



*This stunning and well camouflaged Egyptian Nightjar was one of the highlights of the trip. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

# MOROCCO

**27 APRIL – 11 MAY 2013**

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**GROUP MEMBERS:** BARBARA GRAY, RON KNIGHT, PETER LONCAR, PAMELA MORSE, BOB ORENSTEIN, CARMELITA SARAO, MIKE SMITH, GILLIAN WHEATLEY and BARBARA YORK

Visiting Morocco is a must for any birder, especially those interested in our Western Palearctic (WP) region, due to the many specialities here that are found nowhere else inside the WP boundaries. Birdquest offers the most comprehensive itinerary of all tour companies in this region, which ensured that this year's tour was once again a tremendous success, recording almost all possible specialities available in our 2-week itinerary. A total of 219 species was recorded during the tour, a slightly lower number than on tours earlier in the spring, when migration is in full swing, but pretty much all targets and important birds, the ones you come here for, including the near-endemic and late arriving Atlas Pied Flycatcher, were logged. Amongst the highlights, an impressive count of 650 Black-necked Grebes near Ifrane, a flock of more than 1200 Ruddy Shelducks, together with flamingos and many other species, with the sand dunes of Erg Chebbi as backdrop all making for an impressive sight, good numbers of Marbled and White-headed Ducks, excellent views of the holy grail of all moroccan birds, the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis, great views of a pair of Bonelli's Eagles, many Eleonora's Falcons, walk-away views of a pair of the rare Barbary Falcon sitting near its nest, terrific looks at a pair of probably the most endangered of all moroccan birds, the mighty Houbara Bustard, great looks at the shy and localized Double-spurred Francolin on 2 different mornings, no less than 8 Lesser-crested Terns in the coast, excellent views of Spotted Sandgrouse, the 2 owl targets in form of

Marsh Owl and Pharaoh Eagle Owl, the best possible views of Egyptian Nightjar at daytime, Levillant's Woodpecker, 14 species of larks including mega views of the highly sought after Dupont's as well as Thick-billed, Greater Hoopoe and Temminck's, colorful Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, many encounters with the stunning North African endemic Moussier's Redstart, fabulous views of one of the most difficult of all Moroccan specialities, the scarce Western Mourning Wheatear, amongst 8 species of wheatears, the localized Streaked Scrub, African Desert, Eastern (Saharan) Olivaceous and Tristram's Warblers, several Fulvous Babblers, showy Black-crowned Tchagras, nice looks at breeding Atlas Pied Flycatchers, great views of a couple of pairs of the declining Desert Sparrow, and to finish, many African Crimson-winged Finches in the Atlas.

After very little sleep, we set off in the dark towards our first destination, an area of maquis and cork oak in the Zaër region, near Rabat, famous for being the only reliable spot in the Western Palearctic to see Double-spurred Francolin. Once we arrived at the exact location, we soon heard some francolins, but it took some time before we finally obtained good views of 2 birds. A pair of Barbary Partridges, a North African and Canary Islands endemic, was also seen crossing the track in front of us. Also in the area we enjoyed great scope views of a perched Short-toed Snake Eagle, while European Turtle Doves were surprisingly common. Our first Common Bulbuls, African Chaffinches (split from Common by some authorities), African Blue Tits and Sardinian Warblers were also seen, and singing Common Nightingales were everywhere along the valley. Other migrants seen included European Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Common Redstart, Eurasian Golden Oriole and Woodchat Shrike. After a well deserved breakfast, we spent the rest of the day at the reserve of Lac de Sidi Bourhaba and the nearby estuary of Oued Sebou and Mehdiya Plage. On our way, we found a few Common Scoter flocks along the coast, as well as some Eurasian Oystercatchers, Sanderlings and Eurasian Whimbrels. Sidi Bourhaba was alive with waterfowl, and several interesting species were added to our list, including Marbled, White-headed and Ferruginous Ducks, plenty of Red-crested Pochards, and many Red-knobbed Coots. Amongst herons, we had good views of a single Squacco, plus 3 Black-crowned Night Herons. Western Marsh Harriers patrolled over the reeds, and a single Eurasian Hobby was seen hunting dragonflies. A pair of Purple Swamphens eventually showed well, and we also had our first views of the local *mauritanica* subspecies of Eurasian Magpie. However, the main reason for coming to Sidi Bourhaba was because of its resident pair of the now extremely rare Marsh Owl. As dusk fell, we positioned ourselves in an area with good visibility over the reedbed, and waited. We were running out of light, and our hopes of seeing one rapidly diminishing, until, finally, one of these owls flew over the reeds and was soon lost in a nearby hillside. Only a couple of people got on the bird, but, as luck would have it, a few minutes later not only one, but two, Marsh Owls flew over our heads and were seen by everyone. Persistence, usually, pays off! With our main target under our belts, we quickly went back to our accommodation to catch up on some much deserved sleep.



Both White-headed (left) and Ferruginous (right) Ducks were common this year at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba. (Ron Knight)

The next morning we returned to the Zaër, and we enjoyed great views, again, of a Double-spurred Francolin, first located by Peter, plus another pair of Barbary Partridges, while on a nearby forest we had good views of 4 Wood Warblers- a fairly scarce migrant here- as well as a single Western Bonelli's Warbler. After breakfast, we started our journey towards Ifrane, passing through some wonderful scenery. In a grassy area close to El-Hajeb we had our only Calandra Larks of the trip, and a colony of Lesser Kestrels kept us



entertained for a while. Before arriving to Ifrane, we made a very productive stop in a extensive area of cork forest, where our 2 main targets, near-endemic Atlas Pied Flycatcher and Levillant's Woodpecker, were both seen almost seconds after stepping out of the bus. Now that's quick! We spent a couple of hours quietly walking around the forest, getting great views of a pair of woodpeckers and at least 5 Atlas Pied Flycatchers, together with some migrant European Pied Flycatchers, giving great comparisons, plus a few other goodies, such as Wood Lark, Mistle Thrush, delightful Common Firecrests, Eurasian Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreepers and a pair of Hawfinches. A pale Booted Eagle was also seen overhead.



