



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Morocco

9<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007



*Northern Bald Ibis by David Hoddinott*

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leaders Erik Forsyth & David Hoddinott**

### Tour Summary

Arriving in Morocco in the late afternoon we drove into the city of Agadir where a roosting Barbary Falcon greeted us on the roof of our hotel! What a cracking start to our Moroccan adventure. The next day had us visiting Oued Massa National Park, an estuary with reedbeds and surrounded by scrubland. Our first birds were the Moroccan race of European Magpie with the distinct blue-ear covert, a singing Cetti's Warbler and a pair of Barbary Partridge. Many more exciting birds were seen here and highlights included Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Common Kingfisher, Eurasian Wryneck, the beautiful Moussier's Redstart (a North African endemic) and a confiding Black-crowned Tchagra. *En route* to lunch we had our only Little Swift of the tour. After an enjoyable sit down lunch we headed to Tamri to look for the mythical Waldrapp or Northern Bald Ibis, one of the world's rarest and most sought-after species. At our stake-out, we soon found a flock of these critically endangered birds feeding in a field. We set up scopes and enjoyed excellent views. Here we were also treated to scope views of a pair of Barbary

Falcon and further views of a confiding ibis flock, which allowed for good photos. We returned to Agadir a very happy and satisfied bunch of birders!

Next followed a long day of driving as we traveled from Agadir to Boumalne Du Dades. The journey was enlivened by the impressive snow-capped High Atlas Mountains and we were flanked in the south by the equally stunning Anti Atlas Mountains. We passed through several historical towns and stopped in Tarroudannt to enjoy the walled Medina. Despite the hive of activity and the local lads playing a football match, two pairs of White Stork nested in close proximity. Our next stop was Ourzazate where we enjoyed a sit down lunch, a traditional Tajinne meal of either chicken or beef with vegetables. We arrived at our hotel in the afternoon and made our first excursion to the Tagdilt Track for some late afternoon birding. The rubbish dump was fairly birdy and soon we were watching our first Red-rumped Wheatear, Red-throated Pipit and we heard a singing Greater Hoopoe-Lark.

We revisited the Tagdilt Track early the following morning, exploring numerous tracks and roads and even venturing out over the steppe plains on foot. We were scanning hard for Houbara Bustard, which is known to breed in this area but sadly few remain due to heavy hunting by Arab falconers. We did not find any Houbara but were compensated well with Long-legged Buzzard, Crowned and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, the attractive Temminck's Lark, Mourning Wheatear and pink Trumpeter Finches. In the afternoon we visited Todra Gorge. A stunning area of towering cliff faces and a crystal clear stream. A single Gray Wagtail and a pair of Bonelli's Eagle were seen while we enjoyed a late afternoon coffee.

The red Saharan sand dunes of Erg Chebbi were our next birding site. Leaving the hotel we picked up our only Little Owl of the tour. *En route*, we were extremely fortunate to find a pair of the nomadic Thick-billed Lark feeding next to the road. After enjoying close scope looks at these highly prized, massive larks, we headed off to Rissani arriving in time for lunch. Thereafter, we swapped our bus for 4x4's and headed out for Erg Chebbi. After crossing a huge gravel plain we came across several regal Cream-colored Courser, Desert and Bar-tailed Desert Lark, as well as three more Thick-billed Larks. We arrived at Erg Chebbi in the late afternoon and savored sun setting behind the impressive dunes.

We had the whole day to explore this splendid area. First off we walked the vegetated areas finding Desert Wheatear, Spectacled Warbler and two brief Desert Sparrows. Merzouga Lake was teeming with birds and held a variety of waterfowl including several Marbled Teal, a lone drake Ferruginous Duck and a variety of waders including Little Ringed Plover and Black-tailed Godwit. We also found several smartly plumaged Yellow Wagtails. An unusual sighting was four winter-plumaged Mediterranean Gulls. A late afternoon visit to a rocky escarpment to look for Pharaoh Eagle Owl drew a blank but we did find a confiding Tristram's Warbler, which allowed good views. Wadis around Erg Chebbi and Rissani produced more Tristram's and a delightful African Desert Warbler singing from a grassy area, which we scoped and enjoyed excellent looks. After that success we then headed off to Rissani for lunch and drove on to Ourzazate. A brief stop *en route* in Boumalne Du Dades produced our only Eurasian Hoopoe of the tour.

