Mostly Mammals Tour

Thursday 21st - Thursday 28th March 2019

5 Wise Birding Clients

Leaders: Chris Townend & Nico Calcagno

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Sand Cat: Two different encounters, both at night and viewed by spotlight including exceptional views of a curious animal that we watched for a few minutes.

African Golden Wolf: A fabulous sighting of an animal that gave scope views for 30 minutes as it looked down at us from a rocky outcrop during the early hours.

Fennec Fox: At least 4 different animals seen during a spotlighting session close to our desert camp west of Bir Anzarane.

Ruppell's Fox: A number of encounters of this relatively common species during our many spotlighting sessions.

African Wild Cat: Two different animals seen on the same night, including an animal that gave good scope views for over 30 minutes.

Desert Hedgehog: Always a highlight and we enjoyed sightings of three different animals over two nights.



Sand Cat and Desert Hedgehog were just two of the tour highlights

Tour Summary

The Western Sahara is easily accessible with daily flights, good accommodation, good food and some impressive desert scenery and coastal lagoons. This 7 night tour targeted the key mammals of the desert environment with a particular focus on finding Sand Cat as well as seeing a reasonable selection of speciality birds of this region. We enjoyed 2 nights on the coast, 1 night in a desert camp and 4 nights in a simple but very comfortable and clean house with hot showers. The majority of our time was spent spotlighting during the hours of darkness for the numerous impressive mammals that can be found in this fabulous region of NW Africa. During the day we did some relaxed birding and enjoyed a boat trip on one morning in Dakhla Bay.

We saw a total of 9 mammal species including some great views of Sand Cat, African Wildcat and the recently described, African Golden Wolf. In addition to the mammals we also saw 75 species of bird including some specialities of the region like Dunn's Lark, African Desert Warbler, Cricket Warbler and African Royal Tern. We also saw a number of impressive reptiles.

Thursday 21 March: ARRIVE DAKHLA

We arrived into Dakhla on the late evening flight from Casablanca and transferred to our hotel just five minutes drive away. **Overnight Dakhla Hotel**

Friday 22 March: BOAT TRIP DAKHLA BAY - ARBT SBETA CAMP

This morning after a relaxed breakfast at our hotel and enjoying our first views out across Dakhla Bay from the roof terrace, we travelled a short distance along the bay where we boarded our private yacht. We spent the morning expertly navigated by Neil and his crew in the hope that we may encounter the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin. Dakhla Bay has long been known for its small population of this critically endangered species, endemic to the west coast of Africa. During our time in the bay, sea conditions were pretty good for cetaceans, but sadly we did not find any on this occasion. However, it did allow us to view much of the birdlife present in this internationally important site for birds. Highlights included African Royal Tern and Caspian Tern, an impressive flock of 100+ Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo, White-breasted Cormorant, Whimbrel and Slender-billed Gull.

After our morning at sea we returned to our hotel briefly to collect our luggage and then had lunch in Dakhla before we headed north into the desert to the region west of Bir Anzarane and our tented camp at Arbt Sbeta. We arrived at our camp by early evening where we enjoyed a tasty dinner before we headed out for some spotlighting, searching for mammals. The main purpose for our night in the desert was to be based close to a Fennec Fox hotspot! It was a long but very enjoyable evening as we spotlighted from around 20.45hrs - 03.00hrs.

The clear highlight was seeing up to four Fennec Foxes, one of which was within five minutes of leaving our camp! It seems the Fennec Fox strategy is always to run on seeing a vehicle so our first views were of animals running away. However, during the early hours of the morning we found a couple of animals that were more relaxed and therefore allowed prolonged views at distance, though still very good views in the spotlight. Other mammals during the night included our first African Savannah Hares and Lesser Egyptian Jerboa. **Overnight Desert Camp**

Sat 23 March: ARBT SBETA - PARIS/DAKAR - BOUGOUFFA - AOUSSERD

After a very comfortable sleep and later start, we spent time enjoying the scenic desert landscape around our camp and were entertained by Greater Hoopoe Larks and the impressive Common Sandfish in the sand dunes. Then after a "brunch" we explored the area by our 4x4 vehicles and did some birding. A family group of Cream-coloured Coursers was great to see and a check of the various tree clusters revealed Western Subalpine Warbler and Orphean Warbler as well as some good views of a male Black-crowned Sparrowlark and best of all, a Dunn's Lark. After an early dinner our camp was dismantled and it was time to head off south on another spotlighting session. This time we took some of the old Paris-Dakar rally tracks until we reached the Aousserd Road and then explored the Bougouffa Trail north of the Aousserd Road before finally travelling along the Aousserd Road itself, to our comfortable house in Aousserd. It was another long night as we spotlighted from 20.30hrs - 04.30hrs.