*North African endemics Levillant's Woodpecker and Atlas Pied Flycatcher showed very well in the Ifrane area. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

We awoke to strong winds and heavy rain the next morning, which meant that few birds were seen in the forest, although a pair of local Great Spotted Woodpeckers and another Levillant's showed well. On the way back for a warm breakfast, we picked up our first Seeböhm's Wheatear of the trip, sheltering from the winds behind a rock. Later on, we moved towards Dayet Aaoua. This attractive wetland is usually teeming with waterbirds, and this year was no exception. A count of 650 Black-necked Grebes was certainly impressive, and scattered amongst them were Little and Great-crested Grebes, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, Common Pochards, Ferruginous Ducks and an interesting hybrid Common Pochard x Ferruginous Duck. Even more impressive were the numbers of Hawfinches, literally hundreds, feeding in the poplars around the lake and giving great views. We then moved on, and had lunch at Azrou. Our journey took us through the famous Forêt de Cedres, where we were treated with excellent views of a troop of Barbary Macaques, as well as European Robin, African Chaffinch and Coal Tit. Further south we stopped at the gorge of Fom Kheneg where we had a brief view of an Egyptian Vulture in flight, our first Atlas Long-legged Buzzard, a single Little Owl, 2 Eurasian Crag Martins, a Spanish Yellow Wagtail, 2 Black Wheatears, a singing Common (Rufous-tailed) Rock Thrush, a distant Moussier's Redstart- the first of the trip- and a pair of Rock Sparrows. Before reaching Zaida we saw several Eurasian Rollers perched on roadside wires. Upon arriving at an area of desert with short but dense vegetation we set on a mission: find the enigmatic, highly sought-after and usually extremely elusive Dupont's Lark, also called Devil Bird (wonder why...?). We soon heard a couple of birds, but as is usually the case with this species, they stopped singing as soon as we got a bit too close. While searching for them, we had good views of our first massive billed Thick-billed Larks, plus a few other desert birds such as Desert Wheatear. Overhead, plenty of Greater Short-toed Larks were in full display flight, but in the back of our minds we all knew we were here for another reason. We kept searching, until another Dupont's was heard singing close by. This time though, we had luck on our side, and the bird was soon discovered singing from top of a bush. Amazingly, it sat there for ages, and we enjoyed full-frame scope views of this little-known lark. After everyone was fully satisfied with their views, we left the bird, still singing as we departed.



Usually extremely elusive, this time the enigmatic Dupont's Lark proved rather easy near Zaida, giving great scope views. (Ron Knight)

We spent the night at a lovely, moroccan-style hotel in the outskirts of Midelt, and in the early morning we were already on our way south, climbing into the High Atlas. A stop on a slope with scattered junipers gave us a pair of near-endemic Tristram's Warblers after some searching, and we also enjoyed excellent views of several singing Western Orphean Warblers. An obliging, and stunning, male Moussier's Redstart was also much welcome. Continuing south, through progressively drier habitat, we made a couple of stops. First, to see a pair of Moroccan White Wagtails feeding on a river bank, and then at a good migrant spot where we had several singing Western Olivaceous Warblers, a Whinchat, and a nice flock of European Bee-eaters. Nearby, we saw a pair of Lanners, and a small colony of Little Swifts nesting below a bridge. After lunch at Er Rachidia, we went to a sparsely vegetated wadi, well known for its Streaked Scrub Warblers (subspecies *saharae*), a surprisingly scarce species in Morocco. It was the middle of the day, and thus very hot, but, luckily, within minutes of arriving, we had found a nice family group of these little gems, and had splendid views of them. The area was full of larks, with Bar-tailed, Greater Hoopoe, Maghreb (split from Crested) and Temminck's all on show. Other good additions to our list here included a pair of Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, several Melodious Warblers, Western Subalpine and Spectacled Warblers and a few Woodchat Shrikes. A quick search in the wadi on the other side of the road produced yet another group of Scrub Warblers. It was getting late, so we were quickly on the move again, heading south along the Ziz valley. Once at the famous city of Erfoud we transferred from our bus into 3 landrovers, for the last part of our journey. As the sun was just setting we arrived at our wonderful hotel located in a small desert oasis, what an idyllic setting!



Streaked Scrub Warbler (left), of the distinctive *saharae* subspecies, and a male Tristram's Warbler (right). (Ron Knight and Dani Lopez-Velasco)

We woke up early the next morning, on what was going to be one of the most exciting days of the tour. Tapping into our local network of contacts, our drivers phoned a local nomad, who took us into the desert and eventually directed us towards a small bush, just a few metres from us. There, to our amazement, was an incredibly well camouflaged Egyptian Nightjar in all its glory. We had walk-away views of this stunning species, until it was time to move on to look for some other targets. Next on the agenda was Spotted Sandgrouse, and after some driving around suitable habitat we were treated to excellent looks at a small



flock of them. After that, we went to look for Desert Sparrow, and soon we had great views of a nesting pair of these truly desert species. Another speciality of Merzouga is the scarce African Desert Warbler, and with that in mind, we started searching at a favoured area. After a while, one was heard, and eventually seen very well. Also in the area we saw a family of Desert Sparrows, with several recently fledged juveniles, an encouraging sight given how rare the species has become in recent times.



*The scarce African Desert Warbler (left) and the delightful Desert Sparrow, here a male with 2 young, (right), were seen well in the Merzouga area. (Ron Knight and Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

Our drivers then took us to a nearby oasis where we had no problem finding our target, the localized Fulvous Babbler. A small group gave very good views, as did several migrants, including a Red-necked Nightjar and a nice male Atlas Pied Flycatcher. With pretty much all possible targets in the area under our belts, we set off in search of the now extremely rare Houbara Bustard. Saudi falconers have hunted them over the years in this area, (and even killed 10 this year, prior to our visit, according to our drivers), leading them to the brink of extinction. Apparently, there are now only 2-3 left in the area, just near the border with Algeria. With that in mind, we knew it wasn't going to be an easy task. After a couple of hours driving, seeing a few Brown-necked Ravens and White-crowned Wheatears, we arrived to the favoured area, and started searching from the car. Time passed, and there was no sign of the bustards. We agreed to split in order to do an extensive search, and after another hour, one of the cars found a Houbara. Unfortunately, there was no mobile signal and the news couldn't be passed to the other vehicle. When we both met up again, we all immediately went straight back to the area. Unfortunately, there was no houbara to be seen there...but in Birdquest we never give up. We kept searching, knowing that they had to be somewhere. Finally, we found them, a pair of stunning Houbaras, seen well both in flight and on the ground. Mission accomplished! It was a sobering thought however, to know that these 2 birds might have been the last houbaras in the area.