An early start had us cruising up the Tizi-n-Tichka Pass in the dark. Our plan was to be in the high mountains around Oukaïmeden before lunch to search for a number of target birds. Our first comfort stop yielded African Blue Tit and a singing Cetti's Warbler as well as a spectacular sunrise alongside the snow-capped High Atlas Mountains. An impromptu stop in Pine forest yielded a nice selection of woodland birds more reminiscent of birding in Europe than Africa! These included Great Spotted Woodpecker, Short-toed Treecreeper and Winter Wren. Before we reached Oukaïmeden we birded along a road flanked by orchards and several poplar trees. Here we enjoyed excellent close views of the North African endemic Levaillant's Woodpecker and swirling flocks of



Red-billed Chough. Arriving in Oukaimeden was surreal with snow laden slopes, ski-runs, hotels and shops! We felt as if we had arrived at a European holiday resort! At our hotel we found a pair of Mistle Thrush and compared flocks of Alpine (Yellow-billed) Chough with the commoner Red-billed. We quickly started birding in earnest and soon we were watching stunning Crimson-winged Finch feeding in grass tufts scattered amongst the snow...what a sight! Other great birds here were numerous Horned (Shore) Lark (of an endemic North African race), the very difficult Hawfinch, Cirl and Rock Bunting and Rock Sparrow. A nearby stream was targeted for the charming White-throated Dipper. After a short while we were soon watching a pair foraging in the clear mountain stream much to the delight of the group. After a great day we relaxed, enjoyed a hot bath and a fine meal at our hotel.

The following morning we were out early in search of Alpine Accentor. It didn't take too long to find this accentor, a great tick for the African list, and soon we were enjoying close views. Below in some Argan trees, Mark pointed out the call of Ring Ouzel and after several minutes we managed to scope a male. On our return to the hotel Mark was on form again finding a Brambling amongst a flock of Common Chaffinch, a good find and scarce winter visitor so far south. Making our way down the scenic Tiz-n-Test Pass we found our only flock of Black Kites and a smart little Firecrest.

We arrived in Agadir in the evening and quickly made our way to the Oued Souss estuary. In fading light we still managed to add seven species new to our trip list including over fifty Greater Flamingo, European Oystercatcher, Eurasian Thick-knee (Stone Curlew) and a spot lit Red-necked Nightjar to finish the tour off in style. This late winter tour had been a great success with all the North African endemics seen well and a huge range of desert and mountain birds enjoyed in some spectacular scenery.

## Annotated Checklists of Birds and Mammals

**Birds:** nomenclature and taxonomy follows J. F. Clements *Birds of the World: A Checklist* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (2000) Ibis Publishing Company, with updates to July 2005. Any deviations from Clements are indicated by square brackets and explained in taxonomic notes. Extensive research has been conducted into potential splits.

**Mammals:** nomenclature and taxonomy follows J. Kingdon *The Kingdon Fieldguide to African Mammals* (1997) Academic Press.

## BIRDS

### Grebes Podicipedidae

**Little Grebe**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Twenty at Oued Massa near Agadir and a single bird at the temporary Merzouga Lake.

### Shearwaters and Petrels Procellariidae

**Cory's Shearwater**

*Calonectris diomedea*

Two birds were seen gliding beyond the breaking waves at Oued Massa.

**Mediterranean Shearwater**

*Puffinus yelkouan*

A single bird was seen from the Casablanca Lighthouse on the post tour extension.

### Gannets Sulidae

**Northern Gannet**

*Morus bassanus*

Up to forty birds were seen during our short seawatch from Cap Rhir. A single bird was seen from



the Casablanca Lighthouse on the post tour extension.

### Cormorants & Shags Phalacrocoracidae

#### **Great Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus*

Thirty birds were seen at Oued Massa and a single bird was seen on the Oued Souss near Talouine.