As is often the case with spotlighting, there can often be long periods with little life, but perseverance is the key! We enjoyed some excellent views of two Desert Hedgehogs as well as two Ruppell's Fox and in terms of difficult species, the highlight would have to go to the Fat-tailed Gerbil that is always a special one to see. Other sightings included the now expected African Savanna Hares and Lesser Egyptian Jerboas along with some unidentified Gerbils. **Overnight Aousserd**

Sunday 24 March: DERRAMAN - AOUSSERD ROAD

After a good sleep we re-grouped in the house for lunch at around 1.30pm and then headed out for a couple of hours to explore the Derraman Massif. Bird highlights here included a couple of Long-legged Buzzards, one carrying a snake, a Lanner Falcon and three Pale Rock Martins hawking for insects around the rocks. Then after another short rest back at the house, once again we headed out for a spotlighting session, this time remaining on the Aousserd Road covering the area between 85Km and 40Km from Aousserd between around 9pm and 02.30am.

The clear highlights were the cats! The first cat to be seen was a Sand Cat at 22.55hrs around 70Km from Aousserd. It was first located up about 50 metres from the road, thanks to the distinctive eyeshine. It was sat upright between two grass tussocks and sat for a minute or so looking at us whilst both vehicles enjoyed good views. It then slinked away and was not seen again. It seemed to be a small individual, possibly a younger animal but the colouration, distinctive head shape and short dark banded legs were seen well. Pressure off! Later in the evening at around 01.30hrs an African Wildcat was found close to the road. It disappeared quickly but it settled under a bush about 100 metres from the road and allowed us to scope it in the spotlight for a good 20-30 minutes. A second animal was seen a few kilometres further down the road, very close but brief views only. Aside from cats we also saw our third Desert Hedgehog of the trip and the usual Lesser Egyptian Jerboas and African Savannah Hares. We finally returned to the house at around 02.30hrs and dreamed of cats!

Overnight Aousserd

Monday 25 March: OUED JENNA - DERRAMAN - AOUSSERD ROAD

Once again, we re-grouped in the house for lunch and then headed out for some birding where we explored Oued Jenna and the Derraman Massif again. Oued Jenna was very quiet for migrants with a single Western Bonelli's Warbler, but lots of Cricket Warblers were good to see along with Fulvous Babbler. However, the highlight was finding a Short-toed Snake Eagle on a nest incubating a single egg.

After another short rest back at the house, once again we headed out for a spotlighting session, again using the Aousserd Road but arriving at our furthest point for dusk and then working our way back to Aousserd. We covered the area approximately between 80Km and 40Km from Aousserd and then explored off-road near Derraman. We were out between around 19.30hrs and 02.30am.

Without doubt our most exciting night with exceptional views of another Sand Cat and an African Golden Wolf as well as an impressive Horned Viper.

The Sand Cat was a first located at around 21.30hrs in an Acacia tree and then observed on the ground at a range of only 20 meters for around five minutes, seeming somewhat curious about its onlookers and it was a fantastic sighting. Much later in the evening at around 01.00hrs we explored the Derraman Massif area and after a good 30 minutes or so of absolutely no life, some eyeshine finally appeared and with patience we were soon treated to exceptional views of an African Golden Wolf. We enjoyed great scope views for around 30 minutes as it sat on a rocky outcrop. A simply fantastic end to the night. **Overnight Aousserd**

Tuesday 26 March: AOUSSERD - OUED BOLARYAH

As usual, we met for lunch after a good rest and then headed out to do some birding, this time to Oued Bolaryah to the south of Aousserd. Birds were thin on the ground with still no obvious signs of migration, but Western Subalpine Warbler, Bar-tailed Lark and more Cricket Warblers were the highlight species.