*Record shot, due to heat haze, of probably the rarest of all Moroccan birds, the mighty Houbara Bustard. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

With an obvious sigh of relief, we retraced our steps and headed back to our accommodation for a late lunch. An hour birding around the hotel grounds produced several migrants, as well as a singing Eastern (Saharan) Olivaceous Warbler. Afterwards, we went to lake Srij, commonly known as Merzouga lake. After

this winter's rains, this seasonal lake was full of water, and teeming with birds too! Seeing a flock of Greater Flamingos with the magnificent sand dunes of Erg Chebbi in the background was definitely one of the tour highlights. Other species included 1,200 Ruddy Shelducks, together with 305 Marbled Ducks, a couple hundred Eurasian Coots, many waders including Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling and Little Stint and a few Black and Whiskered Terns catching insects over the water.



*Greater Flamingos and a Ruddy Shelduck at Merzouga Lake, with Erg Chebbi sand dunes in the back. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*



*The scenery around Merzouga is breathtaking! (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

The main target for the following morning was Pharaoh (Desert) Eagle Owl, and with that in mind, we headed towards the Rissani area. We eventually reached our destination, an area of cliffs where we soon found our prize, a magnificent adult Pharaoh Eagle Owl roosting in a cave. We had very good scope views of the bird, while nearby a pair of Desert Larks was seen. A lucky encounter with the scarce Rüppell's Fox was also unexpected. After the owl, we visited another cliff face where we had very good views of a pair of Lanners with 2 half-grown juveniles. Several Brown-necked Ravens were also logged, and a group of Spotted Sandgrouse gave fantastic photo opportunities, together with some Trumpeter Finches.



*Nice flock of Spotted Sandgrouse, with three males and a female in the front left, near Rissani. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

A short visit to the palm groves around Rissani gave us several of the much wanted and colorful Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, and an area of tamarisks allowed us to discern the differences in song and plumage of both Western and Eastern (Saharan) Olivaceous Warblers side-by-side. A single Fulvous Babbler was also seen, while several noisy Little Ringed Plovers were found on a dry river bed. After lunch, we spent some time watching Laughing Doves near Merzouga, also finding a skulking Common Grasshopper Warbler. Later we paid a visit to the famous Yasmima Cafe, however a few minutes after arriving an impressive sand storm built up and we had to hurry towards our vehicles. The experience of driving back to our hotel in the middle of the storm, with sand blowing everywhere and with visibility reduced to almost zero was something none of us will ever forget!

Next morning saw us on the road again, with the first proper stop being at Gorges du Todra. Amidst impressive scenery, we spent some time scanning the skies here until our target, a pair of Bonelli's Eagles, was well spotted by Barbara.





*Bonelli's Eagle (left) and House Bunting (right) gave excellent views at Gorges du Todra. (Dani Lopez-Velasco and Ron Knight)*

They put on a great show for all of us, before we adjourned to a nearby restaurant, where we watched Eurasian Crag Martins, Blue Rock Thrushes and House Buntings as we had lunch. We continued our journey westwards, eventually arriving at a wadi close to the famous Tagdilt track. The reason for coming here was to look for the scarce Western Mourning Wheatear. This species is frequently missed on tours, so we wanted to try at as many locations as possible. We slowly walked through the wadi, seeing a couple of Little Owls, until our target, a nice male Western Mourning Wheatear was found. Soon after, a female joined it, and we had excellent looks at the pair, as they fed their young at a nearby nest. With such quick success, we still had some time to explore the nearby plains around the Tagdilt track for some desert species. In just one hour we scored a flock of 15 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a group of delightful Cream-colored Coursers, quite a few Temminck's, Greater Hoopoe, Greater and Lesser Short-toed Larks, and our last wheatear species of the trip, Red-rumped Wheatear, of which we saw several.



*Two specialities of the Tagdilt Track: Red-rumped Wheatear (left) and Temminck's Lark (right). (Dani Lopez-Velasco and Ron Knight)*

The next day was spent mostly birding around the various Tagdilt tracks. We recorded similar species to those seen the previous evening, with lots of larks and wheatears seen, and improved our views of Cream-colored Courser and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Much of the morning was focused on trying to find Crowned Sandgrouse, and we visited 2 well-known drinking holes where flocks usually come to drink earlier in the season. However, both drinking spots were completely dry and no sandgrouse were seen. In our experience, even if dry, sometimes small flocks can still be present, but although we did our best by walking along the entire area 3 different times over the morning, no birds were seen, with the only noteworthy record being 2 Grey-headed Yellow Wagtails.

The next morning we decided for a last ditch attempt for the sandgrouse before heading west. Again, we visited the dry waterhole, but no luck. We then drove around several areas where we've seen them regularly in the past. Just as we were about to leave, a couple of birds were finally heard calling in flight. We all started scanning the sky desperately, but unfortunately to no avail. Coming a bit earlier in the season when there's



most likely water at the drinking holes makes seeing them a bit easier, but on the other hand a much more range-restricted and special bird, the Atlas Pied Flycatcher, wouldn't have arrived to its breeding areas yet (they usually arrive on the last few days of April) and would have been missed. Our itinerary timing is always about maximising our priorities with respect to target species, and in this case, Atlas was a priority. After a quick breakfast, we resumed our journey westwards, making a couple of stops at the huge barrage at Ouarzazate. On our second stop though, the bus got stuck in a muddy area, and it took some time, encouragement and pushing from most group participants (thanks to all!) before, with the help of some kind locals, we managed to pull it out. We had a great lunch at the ancient city of Ouarzazate, and later we continued driving towards Taroudant. On the way, as we dropped into the Souss Valley-famous for being the former breeding place of Dark-chanting Goshawk and Tawny Eagle, both now almost certainly extinct in the country- with its extensive argan forests, we had great views of the only Black-winged Kite of the trip, as well as some flocks of Spanish Sparrows.