*NOTE: The resident white-breasted African subspecies P. c. lucidus is regarded by some authorities to be a distinct species; White-breasted Cormorant.*

### Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae

#### **Gray Heron**

*Ardea cinerea*

Five at Oued Massa, a single at Merzouga Lake and ten at Oued Souss.

#### **Little Egret**

*Egretta garzetta*

Four at Oued Massa, a single at Merzouga Lake and six on our post tour to Casablanca.

*NOTE: Clements lumps Little and Madagascar's Dimorphic Egret E. dimorpha into a single species. This treatment is not widely accepted.*

#### **Squacco Heron**

*Ardeola ralloides*

Three birds were seen at reedbeds at Oued Massa.

#### **Cattle Egret**

*Bubulcus ibis*

Regularly recorded throughout the tour in farmlands alongside rivers with our highest count of one-hundred and forty at the Oued Massa.

*NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret (which is what we recorded in Morocco) and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret E. coromanda. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.*

### Storks Ciconidae

#### **White Stork**

*Ciconia ciconia*

Recorded throughout in pairs or small colonies at their nests, which are typically placed on tops of chimneys and roofs of buildings. A flock of sixty was seen feeding in agricultural lands 30km from Marrakesh *en route* to Oukaïmeden.

### Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

#### **Waldrapp (Northern Bald Ibis) Cr**

*Geronticus eremita*

We enjoyed excellent close views of a flock feeding in a field near the road. Later we saw several other small flocks flying down to their nesting colony near the sea. This is a highly threatened species with a tiny world population that we were privileged to enjoy at our leisure.

#### **Glossy Ibis**

*Plegadis falcinellus*

Two birds were seen flying at Oued Massa.

#### **Eurasian Spoonbill**

*Platalea leucorodia*

Three at Oued Massa and three at Oued Souss.

### Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

#### **Greater Flamingo**

*Phoenicopterus ruber*

Up to fifty birds were seen at dusk at Oued Souss.

*NOTE: The Greater Flamingo (P. roseus) and the Caribbean Flamingo (P. ruber) are now considered monotypic species according to Clements.*

### Swans, Geese & Ducks Anatidae

#### **Ruddy Shelduck**

*Tadorna ferruginea*

Commonly recorded at freshwater, temporary pans in the Merzouga area with a further sighting of a pair at Oukaïmeden.

#### **Common Shelduck**

*Tadorna tadorna*

Two at Merzouga Lake and twenty-eight at Oued Souss.



**Eurasian Wigeon**

Three at Oued Massa were a trip exclusive.

*Anas Penelope***Eurasian Teal**

Twenty-eight at Oued Massa.

*Anas crecca***Mallard**

Fifteen at Oued Massa.

*Anas platyrhynchos***Northern Pintail**

Four at Oued Massa and four at Merzouga Lake.

*Anas acuta***Northern Shoveler**

One hundred + at Merzouga Lake.

*Anas clypeata***Marbled Duck**

Sixteen at Oued Massa and ten at Merzouga Lake.

*Marmaronetta angustirostris***Red-crested Pochard**

A female was found by Mark at Oued Massa. A scarce winter visitor this far south.

*Netta rufina***Common Pochard**

Two hundred and thirty five at Oued Massa and thirty at Merzouga Lake.

*Aythya ferina***Ferruginous Duck**

Singletons were seen at both Oued Massa and at Merzouga Lake.

*Aythya nyroca***Tufted Duck**

Ten at Oued Massa.

*Aythya fuligula***Ospreys Pandionidae****Osprey**

A single bird was seen at Oued Souss.

*Pandion haliaetus***Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures Accipitridae****Black-shouldered Kite**

Singletons were seen east of Agadir, near Talouine and at Casablanca.

*Elanus caeruleus***Black Kite**

Eight birds were seen on the Tiz 'n' Test Pass.

*Milvus migrans***Western Marsh-Harrier**

Two at Oued Massa and singletons at Merzouga Lake and at Casablanca

*Circus aeruginosus***Eurasian Sparrowhawk**

Two seen at Oued Massa and a single bird near Ourzazate.