Another evening visit to the same area produced some nice mammal encounters with Ruppell's Fox, African Savannah Hares and Lesser Egyptian Jerboas. A couple of gecko species were also great to see including White-spotted Gecko and a Scorpion was our first of the trip. This evening we did less spotlighting prior to an early start the following day. We were out from 20.00hrs to 22.30hrs.

Overnight Aousserd

Wed 27 March: AOUSSERD - TACHKTANT - MIJK - DAKHLA BAY

Today we headed back on the journey to Dakhla, taking a number of stops en route for birding and other wildlife. Highlights included some great views of African Desert Warbler, wonderful song display flights from both Black-crowned Sparrow-larks and Dunn's Larks with the latter species seen nest building too.

A stop at the migrant hotspots of Tachktant and Mijk Farm revealed very few migrants compared to last year, but nonetheless some nice species including Bluethroat, Tree Pipit, Common Nightingale, Black-crowned Night Heron as well as some typical desert species like Trumpeter Finch, Temminck's Lark, Desert Wheatear and a pair of Buff-rumped Wheatears.

Once back at the northern end of Dakhla Bay, a much welcomed drink at Ocean Vagabond allowed some great views of the bay and our first Black Wheatear. We returned to our hotel for a final meal together and a couple of Pallid Swifts over the roof terrace before we all raised a glass to the Sand Cats!

Thurs 28 March: DEPARTURE

We took the short five minute transfer to the airport to take our flight to Casablanca and connections back to the UK where the tour concluded.



Dakhla Bay (above) and Greater Flamingos (below)





Both *sinensis* and the white-breasted *maroccanus* Cormorants were seen (above)
Good numbers of Cream-coloured Coursers were seen including chicks (below)





**Our tented camp at Arbt Sbeta (above Photo courtesy of tour participant John Weir)
and Common Sandfish (below)**





We saw at least 4 Fennec Fox (above - Photo courtesy of tour participant John Weir) and a number of the more commonly encountered Ruppell's Fox (below)





African Savannah Hares (above) were common on night drives and Desert Hedgehogs (below) were seen on three separate occasions





We had great views of the Cats!
African Wildcat (above) and Sand Cat (below)





The Sand Cat was the key target species of the trip and we enjoyed wonderful views of this animal for a good five minutes





**Sunsets were always impressive in the desert
We also had exceptional views of the newly described African Golden Wolf
Photo courtesy of tour participant John Weir**





**African Desert Warbler (above) and Cricket Warbler (below)
were special birds of the desert environment**





**Long-legged Buzzard with snake (above)
and Short-toed Snake Eagle (below)**





**We found the nest of a Short-toed Snake Eagle in an Acacia Tree
The species was only confirmed breeding in the region as recently as 2016**



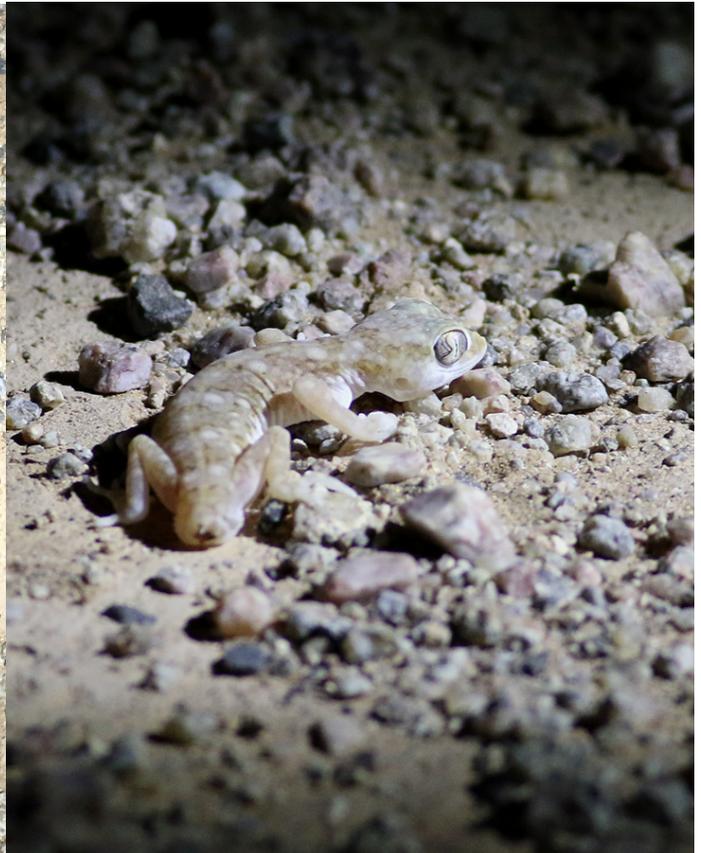


**Dunn's Lark is another special bird of the region.
We enjoyed a number of sightings including a bird nest building**





The easily identified Four-spotted Gecko (above and below)
and a *Stenodactylus* Gecko