The following morning was spent birding at various areas of relatively unspoiled argan forest. The highlight of the morning was a pair of Black-crowned Tchagras which performed superbly for us. A Peregrine of the race *brookei* and an *erlangerii* Lanner were seen almost side-by-side. Thekla Larks were everywhere and we also enjoyed good views of Western Black-eared and Black Wheatears, Western Orphean Warbler and our first Cirl Buntings of the trip, which included a nice singing male. In the afternoon we visited Aulouz Gorge, home not so long ago to a breeding colony of Northern Bald Ibis. Sadly no ibis are left now, but it's a good place for raptors nevertheless, and we had good scope views of a juvenile Peregrine, while several Red-rumped Swallows flew around us. A quick stop at the stony river bed of the Souss produced 3 Eurasian Stone-Curlews, which gave excellent scope views.



*Black-crowned Tchagra (left) and a male Western Orphean Warbler (right), both typical argan forest inhabitants. (Ron Knight)*

We went on to visit the famous Oued Massa reserve the next morning, starting in the inner parts of the reserve, where our main target was Brown-throated (Plain) Martin, being this area its main stronghold in the WP. After carefully scanning some hirundine flocks, we finally connected with a few of these drab martins flying overhead. Later, we ventured into the mouth of the estuary, where highlights included our first Northern Bald Ibis, of which we saw a flock of 4 flying by, a Glossy Ibis, several Eurasian Spoonbills, a variety of herons and 15 Marbled Ducks. A nice flock of gulls and terns, mostly formed by Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Sandwich Terns on the beach also contained 3 much welcome, especially for Bob, Lesser-crested Terns, a single Caspian and 3 Gull-billed Terns and 6 Audouin's Gulls. In the scrub around the track, a couple of Black-crowned Tchagras were much in evidence, doing classical display flights. After lunch we unsuccessfully explored some coastal fields in search of more ibis. A few noteworthy sightings were logged though, including a very late female Hen Harrier, and a flushed Red-necked Nightjar. We then headed north and arrived to the Souss estuary, where we spent an enjoyable hour looking at the various waders, flamingos, gulls and terns present, which included Pied Avocet, Common Ringed, Kentish and Grey Plovers, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Little Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank and Gull-billed and Common Terns. As light faded, we waited at our Red-necked Nightjar stake out, where soon a bird was first heard singing, and later spotlighted, both sitting on a tree and flying over the track.

On our way to Cap Rhir the next morning we made a few stops along the coast to observe several small flocks of Audouin's Gulls, some of them carrying color rings from the colony of Ebro Delta (North-Eastern Spain), the largest one in the world. An hour of seawatching off the headland was a fairly sedate affair, with only a few Cory's Shearwaters, around one hundred Northern Gannets, a Common Scoter and best of all, 5 Lesser-crested Terns, all moving north. At the coastal fields near Tamri we succeeded in quickly finding, from the main road no less, a small group of 3 Northern Bald Ibis.



*A group of the Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis performed superbly in the coastal fields of Tamri. (Ron Knight and Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

It's always a privilege to see this Critically Endangered species, now with only 2 colonies left in the entire world, one in Tamri and the other one in the Souss-Massa reserve, totalling less than 500 birds. Sadly, the Syria colony found in 2002, with 3 pairs at the time, held only a single bird this year, so although 4 birds were seen in the wintering grounds in Ethiopia, it seems clear that the subspecies will soon be extinct. So Morocco is clearly now the place to see these prehistorical birds, and, we spent quite some time admiring them from the road, as they busily fed in the fields. We then checked some nearby cliffs and had excellent, full frame scope views of a pair of adult Barbary Falcons. Barbary Falcons are quite rare in Morocco, and many of the sightings refer instead to misidentifications, usually local *brookei* Peregrines which can show some rusty color on the nape.



*Both light and dark phase Eleonora's Falcons were on show near Essaouira. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

Our next destination was the old fishing harbor of Essaouira, where we had a sumptuous fish lunch at a wonderful restaurant overlooking the beach. Afterwards, we went to the nearby estuary, where we got excellent views of several Eleonora's Falcons, which breed on the Ile de Mogador, just offshore. The journey to Marrakech proved uneventful, with little of note on the way.



Our final day of the tour was spent around the ski resort of Oukaimeden, in the High Atlas. The main target here was African Crimson-winged Finch (split from Asian), a species that can prove tricky sometimes. In order to have the best chances for seeing it, we arrived very early the next morning, and much to our surprise, the very first bird we saw was a Crimson-winged Finch perched on a fence in the parking lot! We had good scope views until it flew off. With great relief, we spent the rest of the morning walking along the stream and nearby slopes, seeing plenty more African Crimson-winged Finches, which were certainly easy and common this year. A few other interesting species such as the local subspecies of Horned (Shore) Lark, flocks of both Alpine and Red-billed Choughs, Black Redstarts, Seebohm's Wheatears and Rock Sparrows were also sighted. As we descended from the mountains, we made several stops to look for White-throated Dipper, until we eventually found 2 sitting on a rock in a fast flowing stream. Nearby, a singing Rock Bunting was surprisingly the first, and only, of the trip. Once back at Marrakech, we paid a visit to the world famous Place Jemaa el Fna. The bustling square and souq was filled by youths with chained Barbary Apes, water-sellers in colourful costumes, snake charmers, story-tellers and magicians. After spending some time getting a taste of the local culture we returned to our hotel for our last dinner.



*Oukaimeden is the best place to see the recently split African Crimson-winged Finch (left) and Seebohm's Wheatear (right). (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

All in all, it had been a great trip. Morocco is a very special country, different in many ways to all its neighbours, with lots of birds, superb scenery, delicious food and friendly locals. Check for yourself next year!