*Accipiter nisus***Long-legged Buzzard**

Single birds at the Tagdilt Track, *en route* to Erfoud and two *en route* from Erfoud to Ourzazate.

*Buteo rufinus***Bonelli's Eagle**

A pair was seen coming in to their roost while we were enjoying a coffee at Todra Gorge.

*Hieraetus fasciatus***Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae****Eurasian Kestrel**

Recorded almost daily with a high of thirty on the drive between Boumalne Du Dades and Erfoud.

*Falco tinnunculus*

*NOTE: Some authorities split this species into Common Kestrel, F. tinnunculus which we observed (occurring in East Africa and the Palaearctic region) and Rock Kestrel, F. rupicolus that occurs in Southern Africa. Clements does not as yet recognize these splits.*

**Barbary Falcon**

An immature bird roosting at our hotel in Agadir, three scoped (allowing excellent close studies) at Tamri and finally two at Oukaimeden.

*Falco pelegrinoides***Peregrine Falcon**

An adult was seen at the Tagdilt Track.

*Falco peregrinus***Pheasants & Quails Phasianidae**

**Barbary Partridge***Alectoris barbara*

We had excellent looks at six birds at Oued Massa. Our final sighting was of a single bird flushed *en route* to Oukaimeden.

**Common Quail***Coturnix coturnix*

Two birds were seen well at Merzouga Lake.

**Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae****Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus*

Eight at Oued Massa, a single bird at Merzouga and fifteen near Casablanca.

**Eurasian Coot***Fulica atra*

A thousand at Oued Massa, Seventy-nine at Merzouga Lake and three near Casablanca.

**Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae****Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Nine at Merzouga and five near Casablanca.

**Thick-knees Burhinidae****Eurasian (Stone Curlew) Thick-knee***Burhinus oedicephalus*

Seven were heard calling and seen at Oued Souss.

**Coursers & Pratincoles Glareolidae****Cream-colored Courser***Cursorius cursor*

We recorded twenty-five birds on gravel plains between Rissani and Merzouga.

**Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae****Black-bellied Plover***Pluvialis squatarola*

Ten at Oued Souss and thirty at Casablanca on our post tour extension.

**Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius haiticula*

Two at Oued Souss and ten at Casablanca on our post tour extension.

**Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

Three birds were seen at Merzouga Lake

**Snowy (Kentish) Plover***Charadrius alexandrinus*

Fourteen birds were recorded at temporary wetlands in Merzouga.

**Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae****Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

A single bird at Oued Massa, two at Merzouga and a single bird at a wetland near Casablanca on our post tour extension.

*Note: New World race delicata of Common Snipe has been raised to species level, Wilson's Snipe Gallinago delicata.*

**Black-tailed Godwit***Limosa limosa*

Twenty-two at Merzouga Lake.

**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

Six birds were seen at the Oued Souss by Dave, Debbie and Tadd who were catching a later flight.

**Eurasian Curlew***Numenius arquata*

Up to fifty birds at Oued Massa on our last day.

**Spotted Redshank***Tringa erythropus*

A single bird was seen at Merzouga Lake.

**Common Redshank***Tringa totanus*

A single bird at Oued Massa on our last day was a trip exclusive.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Six at Merzouga Lake and heard at Oued Souss.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

Two at Oued Massa and Six at Merzouga Lake.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

Three at Merzouga Lake.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Three at Oued Massa.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

Three birds were seen on the post tour extension to Casablanca.

**Red Knot***Calidris canutus*

Six birds were seen at Oued Souss by Dave, Debbie and Tadd who were catching a later flight.

**Sanderling***Calidris alba*

Fifteen birds were seen at Oued Souss by Dave, Debbie and Tadd who were catching a later flight.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

Eleven at Merzouga Lake.

**Temminck's Stint***Calidris temminckii*

A single bird found by Mark at Merzouga Lake.

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*

Ten birds were seen at Oued Souss by Dave, Debbie and Tadd who were catching a later flight.

**Ruff***Philomachus pugnax*

Twelve at Merzouga Lake and two at Casablanca on the post tour extension.