**Other interesting wildlife in the desert included a Scorpion (John Weir)
and an equally impressive looking Spider**





**A Horned Viper was seen well on one occasion,
though missing one of its horns!**





**Slender-billed, Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls (top)
Trumpeter Finch (middle)
African Royal Tern and Caspian Tern (bottom)**





**The impressive backdrop to the town of Aousserd (above)
and another wonderful Sand Cat (below)**



Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Western Sahara £175 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund.

For the last three years Wise Birding Holidays has been supporting a number of small conservation projects. However, we now believe that to try and 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. Currently this amounts to £6,000. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations. Please visit our www.wisebirding.co.uk to find out more about the project we support.



More photos from our tours can be viewed on our Flickr site:
www.flickr.com/photos/129663578@N06/albums

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WISE BIRDING HOLIDAYS: Bird and Mammal Checklist for WESTERN SAHARA March 21st - 28th 2019
The bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW Alive, del Hoyo, J, Elliott, A et al

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Species Notes
1	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	1	Small groups seen around Dakhla Bay during our boat trip on the 22nd with 60+ birds and then on the 27th with 6 birds.
2	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	2	Recorded on three days around habitation.
3	Eurasian Collared-dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	3	Small numbers recorded on three days from Dakhla to the desert.
4	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	4	Four birds around Dakhla on the 22nd as well as at Casablanca airport on the 28th.
5	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	5	Two birds gave great views from our hotel in Dakhla from our roof top terrace on the evening of the 27th.
6	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	6	A bird was heard calling from one of the densely vegetated pools at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
7	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	7	Six birds whilst travelling to our desert camp on the 22nd and then a single bird near Mijk Farm on the 27th.
8	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	8	A large flock of at least 100+ birds distantly from our boat trip in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
9	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	9	An adult bird was accidentally disturbed whilst birding Mijk Farm on the 27th.
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	10	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay.
11	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	11	Recorded in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
12	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	12	Two birds (adult and imm.) recorded during our boat trip in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd and then another two birds there on the 27th.
13	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	13	Both <i>sinensis</i> and the striking white-breasted forms <i>maroccanus</i> were seen very well around Dakhla Bay on two days.
14	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burinus oedicnemus</i>	14	Heard calling from Dakhla airport as we arrived for our return flight early morning on the 28th.
15	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	15	The odd bird seen in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
16	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	16	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
17	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	17	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
18	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	18	Counts of 3+ birds in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
19	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	19	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
20	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	20	A single bird in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
21	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	21	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
22	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	22	Three birds in a mixed wader flock flew past our boat in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
23	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	23	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
24	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	24	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
25	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	25	A single bird near the Oyster Farm, Dakhla Bay on the 27th.
26	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	26	A single bird prior to boarding our yacht in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
27	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	27	At least 2 birds seen prior to boarding our yacht in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
28	Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	28	Excellent views of both adults and juveniles with a peak count of 20+ birds on the 22nd., 7 birds including 2 juveniles on the 23rd and a single bird was also seen on the 27th.
29	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	29	Good numbers this year with counts of 60+ birds on the 22nd and then
30	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	30	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
31	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	31	Three birds in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd with a mixed group of Black-headed Gulls and Slender-billed Gulls.
32	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	32	Excellent views of at least 15+ birds around Dakhla Bay on the 22nd.
33	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	33	The commonest gull present in Dakhla Bay with numerous birds seen on the 22nd and the 27th.
34	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	34	Great views of this striking tern seen in small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd and the 27th.
35	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	35	Small numbers in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd and the 27th.
36	"African" Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus (albidorsalis)</i>	36	The <i>albidorsalis</i> subspecies breeds in W Africa and was recorded during our boat trip on the 22nd in Dakhla Bay. At least 5 birds were seen well.
37	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	37	Single birds in Dakhla Bay on the 22nd and the 27th.
38	Short-toed Snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	38	An adult bird was sitting tightly on a nest in an Acacia tree near Oued Jenna on the 25th. It was unintentionally disturbed to reveal an egg was present and the bird was still sitting the following week. The first confirmed breeding of this species was as recent as 2016 in the same area.