*When seen this close, Black-necked grebes are real stunners. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*



*Spotted Sandgrouse, here a female, is one of the main targets in the Merzouga area. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*





*The brightly-colored Moussier's Redstart is arguably the most desired of all North African endemic birds. (Ron Knight)*

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

**CR** = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

**Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara* ◊ Two pairs seen in the Zaër and another pair at Oued Souss.

**Double-spurred Francolin** *Francolinus bicalcaratus* Great views of three birds in the Zaër.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* (H) Heard only in the Zaër.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* Noted at several locations, with an impressive count of 1200 at Merzouga lake.



Ruddy Shelduck at Dayet Aaoua. (Ron Knight)

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera* One seen at lac de Sidi Bourhaba, with a further eight at Dayet Aaoua.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* Widespread, with up to 25 birds at Dayet Aaoua.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* Only two birds at Dayet Aaoua.

**Marbled Duck (M Teal)** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (VU) Noted at several locations, with 305 at Merzouga lake.



Our first Marbled Ducks were seen at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba. (Ron Knight)

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* Up to 50 at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* Two pairs at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba, and nearly 15 at Dayet Aaoua.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* (NT) Up to six pairs at Sidi Bourhaba, with a further 6 individuals at Dayet Aaoua.

**(Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) x Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*))** One male at Dayet Aaoua.)

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* Several flocks along the coastline north of Rabat.

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* ◊(E) Eight birds seen very well at lac de Sidi Bourhaba.

**Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris borealis* ◊ Four birds flying north at Cap Rhir.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Recorded at Sidi Bourhaba and Dayet Aaoua.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Several seen at Sidi Bourhaba, Dayet Aaoua and Ouarzazate barrage.

**Black-necked Grebe (Eared G)** *Podiceps nigricollis* An impressive count of 650 birds at Dayet Aaoua.

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* Small flocks at Merzouga lake, Ouedd Souss and Oued Massa.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* Common and widespread.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* A single bird at Oued Massa.

**Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* ◊(CE) 4 birds in flight at Oued Massa and 3 birds seen very well near Tamri.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* A few birds seen at Oued Massa and Oued Souss.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Only recorded at Sidi Bourhaba, where 3 birds were seen.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Singles at Sidi Bourhaba and Oued Massa, and 3 migrants near Cap Rhir.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Seen at most wetland sites.

**Great Egret (G White E)** *Egretta alba* One at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers at several localities.

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* 80 birds flying North at Cap Rhir.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* A few of the distinctive *maroccanus* subspecies at Oued Massa.



**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* One along the Ziz river.  
**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* One adult by the roadside near Taroudant.  
**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* One briefly in flight at Fom Kheneg.  
**Short-toed Snake Eagle (S-t Eagle)** *Circaetus gallicus* A total of five birds seen this year.  
**Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* Ten scattered sightings.  
**Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata* Great views of a pair at Gorges du Todra.  
**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* Only two birds seen, at Sidi Bourhaba.  
**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* At least eight birds patrolling the reedbed at Sidi Bourhaba.  
**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* One late female at Oued Massa.  
**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Fairly common and widespread.  
**Atlas Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* ◊ A total of ten birds seen.



We enjoyed good views of Atlas Long-legged Buzzard at several locations. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* Recorded at various places, with up to 25 near El Hajeb.  
**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* Common and widespread.  
**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* One bird in flight over Sidi Bourhaba.  
**Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* First seen at Oued Souss, then at least 15 put on a great show at Essaouira.  
**Lanner** *Falco biarmicus* Two along the Ziz Valley, a pair with two chicks at Rissani and one near Taroudant.  
**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus* Singles near Rissani, Taroudant and Aoulouz.  
**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* ◊ Excellent views of a pair near Tamri.  
**Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* ◊(V) After a lot of effort, we had great views of a pair in the Merzouga desert  
**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* A pair showed well at lac de Sidi Bourhaba.  
**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Six birds noted at Sidi Bourhaba.  
**Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C)** *Fulica cristata* Seen at various locations, with up to 100 at Dayet Aaoua.



A nice Red-knobbed Coot showing its distinctive red knobs. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* Noted at several places, with up to 200 at Merzouga lake.  
**Eurasian Stone-curlew (Stone-curlew)** *Burhinus oedicnemus* Seen at the Souss Valley and Oued Massa.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* Two along the coastline north of Rabat and four at Oued Massa.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Seen at various wetlands.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avoetia* Just three recorded at Oued Souss.

**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* 50 seen at Oued Souss.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* A total of 15 seen in the tour.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* Highest count of 150 birds at Oued Souss.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Highest count of 20 at Oued Souss.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Several seen along the coast.

**Eurasian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Five birds at scattered locations.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus* Small numbers at Dayet Aaoua, Merzouga lake and Oued Souss.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Three at Merzouga lake.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* A migrant seen near Rissani.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Only two birds were recorded.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers at several localities.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* Ten along the coastline north of Rabat, and a further five at Oued Souss.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* 15 at Oued Souss.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Small numbers seen at various locations.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* Up to 100 at Merzouga lake, with a further 15 at Oued Souss.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* A flock of 25 at Merzouga lake.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Fairly common along the coast.

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* Great views of several small groups on the Tagdilt track.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Four birds at Oued Souss.

**Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaeetus audouinii (NT)* Four at Oued Massa and up to 15 along the coast near Cap Rhir.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* Common on the coast.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* Common on the coast.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Three birds at Oued Massa and at least 15 at Oued Souss with other terns.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* One at the Souss estuary.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* Good numbers this year, with 3 at Oued Souss and 5 at Cap Rhir.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* Fairly common along the coast.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* Only two seen at Oued Souss.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* Six birds present with other terns at Oued Souss.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* A single bird was recorded at Merzouga lake.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* Six birds at Ayet Daaoua and three at Merzouga lake.

**Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus* Great views of a flock of 9 near Merzouga and 5 near Rissani.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* A total of 14 seen on the Tagdilt track on two dates.