**Oystercatchers Haematopodidae****Eurasian Oystercatcher***Haematopus ostralegus*

Six birds were seen at Oued Souss.

**Gulls Laridae****Audouin's Gull***Larus audouinii*

Two hundred and eighty-one birds recorded at Oued Massa

**Yellow-legged Gull***Larus michahellis*

Thirty at Oued Massa and two at Casablanca on our post tour extension.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull***Larus fuscus*

Five-hundred at Oued Massa, one thousand at Rabat and three thousand at Casablanca on the post tour extension.

**Black-headed Gull***Larus ridibundus*

A single bird at Oued Massa, fifteen at Oued Souss and one hundred seen between Rabat and Casablanca.

**Slender-billed Gull***Larus ichthyaetus*

Four seen at Oued Massa.

**Mediterranean Gull***Larus melanocephalus*

Four at Merzouga Lake, two at Oued Souss and two at Rabat on our post tour extension.

**Terns Sternidae****Sandwich Tern***Sterna sandvicensis*

A single bird at Oued Massa and fifty at Casablanca on our post tour extension.

**Skuas Stercorariidae****Great Skua***Stercorarius skua*

Three birds were seen on our post tour extension to Casablanca

**Parasitic Jaeger***Stercorarius parasiticus*

A single bird was seen while sea-watching of Cap Rhir.



**Sandgrouse Pteroclididae**

- Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*  
We had excellent scope and flight views of sixteen birds on the Tagdilt Track.
- Crowned Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*  
Three birds were seen in flight at the Tagdilt Track.

**Doves & Pigeons Columbidae**

- Rock (Pigeon ) Dove** *Columba livia*  
Commonly seen at scattered localities throughout the trip.
- Common Wood-Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*  
Two seen *en route* from Agadir to Boumalne Du Dades and fairly common in the Oukaimeden area.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*  
Commonly recorded throughout towns in Morocco.
- Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*  
Commonly recorded, almost daily, at many scattered sites throughout Morocco.

**Cuckoos Cuculidae**

- Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*  
We had excellent scope views of three birds at Oued Massa.

**Typical Owls Strigidae**

- Little Owl** *Athene noctua*  
Two birds were seen on a wall at our hotel near Boumalne Du Dades, typically seen sitting on buildings.

**Nightjars Caprimulgidae**

- Red-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus ruficollis*  
We had good views of a spotlight bird as it flew past at close range, Oued Souss Estuary.

**Swifts Apopidae**

- Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba*  
Two at Oued Massa.
- Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*  
First recorded at Oued Massa, one hundred *en route* from Agadir to Boumalne Du Dades and finally recorded at Rabat and Casablanca on the post tour extension.
- Little Swift** *Apus affinis*  
A single bird was seen over buildings on the main road from Oued Massa to Agadir.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae**

- Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo Atthis*  
Eric spotted our only bird of the tour at Oued Massa.

**Hoopoes Upupidae**

- Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*  
Our only birds were a pair at our hotel near Boumalne Du Dades seen on two occasions.  
*NOTE: Clements only recognizes two species of Hoopoe; Eurasian U. epops and Madagascar U. marginata. One further species, is widely recognized namely African U. africana and a 4<sup>th</sup> is sometimes recognized, West/Central African U. senegalensis. We only recorded the nominate Palaearctic form U. e. epops.*

**Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae**

**Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

A single bird was found by Mark at Oued Massa.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker***Dendrocopus major*

Three birds were found in woodland near Oukaïmeden.

**Levaillant's Woodpecker***Picus vaillanti*

We enjoyed excellent close looks at a pair near Oukaïmeden.

**Larks Alaudidae****Bar-tailed Lark***Ammomanes cincturus*

Two birds were seen *en route* to Merzouga. The song reminded us of a windmill turning!

**Desert Lark***Ammomanes deserti*

A single bird was recorded near Taroudant, four at the Tagdilt Track and finally two *en route* to Merzouga.

**Greater Hoopoe-Lark***Alaemon alaudipes*

We had great looks at two at the Tagdilt Track and four near Merzouga. Its melancholy piping song was heard in the early morning and at dusk. In flight the upper wings showed the large white secondaries flashes.