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Species Notes
39	Western Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	39	A single young male at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
40	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	40	Counts of 1-2 birds on three days including a bird carrying a snake on the 24th.
41	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	41	Three birds hunting on the 22nd whilst travelling to our desert camp.
42	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	42	The very pale <i>erlangeri</i> form is probably the most impressive and was seen well on two days whilst around the Aousserd region.
43	Great (Southern) Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	43	Birds were seen daily between 23rd and the 27th with typical counts of 2-3 birds and at least 6 birds on the 23rd.
44	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	44	Two of these migrants were seen on the 25th in Oued Jenna.
45	Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	45	Seen daily in the Aousserd region on four days with small groups often present just outside the town and adjacent army camp.
46	Greater Hoopoe-lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	46	Numerous opportunities to see and hear this beautiful bird whilst in the desert. We recorded birds on three days and witnessed the impressive display flight a number of times.
47	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>	47	Small numbers with counts of 1-3 birds on three days only.
48	Black-crowned Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	48	Seemingly a good year with birds found singing and displaying at a number of sites. Recorded on two days with birds seen near our desert camp at Arbt Sbeta, near Bir Anzarane and around 83Km from Aousserd.
49	"African" Dunn's Lark	<i>Eremalauda dunni</i>	49	This speciality was seen very well with 1 bird near our desert camp at Arbt Sbeta, near Bir Anzarane on the 23rd and then at least 4 birds, one with nest material, around 83Km from Aousserd.
50	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	50	Counts of 2-3 birds recorded on three days from Mijk Farm to our desert camp at Arbt, Sbeta near Bir Anzarane.
51	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	51	Breeds along a narrow area along the coast, more discontinuous south of Dakhla. No confirmed records deep inland (e.g. around Aousserd).
52	Cricket Warbler	<i>Spiloptila clamans</i>	52	This speciality was seen very well on a number of occasions. Recorded on two days around the Aousserd region with a peak count of at least 6 birds on the 25th.
53	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	53	Two migrants were present in the wetland area at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
54	Northern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	54	The only record was of a single bird at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
55	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	55	Very low numbers with just 5 birds on the 23rd and 6+ on the 27th.
56	Pale Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>	56	A minimum of three birds showed well around the Derraman Masif on the 24th.
57	Collared Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	57	A single bird in Dakhla Bay on the 27th near Ocean Vagabond.
58	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	58	A single bird in Oued Jenna on the 25th.
59	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	59	Three birds on the 27th around Mijk Farm.
60	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>	60	Excellent views of this desert speciality around 75Km from Aousserd.
61	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	61	Single birds seen well near our desert camp at Arbt Sbeta on the 23rd and another near Derraman on the 24th.
62	"Western" Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans inornata</i>	62	Surprisingly low numbers of this usually common migrant with single birds on the 23rd - 25th and then 2 birds on the 26th.
63	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Argya fulva</i>	63	A couple of noisy "gangs" were seen well in Oued Jenna on the 25th totalling at least 12 birds.
64	Bluethroat	<i>Cyanecula svecica</i>	64	Great views of a white-spotted bird at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
65	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	65	A single bird seen only by Chris at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
66	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	66	A single bird near Mijk Farm on the 27th.
67	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	67	A lovely male near Mijk Farm on the 27th.
68	Buff-rumped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	68	A pair of these very localised and large wheatears near Mijk Farm on the 27th.
69	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	69	A bird at Ocean Vagabond on the 27th was our only sighting.
70	White-crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	70	The commonest wheatear recorded on four days, but nonetheless a stunning bird with plenty of opportunities to see it well.
71	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	71	Recorded on four days from Dakhla to the desert.
72	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	72	Surprisingly small numbers with a pair seen well at Aousserd petrol station on the 24th and another three birds on the 27th whilst travelling from the desert to Dakhla.
73	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	73	A single migrant at Mijk Farm on the 27th.
74	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	74	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay.
75	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	75	A group of five birds around a small pool at Gleb Tachtant (Gleb Jdiane).