**Crowned Sandgrouse** *Pterocles coronatus (H)* Despite much searching, only heard on our last try in the Tagdilt.

**Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)** *Columba livia* Many feral birds in the towns, and a few presumed wild ones on gorges.

**Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* Small numbers noted at several locations.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* Common and widespread

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* Fairly common, especially in the Zaër area.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Seen around Merzouga and along the Souss Valley.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus (H)* Heard only in the Zaër area.

**Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* Seen in flight on our first morning.

**Pharaoh (Desert) Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* ♦ Great scope views of an adult on its cave near Rissani.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* A total of 8 seen throughout the tour.





*Little Owl. (Ron Knight)*

**Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*** Two birds seen at dusk over Lac de Sidi Bourhaba.

**Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*** ♦ Daytime roosting birds seen at 3 spots, and one at night at the Souss.

**Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*** ♦ Excellent views of a roosting bird near Merzouga

**Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*** Fairly common and widespread.

**Common Swift *Apus apus*** Common and widespread.

**Alpine Swift *Tachymartus melba*** Two near El Hajeb and five over Dayet Aaoua.



*Several Alpine Swifts were seen in flight over Dayet Aaoua. (Ron Knight)*

**Little Swift *Apus affinis*** Small numbers noted at several locations.

**European Roller *Coracias garrulus*** A total of 16 birds seen throughout the tour.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*** Six birds seen well around Rissani.



*The palm-groves around Rissani are a great place to look for Blue-cheeked Bee-eater. (Ron Knight)*

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Widespread.  
**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* Nine birds recorded.  
**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* One bird seen near Taroudant.  
**Levaillant's Woodpecker (L Green W)** *Picus vaillantii* ◇ Three birds showed very well near Ifrane.  
**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* Good views of a pair near Ifrane.  
**Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed Bush Shrike)** *Tchagra senegala* Seen at the Souss Valley and Oued Massa.  
**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.  
**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Common and widespread.  
**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* Six sightings at widely scattered locations.  
**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* Small numbers in the Zaeër and Ifrane area.  
**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica* First seen at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba, then common at Oued Massa and Oued Souss.



*The distinctive mauritanica subspecies of Magpie, showing its bare blue skin around the eye. (Ron Knight)*

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* A large flock was seen at Oukaimeden.  
**Alpine Chough (Yellow-billed C)** *Pyrhcorax graculus* Small numbers at Oukaimeden.  
**Western Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula* Small numbers near Sidi Bourhaba and Ifrane.  
**Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis* ◇ Only seen in the Merzouga and Rissani area.  
**Northern Raven** *Corvus corax* Small numbers recorded at several localities.  
**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* Only seen near Ifrane and Azrou.  
**African Blue Tit (North A B T)** *Cyanistes teneriffae* ◇ Fairly common, especially in the north.  
**Great Tit** *Parus major* A few birds in the north.  
**Greater Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes* Fairly common around Merzouga and on the Tagdilt track.



*Greater Hoopoe Larks were common in the sandy desert of Merzouga. (Ron Knight)*



**Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey* ◊ Great views of three near Zeida, and a further two on the Tagdilt track.



Male Thick-billed Lark near Zeida. (Ron Knight)

**Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* A few singing birds on a grassy area on the drive to Ifrane.

**Bar-tailed Lark (B-t Desert L)** *Ammomanes cinctura* Fairly common in the desert areas of the south-east.

**Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti* Single pairs near Rissani and Boumalne.



Desert Larks, in Morocco of the race payni, usually occur in rocky areas. (Ron Knight)

**Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* Common on the plains south of Zeida and in the Tagdilt track.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens* Surprisingly scarce this year, with only a couple on the Tagdilt track.

**Dupont's Lark** *Chersophilus duponti* ◊ Great scope views of a singing bird on the plains south of Zeida.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* Common and widespread.

**Maghreb Lark** *Galerida macrorhyncha* ◊ Several of this recent split seen well in a wadi near Goulmima.

**Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae* Widespread, noted at several localities.

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea* One seen well near Ifrane.

**Horned Lark (Shore L)** *Eremophila alpestris* Four birds eventually showed well at Oukaimeden.

**Temminck's Lark** *Eremophila bilopha* ◊ First seen near Goulmima, then fairly common in the Tagdilt track.



Smart-looking Temminck's Larks were common this year in the Tagdilt track. (Ron Knight)

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* Common and widespread.

**Brown-throated Martin (Plain M)** *Riparia paludicola* Three birds seen at Oued Massa.

**Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*** One seen at Sidi Bourhaba and two at Oued Massa.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*** Common and widespread.

**Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*** ... Particularly common at Gorges du Todra.

**Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*** Small numbers at scattered locations.

**Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*** Seen at various places, especially along the Souss Valley.

**Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*** Several seen and heard in the Zaër area.

**Streaked Scrub Warbler (Scrub W) *Scotocerca inquieta*** Good views of two small groups in a wadi near Goulmima.

**Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*** Four birds seen.

**Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*** Six scattered sightings.

**Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*** Seven birds recorded throughout the tour, with four together in the Zaër.



This Wood Warbler was seen in our hotel garden at Merzouga. (Ron Knight).

**Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*** A few migrants in the Merzouga area, and heard at Oued Massa.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*** Birds of the *reiseri* subspecies were seen at Merzouga and Rissani.

**Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca*** Fairly common and widespread.



Western Olivaceous Warblers, depicted here, have larger and different-shaped bills than Eastern (Saharan) Olivaceous Warblers. They can occur side by side, like in the Rissani area, and song is usually the easiest way for separating them. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

**Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*** Eight individuals were recorded.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*** One bird seen briefly at Merzouga.

**Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis*** Fairly common and widespread.

**Fulvous Babbler** *Turdoides fulva* ◊ A group of five seen well near Merzouga, and a single bird near Rissani.



Fulvous Babblers can be tricky to find sometimes. We were lucky this year and saw them at two locations. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

- Eurasian Blackcap (Blackcap)** *Sylvia atricapilla* One heard in the Zaër and one seen at Oued Massa.  
**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* Five sightings throughout the tour.  
**Western Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* ◊ Three birds south of Midelt, with a further three in the Souss Valley.  
**African Desert Warbler** *Sylvia deserti* ◊ Great views of a single individual in a wadi near Merzouga.  
**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* Two birds in the Merzouga area were the only ones of the trip.  
**Tristram's Warbler** *Sylvia deserticola* ◊ Very good views of a male in the mountains south of Midelt  
**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* A single bird was seen in a wadi near Goulmima.  
**Western Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia (cantillans) inornata* Singles at Merzouga, Goulmima and Taroudant.  
**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Fairly common in the north and west.  
**Common Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla* Several seen very well near Ifrane.  
**Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* Heard in the Zaër, and a couple seen below Oukaimeden.  
**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* A few birds seen well in the Ifrane area.  
**Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* Four birds seen near Ifrane.  
**Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* Fairly common and widespread.  
**Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* Fairly common and widespread.  
**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* Fairly common around Ifrane.  
**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* Only seen near Azrou.  
**Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* Particularly common in the Zaër.  
**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (R Bush R)** *Cercotrichas galactotes* Seen near Merzouga and the Souss Valley.



Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin. (Ron Knight)

- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* Five birds were recorded at Oukaimeden.  
**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* A total of seven seen throughout the tour.



**Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* ◇ Seen in the Middle Atlas, the Souss Valley and Oued Massa.



*Moussier's Redstarts are always a delightful sight. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* Four birds at widely scattered localities.

**European Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola* Fairly common at Oued Massa.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Five birds near Goulmima.

**Seebohm's Wheatear** *Oenanthe seebohmi* ◇ First seen near Ifrane, then common at Oukaimeden.

**Western Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* Eleven sightings scattered across the country.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Common in desert regions.

**Red-rumped Wheatear** *Oenanthe moesta* ◇ Several on the various Tagdilt tracks.



*Female Red-rumped Wheatears are very distinctive. (Ron Knight)*

**Western Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe (lugens) halophila* ◇ Excellent views of a pair in the Boumalne area.



*This nesting first-summer male Western Mourning Wheatear gave great views in the Boumalne area. (Ron Knight and Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

**White-crowned Wheatear (W-c Black W) *Oenanthe leucopyga*** ◇ Common in the south-eastern desert regions.



*White-crowned Wheatears are very common around Merzouga area. (Ron Knight)*

**Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*** ◇ Seen at various locations.

**Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis***...A male seen at Fom Kheneg.

**Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*** Seen at several locations.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*** Migrants were recorded at many localities throughout the tour.

**European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*** Fairly common this year, with more than 30 seen.

**Atlas Pied Flycatcher (Atlas F) *Ficedula speculigera*** ◇ Great views of 5 males near Ifrane and 1 near Merzouga.



*Male Atlas Pied Flycatchers have extensive white forehead and primary-base patches, similar to those of Collared Flycatcher. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

**White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*** Two birds were seen below Oukaimeden.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*** Common throughout.

**Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*** Several flocks were noted near Taroudant.

**Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*** ◇ A total of 6 birds (two pairs and two young) in the Merzouga area.



*Desert Sparrow is a truly desert, and now sadly declining, species. (Ron Knight)*

**Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*** Seen at various places, with up to 20 at Oukaimeden.

**Ashy-headed Wagtail *Motacilla (flava) cinereocapilla*** One bird seen at Oued Massa.

**Spanish Wagtail *Motacilla (flava) iberiae*** Males were seen at Fom Khegen and at Oued Massa, where common.

**Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla (flava) thunbergi*** Two males on the Tagdilt track.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*** One in flight in the Zaër.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*** Small numbers seen at various localities, with up to four at Dayet Aaoua.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) alba*** One bird at Oued Massa.

**Moroccan Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) subpersonata*** ♦ First seen along the Ziz river, then seen at 5 more locations.

**African Chaffinch *Fringilla (coelebs) africana*** Fairly common and widespread.



*African Chaffinch is split from Common Chaffinch by some authorities. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*** First seen near Ifrane, with at least 150 feeding at Dayet Aaoua.



*There were lots of Hawfinches this year at Dayet Aaoua. (Ron Knight).*

**Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*** Quite a few a birds seen in desert areas of the south.



*Male Trumpeter Finch. (Ron Knight)*



**African Crimson-winged Finch** *Rhodopechys alienus* ◊ At least 20 at Oukaimeden on our last day.



*Crimson-winged Finch has recently been split into African and Asian Crimson-winged Finches. (Ron Knight)*

**European Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris* Common and widespread.

**Common Linnet** *Linaria cannabina* Small numbers at several locations.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* Widespread.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Fairly common and widespread.

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* Common and widespread.

**Cirl Bunting** *Emberiza cirlus* Four birds seen in the Souss Valley.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* Seen well below Oukaimeden.

**House Bunting** *Emberiza sahari* ◊ Widespread, mainly in the south.

## MAMMALS

**Cape Hare** *Lepus capensis* One seen near Er Rachidia.

**Shaw's Jird** *Meriones shawi* Several recorded along the Tagdilt track.

**Rüppell's Fox** *Vulpes rueppellii* One seen near Rissani.

**Barbary Macaque (B Ape)** *Macaca sylvanus* A troop of 20 was seen at the Forêt de Cedres.

## NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

### **Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*

The subspecies that occurs in Morocco is the nominate.

### **Double-spurred Francolin** *Francolinus bicalcaratus*

The endemic subspecies that occurs in Morocco is *ayesha*.

### **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

The white-bellied birds that occur in Morocco belong to the *maroccanus* subspecies.

### **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeroginosus*

The breeding birds seen at Sidi Bourhaba belong to the subspecies *harteri*.

### **Atlas Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*

The distinctive *cirtensis* subspecies of Long-legged Buzzard occurring in North Africa is quite different to nominate birds, and can be quite similar to Steppe Buzzard (*Buteo vulpinus*).

**Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora***

The species is named after Giudicessa Eleonora d'Arborea (1350-1404), heroine of Sardinia's struggle for independence against Aragon, who made laws protecting breeding raptors.

**Lanner *Falco biarmicus***

The subspecies occurring in Morocco is *erlangeri*.

**Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***

The small subspecies that occurs in Morocco is *brookei*, which can show rusty color on the nape, as well as buff tones on the underparts, and thus can be quite similar to Barbary Falcon.

**Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata***

The subspecies that occurs in Morocco is the nominate, *undulata*.

**European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

Migrants belong to the nominate race, while breeding birds are *arenicola*.

**Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis***

The subspecies in Morocco is *phoenicophila*.

**Pharaoh (Desert) Eagle Owl *Bubo ascalaphus***

This distinctive desert owl has recently been split from Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*.

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

The subspecies in Morocco is *glauca*.

**Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius***

The subspecies that occurs in Morocco is *saharae*.

**Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus***

The subspecies in Morocco is *brehmorum*.

**Little Swift *Apus affinis***

Asian birds have now been split, and are called House Swifts *Apus nipalensis*. Little Swifts are represented in Morocco by the subspecies *galilejen*.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus***

The subspecies breeding in Morocco is *chrysocercus*.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

The race in Morocco is *mauritanus*.

**Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed Bush Shrike) *Tchagra senegalensis***

The subspecies in Morocco is *cucullata*.

**Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis***

Birds in the south-east belong to the subspecies *elegans*, and those in the coast are *algeriensis*. Recent taxonomic studies propose to include all north african forms within Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*).

**Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator***

Birds seen belonged to the nominate subspecies.

**Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

Birds in Northern Morocco belong to the race *whitakeri*.

**Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica***

The birds in Morocco are of the distinctive subspecies *mauritanica* which is smaller than the nominate form and has an area of bare blue skin around the eye. It has been suggested that this form may merit specific status as Maghreb Magpie.

**Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula***

Birds in Morocco belong to the subspecies *spermologus*.

**Northern Raven *Corvus corax***

Represented in Morocco by the subspecies *tingitanus*.

**Coal Tit *Periparus ater***

The subspecies *atlas* is endemic to Morocco.

**African Blue Tit (North A B T) *Cyanistes teneriffae***

This recent split occurs in North Africa and the Canaries, where several subspecies occur.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

The subspecies in Morocco is *excelsus*.

**Bar-tailed Lark (Bar-tailed Desert Lark) *Ammomanes cincturus***

The subspecies in Morocco is *arenicolor*.

**Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti***

The subspecies in Morocco is *payni*.

**Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla***

The subspecies in Morocco is *rubiginosa*.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens***

The resident subspecies in Morocco is *minor*.

**Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti***

The nominate subspecies is the one that occurs in Morocco.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Five races occur in Morocco.

**Maghreb (Long-billed Crested) Lark *Galerida macrorhyncha***

Originally part of the Crested Lark complex, races *macrorhyncha* and *randonii* have recently been split as a separate species, Maghreb Lark *G. macrorhyncha*.

**Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae***

Several subspecies occur in Morocco, with *erlangeri* in the north, *aguirrei* in the more southern areas, and *ruficolor* in the west. The species is named after Thekla Brehm, daughter of the 19th century German ornithologist Christian Brehm.

**Wood Lark *Lullula arborea***

The resident subspecies in Morocco is *pallida*.

**Horned Lark (Shore Lark) *Eremophila alpestris***

The local race, *atlas*, is endemic to the Atlas mountains.

**Brown-throated (Plain) Martin *Riparia paludicola***

The subspecies in Morocco is *mauretanica*.



**Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica***

The subspecies in Morocco is the widespread *rufula*.

**Streaked Scrub Warbler (Scrub W) *Scotocerca inquieta***

The subspecies in south-eastern Morocco is *saharae*, while birds in the south-west belong to *theresae*.

**Eastern (Saharan) Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida reiseri***

Birds in south-eastern Morocco belong to the *reiseri* subspecies, called Saharan Olivaceous Warbler.

**Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus***

The subspecies in Morocco is *maroccanus*.

**Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola***

The subspecies that occurs in Morocco is *maroccana*.

**Western Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia (cantillans) inornata***

A recent taxonomic paper by Lars Svensson treats Subalpine Warbler as three different species, Western Subalpine, Eastern Subalpine and Moltoni's Warbler. Birds in Morocco can be either migrant *iberiae* or breeding *inornata*.

**Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea***

The subspecies in Northern Morocco is *hispaniensis*.

**Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla***

The subspecies in Morocco is *mauritanica*.

**Common Blackbird *Turdus merula***

The subspecies in Morocco is *mauritanicus*.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

The subspecies that occurs in Morocco is *deichleri*.

**Seebohm's Wheatear *Oenanthe seebohmi***

This distinctive dark-throated form was formerly lumped in Northern Wheatear.

**Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti***

The subspecies *homochroa* is the one found in Morocco.

**Black wheatear *Oenanthe leucura***

The duller subspecies *syenitica* is the one found in Morocco.

**Atlas Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula speculigera***

Atlas Flycatcher has recently been split from European Pied Flycatcher. The subspecies *iberiae* is still part of European Pied, although it's extremely similar to Atlas.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*:**

The resident subspecies in Morocco is *tingitanus*.

**Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex***

The subspecies in Morocco is *saharae*.

**Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia***

The subspecies in Morocco is *barbara*.

**Moroccan Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) subpersonata***

This distinctive form of White Wagtail is treated as a different species by several authorities.

**African Chaffinch *Fringilla (coelebs) africana***

This distinctive form of Common Chaffinch is treated as a different species by several authorities.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

The resident subspecies is *buvryi*.

**Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus***

The subspecies in Morocco is *zedlitzii*.

**African Crimson-winged Finch *Rhodopechys alienus***

Crimson-winged Finch has now been split into African (*alienus*) and Asian (*sanguineus*) Crimson-winged Finches.

**European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

Two resident subspecies occur in Morocco: *vanmarli* in the north-west and *voousi* in the Atlas mountains.

**Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina***

The resident race in Morocco is *mediterranea*.

**European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

The resident subspecies in Morocco is *parva*.

**House Bunting *Emberiza sahari***

This species was formerly lumped in Striolated Bunting *E. striolata* of the Middle East and north-east Africa.