**Thick-billed Lark***Ramphocoris clotbey*

We were enthralled in finding two feeding birds alongside the Tagdilt Track *en route* to Erfoud. We enjoyed excellent scope views of this very nomadic species. We had a further sighting of three birds on gravel plains near Merzouga.

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

A single was seen at the Tagdilt Track, four birds were seen daily in the Merzouga area.

**Temminck's Lark***Eremophila bilopha*

Eighteen birds in total were seen in the Tagdilt track area.

**Crested Lark***Galerida cristata*

Recorded at scattered sites throughout the tour in the low-lying areas with the highest counts of twenty+ birds daily at Oued Massa and Oued Souss.

**Thekla Lark***Galerida theklae*

Recorded in the foothills of the High Atlas and thirty birds were recorded in small loose flocks at the Tagdilt track. Generally a bird of the higher lying areas although easily confused with the previous species.

**Sky Lark***Alauda arvensis*

Small flocks totaling fifteen birds were seen at the Tagdilt track.

**Horned (Shore) Lark***Eremophila alepstris*

Up to sixteen birds were found feeding in grassy areas at Oukaïmeden.

**Swallows Hirundinidae****Bank Swallow***Riparia riparia*

Two birds were seen at Oued Massa.

**Eurasian Crag-Martin***Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Sixteen at Todra Gorge and fifteen daily at Oukaïmeden.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Regularly seen in small numbers throughout Morocco with a high of twenty seen on several days.

**Red-rumped Swallow***Cecropis daurica*

A single bird was seen near Talouine, a trip exclusive

**House Martin***Delichon urbicum*

Two at Boumalne Du Dades and a single bird at Merzouga.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae****White Wagtail***Motacilla alba*

Small numbers seen daily throughout Morocco with a high of thirty daily around Merzouga

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Five birds were seen at Lake Merzouga.

**Gray Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Single birds at Todra Gorge and Oukaïmeden.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

Two at the Tagdilt Track and two at Merzouga Lake.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

A single bird was seen at the Tagdilt Track.

### Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Recorded throughout Morocco in wooded habitats.

*NOTE: Another very confusing polytypic species complex. Several Asian and African forms have already been recognized as distinct species within the super-species. Several other forms (including ones which we recorded i.e. Egyptian Bulbul *P. arsinoe* and Dark-capped Bulbul *P. tricolor*) are likely to be recognized as distinct once genetic analysis and further study is completed.*

### Kinglet's Regulidae

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*

We had two sightings of this little gem in pine woodland near Oukaïmeden.

### Dippers Cinclidae

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*

A pair was found on a stream at Oukaïmeden much to the delight of everyone. Much appreciated by Eric!

### Wrens Troglodytidae

**Winter Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Six of these tiny little birds were seen in woodland around Oukaïmeden

### Accentors Prunellidae

**Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris*

A single confiding individual was found at Oukaïmeden.

### Thrushes & Allies Turdidae

**Blue Rock-Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

Two at Oued Massa, three on buildings at Boumalne Du Dades and two at Todra Gorge.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

Two birds were seen in open woodland at Oukaïmeden.

**Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

Commonly recorded throughout Morocco in open woodland.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

Three birds were recorded east of Agadir and a further two in woodland near Oukaïmeden.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

Two pairs were seen at Oukaïmeden.

### Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*

Not recorded on the main tour. A single bird was seen on the post tour extension to Casablanca



### Old World Warblers Sylviidae

**Cetti's Warbler***Cettia cetti*

We had excellent looks at two birds at Oued Massa. Also heard in song along wooded streams *en route* to Oukaïmeden.

**Savi's Warbler***Locustella luscinioides*

A bird was heard in song at Oued Souss by Dave, Debbie and Tadd who were catching a later flight out.

**Sedge Warbler***Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Four birds were seen in flooded tamarisk bushes at Merzouga Lake.

**Eurasian Reed-Warbler***Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

A single bird heard singing and seen in a reedbed at Oued Massa.

**Willow Warbler***Phylloscopus trochilus*

A single bird was seen in woodland near Oukaïmeden.