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Species Notes
TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS				
1	Desert Hedgehog	<i>Paraechinus aethiopicus</i>	1	Excellent views of this very appealing small mammal with two animals on the night of the 23rd near one of the many Paris - Dakar rally tracks and another animal during the night of the 24th on the Aousserd Road.
2	African Golden Wolf	<i>Canis anthus</i>	2	Perseverance and patience with some brief eyeshine soon turned into fantastic scope views of a very relaxed animal around the Derraman Massif during the early hours of the 26th March. It was watched from 01.00hrs for at least 45 minutes when eventually the animal curled up and went to sleep!
3	Ruppell's Fox	<i>Vulpes rueppelli</i>	3	Some great encounters this year with a total of five different animals over three nights.
4	Fennec Fox	<i>Vulpes zerda</i>	4	The main reason for our desert camp at Arbt Sbeta, on the night of the 22nd paid off with some very good views of at least 4 separate animals. The first couple of sightings though exciting, were a little frustrating as the species often runs at the first sign of a vehicle! However, a later sighting during the early hours of the 23rd with a more relaxed animal allowed closer more prolonged views.
5	Sand Cat	<i>Felis margarita</i>	5	Two encounters, both from the Aousserd Road. The first was on the evening of the 24th approximately 70Km from Aousserd at 22.55hrs. The animal was partially crouched beside some grasses and stared back at us for a couple of minutes before slinking off and not being seen again. The second encounter was in a similar area on the evening of the 25th at 21.30hrs. This animal was first seen in a small Acacia tree before heading down to the desert sand and it then remained as we watched it in the torchlight for a good five minutes before it walked off and we left it. A pretty special sighting!
6	African Wildcat	<i>Felis lybica</i>	6	Two animals seen during the early hours of the 25th from the Aousserd Road. The first was around 40Km from Aousserd and we enjoyed great scope views for over 20 - 30 minutes as it sat near the cover of a small bush. The second animal was seen only briefly just a few kilometres nearer Aousserd but right next to the road before it spooked and ran off.
7	African Savannah Hare	<i>Lepus microtis</i>	7	A relatively common mammal recorded on four evenings and one disturbed during the day. Typical daily counts were of 4-6 animals.
8	Lesser Egyptian Jerboa	<i>Jaculus jaculus</i>	8	Recorded on five evenings with counts of 3 - 6 animals a night, some of which gave some very close views.
9	Fat-tailed Gerbil	<i>Pachyuromys duprasi</i>	9	A single animal on the night of the 23rd near one of the many Paris - Dakar rally tracks was the only sighting.
-	(Lesser Egyptian) Gerbil sp.	<i>Gerbillus gerbillus</i>	-	A number of gerbils were seen on the roads at night but could not be identified to species level.
REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS				
1	Brongersma's Toad	<i>Pseudepidalea brongersmai</i>	1	An adult thought to be this species and numerous toadlets were seen at Gleb Tachktant (Gleb Jdiane) on the 27th.
2	White-spotted Gecko	<i>Tarentola annularis</i>	2	Great views of this very smart Gecko with its diagnostic four white spots on the back was seen near Oued Bolaryah on the evening of the 27th.
3	Dumeril's Fringe-toed	<i>Acanthodactylus dumerilii</i>	3	Some of the lizards seen were probably this species, especially in more sandy areas along the Aousserd Road.
4	Golden Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus aureus</i>	4	Common in many desert areas.
5	Common Sandfish	<i>Scincus albifasciatus</i>	5	Thought to be this species and seen around our desert camp at Arbt Sbeta, near Bir Anzarane.
6	Sudan Mastigure / Spiny-tailed Lizard	<i>Uromastyx dispar</i>	6	Fairly common the desert around Aousserd.
7	Horned Viper	<i>Cerastes cerastes</i>	7	One with a broken horn was seen well along the Aousserd Road on the night of the 25th.
OTHER				
1	Scorpion	-	1	One seen very well near Aousserd on the evening of the 26th.
2	Spider sp.	-	2	A very pale spider seen near our desert camp on the evening of the 22nd - See photo in report.

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