**Common Chiffchaff***Phylloscopus collybita*

Recorded daily in small numbers throughout with a high count of thirty birds in woodland around Oukaïmeden.

*NOTE: Most authorities split; including Clements have split the Chiffchaff complex into 4 full species. The nominate form which we recorded is known as Common Chiffchaff P. collybita.*

**Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

Six at Oued Massa, three east of Agadir and three near Oukaïmeden.

**African Desert Warbler***Sylvia nana deserti*

We enjoyed excellent scope views of this scarce and localized desert specialist, thanks to the persistence of Dave and Mark for not giving up!

**Sardinian Warbler***Sylvia melanocephala*

Commonly recorded in scrubby vegetation throughout with a high of twenty seen at Oued Massa.

**Spectacled Warbler***Sylvia conspicillata*

Excellent scope views were had at Merzouga of this attractive species in song and performing display flights. This may have been due to heavy rains that had fallen in the previous weeks.

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

Up to seven birds were seen around Merzouga. An attractive North African endemic

### Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

**European Robin***Erithacus rubecula*

Two at Oued Massa and five at Oukaïmeden. An attractive bird with a delightful song, which we see, depicted on Christmas cards.

**Black Redstart***Phoenicurus ochruros*

Recorded almost daily throughout and often seen favoring buildings and ruins. First recorded at Taroudant.

**Moussier's Redstart***Phoenicurus moussieri*

This North African gem was pleasantly common in scrub vegetation. Our first birds were seen at Oued Massa.

**Common Stonechat***Saxicola rubicola*

Recorded in rank vegetation adjoining wetlands and first seen at Oued Massa..

**White-tailed (White-crowned Black) Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*

A common roadside bird in Steppe Desert throughout Morocco. Our highest count was forty birds in the Merzouga area.

**Black Wheatear***Oenanthe leucura*

First recorded east of Agadir with further sightings at Boumalne Du Dades and at Oukaïmeden.

**Mourning Wheatear***Oenanthe lugens*

Four birds were seen around the Tagdilt Track area.

*NOTE: This extremely variable complex with an extensive range and many distinctive isolated populations is a perfect candidate for multi-splitting.*



**Red-rumped Wheatear***Oenanthe moesta*

Commonly seen on Steppe Desert at the Tagdilt Track with a final sighting near Ourzazate.

**Desert Wheatear***Oenanthe isabellina*

We recorded five birds near Merzouga Lake.

**Babblers Timaliidae****Fulvous Chatterer***Turdoides fulvus*

Unfortunately, not recorded on the main tour but Eric and Patsy saw four birds sitting on a bush on our arrival at Casablanca Airport. A good find!

**Tits Paridae****Coal Tit***Periparus ater*

Six birds daily at Oukaimeden.

**Great Tit***Paris major*

Singleton's at Oued Massa and Todra Gorge and up to nine seen in the Oukaimeden area.

**African Blue Tit***Cyanistes teneriffae*

A single bird at Todra Gorge and sixteen recorded in the Oukaimeden area.

**Creepers Certhiidae****Short-toed Treecreeper***Certhia brachydactyla*

We had excellent looks at two individuals near Oukaimeden.

**Shrikes Laniidae****Southern Gray Shrike***Lanius elegans*

A common roadside bird seen at several localities throughout the tour.

*NOTE: This complex which used to be lumped with Northern Shrike L. excubitor is being considered for further splitting. These splits would include the nominate Southern Gray Shrike, the migrant Steppe Shrike (L. pallidirostris) and Saharan Shrike (L. leucopygos) which is the form we recorded in Morocco during our tour. Clements recognizes the split from Northern Shrike but not the further splits of the Southern Gray Shrike group.***Bushshrikes Malaconotidae****Black-crowned Tchagra***Tchagra senegala*

Two were seen briefly and then we had excellent scope views of a confiding calling individual at Oued Massa. Several other birds were heard in song.

**Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae****Eurasian Magpie***Pica pica mauratanica*

Five at Oued Massa, two east of Agadir and another eight seen on our return to Agadir at the end of the tour. The North African race has a distinct blue patch behind the eye.

**Red-billed Chough***Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax*

Up to a hundred birds were seen in and around Oukaimeden. Flocks were heard and seen swirling above the mountains.

**Yellow-billed (Alpine) Chough***Pyrhcorax graculus*

Less numerous than its predecessor, we had good close looks at several small flocks around our hotel.

**Common Raven***Corvus corax*

We recorded pairs in the Mountainous country around Tamri, Rissani and four on the drive to Oukaimeden.

**Starlings Sturnidae****Spotless Starling***Sturnus unicolor*

Small numbers were seen around Agadir and at Oued Massa.

### Old World Sparrows Passeridae

#### **House Sparrow**

*Passer domesticus*

Recorded daily throughout Morocco with a high of one-hundred+ birds around Merzouga.

#### **Spanish Sparrow**

*Passer hispaniolensis*

Fifty recorded at Oued Massa, fifty *en route* from Agadir to Boumalne Du Dades and finally three seen *en route* from Oukaimeden to Agadir.

#### **Desert Sparrow**

*Passer simplex*

Twenty of these scarce birds were seen around Merzouga.

#### **Rock Petronia**

*Petronia petronia*

Recorded daily around Oukaimeden.

### Siskins, Crossbills & Allies Fringillidae

#### **Common Chaffinch**

*Fringilla coelebs*

The resident subspecies *africana* was seen almost daily throughout the tour. Up to twenty of the nominate race *coelebs*, which is a wintering migrant from Europe, were seen at Oukaimeden.

#### **Brambling**

*Fringilla montifringilla*

Mark found a female bird amongst a flock of wintering Common Chaffinch. A further two birds were seen on our drive from Oukaimeden to Tahanaoute.

#### **European Greenfinch**

*Carduelis chloris*

Commonly recorded in the mountains and wooded areas of Morocco.

#### **European Goldfinch**

*Carduelis carduelis*

Thirty birds at Oued Massa, five near Boumalne Du Dades and seven at Oukaimeden.

#### **Eurasian Linnet**

*Carduelis cannabina*

Twenty at Oued Massa, five at Boumalne Du Dades and the Tagdilt Track and lastly a single bird calling in flight at Merzouga Lake.

#### **European Serin**

*Serinus serinus*

Commonly recorded in mountains and wooded areas.

#### **Hawfinch**

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Six birds were seen and heard calling near Oukaimeden.

#### **Crimson-winged Finch**

*Rhodopechys sanguinea*

Up to fifteen of these attractive high mountain birds were seen feeding in grassy patches surrounded by snow.

#### **Trumpeter Finch**

*Rhodopechys githaginea*

Twenty birds were seen daily at the Tagdilt Track and in the Merzouga areas.

### Buntings Emberizidae

#### **Cirl Bunting**

*Emberiza cirlus*

A pair was found at Oued Massa, a male east of Agadir and finally a pair found by Eric near Oukaimeden.

#### **Rock Bunting**

*Emberiza cia*

Eleven birds seen near Oukaimeden.

#### **House Bunting**

*Emberiza striolata*

Common throughout Morocco and often seen around buildings. We often heard singing birds at our hotels.

#### **Corn Bunting**

*Emberiza calandra*

Mark found a single bird east of Agadir and sixteen were seen on the coastal road between Rabat and Casablanca on the post tour extension.



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## Mammals

### Dogs & Allies Canidae

**Red Fox**

*Vulpes vulpes*

Singleton's were seen at the Tagdilt Track, Erfoud, Merzouga and at Oukaimeden.

### Rats Muridae

**Fat Sand Rat**

*Psammomys obesus*

Three at the Tagdilt Track.

### Ground Squirrels

**Barbary Ground-Squirrel**

*Alantocerus getulus*

Recorded in rocky terrain near Ourzazate, Todra Gorge and at Oukaimeden.

## Reptiles

**Striped-necked Terrapin**

*Mauremys caspica*

Three at Oued Massa.

**Spiny-tailed Agama (or Bell's Dab Lizard)**

*Uromastyx accunthinarus*

Two green individuals shown to us by locals and a black and red specimen near Boumalne Du Dades.

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