



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Morocco Trip Report The Atlas to Sahara

30th January to 8th February 2010



Trip Report Compiled by Tour Leader David Hoddinott

Trip Summary

Our tour started off with a trip to Oukaimeden, a beautiful site and ski resort in the High Atlas Mountains. An early start saw us leaving the hustle and bustle of Marrakech, and we were soon in the lush and very green countryside brought about by the season's unusually high rainfall. *En route* we stopped for our only Black-winged Kite of the tour and the first of many Eurasian Greenfinch's. Shortly before heading up the

mountain we stopped at a fast flowing river where we saw a pair of the delightful Little Ringed Plover, Grey and the very common White Wagtails, the first of many White Storks, flocks of Western Cattle Egret with the odd Little Egret amongst them, and a fine male Cirl Bunting, a very nice start indeed. Further up the mountain we stopped to search for the North West African special, Levaillant's Woodpecker. This spot proved very productive and we were soon watching Coal, Great and African Blue Tits. This was shortly



followed by superb views of a pair of singing Winter Wren and then scope views of our quarry, the very smart Levaillant's Woodpecker as well as his cousin, Great-spotted Woodpecker. With a bunch of great birds in hand a very happy group boarded the bus and we headed up to the top of the mountain. Here we were soon watching the quaint White-throated Dipper feeding along an icy mountain stream, and swirling flocks of Red-billed and Alpine Chough. Following a delicious tagine lunch (the first of many) we went in search of Alpine Accentor. The Accentor proved elusive and, try as we may, we couldn't find it during our initial search. We were, however, consoled with great sightings of Horned Lark, shy Ring Ouzel, Mistle Thrush, Rock Sparrow and delightful Barbary Ground-squirrels. One last attempt to find the Accentor saw us searching the escarpment when suddenly, there they were; not one, but five of these smart birds! What's more, they showed very well, allowing us all great scope views.

On the down side, being the weekend the ski resort was very crowded, and alas, no sign of the Crimson-winged Finches today.

Next we were to take the beautiful scenic Tiz-n-Test Pass to Agadir. We woke up early to be welcomed by a beautiful dawn with snow all around us and a magnificent Bearded Vulture cruising by, shortly followed by splendid sightings of twenty-nine Crimson-winged Finches! In high spirits, we then bade farewell to this beautiful mountain and made our way along the pass. *En route* we picked up a superb Hawfinch, a pair of stunning Firecrests and Short-toed Treecreeper. A stop at the Tin Mal Mosque to search for Tawny Owl proved fruitless; however, we did see a lovely pair of Bonelli's Eagle soaring nearby. We then stopped near the top of the pass for another delicious lunch. Whilst enjoying the spectacular scenery we were treated to a Peregrine Falcon whizzing by. Pressing onward to Agadir we were interrupted by a flat tyre that caused us a slight delay; the plus side of this was that we were soon watching a covey of handsome Barbary Partridge at the roadside. We finally reached the Oued Souss near Agadir in time to watch many species flying off to their roost. These included a lovely flock of thirty-eight Eurasian Spoonbill, Slender-billed Gulls and a Western Osprey. A Red-necked Nightjar called briefly, and then it was time to head to our comfortable hotel in Agadir.

The next day we travelled to the great Oued Massa, a near pristine river estuary. Our first stop yielded numerous waterfowl including a male Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, a dozen Marbled Duck, striking Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck and then – shouts of joy reverberated through the air as Mark found us a real bonus in the form of a vagrant Ruddy Duck! Other species seen here included our only Black-necked Grebe of the trip, a flock of Glossy Ibis, a pair of stately Common Crane, hundreds of Audouin's and thousands of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Common Wood Pigeon, delightful Little Owl, Common Kingfisher, Eurasian Hoopoe, confiding Eurasian Wryneck, the sought after Black-crowned Tchagra, Eurasian Magpie of the distinctive *mauritanica* race, Sardinian Warbler, Spotless Starling eating dates, a secretive Song Thrush, the stunning North West African endemic – Moussier's Redstart, flocks of displaying European Serin and a Wild Boar to boot! What a morning! Reluctantly, we pulled ourselves away and headed north towards Tamri, stopping for lunch *en route*. In the afternoon we had time for some sea-watching off



Cap Rhir and were soon enjoying flocks of Northern Gannet close to shore, then a splendid show of Balearic Shearwaters on passage northwards and an unusual sighting of 120 Greater Flamingo heading north, possibly also on migration. Then it was time to look for one of the most sought-after birds of North Africa, the great Northern Bald Ibis. This year we found them particularly easy to see and enjoyed great sightings of forty birds feeding in a field.

From Agadir we headed east to the gravel desert of Boumalne du Dades. *En route* we stopped for some great birds including a very pale Lanner Falcon, impressive Short-toed Eagle scoped for all, and the smart Trumpeter Finch. Near Ouarzazate we stopped at the impressive Barrage L'Mansoor Eddahbi where we were treated to thousands of birds. These included Ruddy Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Great Crested Grebe, a flock of three hundred White Stork, Great Cormorant, Little Stint, Pallid Swift, five species of swallow and a real bonus in the form of two Bluethroats.

The next morning we enjoyed time on the famous Tagdilt Track. Traversing the network of tracks we



quickly found our first of many Long-legged Buzzards and Red-rumped Wheatears; this was shortly followed by stunning sightings of no less than seventeen Cream-colored Courser, small flocks of Black-bellied and a single Crowned Sandgrouse, striking Greater Hoopoe-Lark with its impressive display flight, a flock of thirty highly sought after Thick-billed Larks and numerous other larks, including Desert, Lesser Short-toed, Crested, Eurasian Sky and Temminck's. We were also particularly fortunate to find a smart pair of Mourning Wheatear. An added attraction was the comical Fat Sand Rats which were seen darting from their feeding areas to their burrows, and a hunting

Red Fox. In the afternoon we visited the great Dades Gorge, and whilst enjoying some hot coffee we had simply mind-blowing views of a Golden Eagle that was initially picked up on the horizon and ended up flying low overhead. This was shortly followed by an adult Bonelli's Eagle and a covey of Barbary Partridge. What a day!

Before heading deeper into the desert we spent time at Todra Gorge where we picked up another North African specialty, Tristram's Warbler, as well as Gundi, a large Hamster-like animal. Making our way to Midelt, we stopped for a splendid Barbary Falcon that showed very nicely, and then another stop produced a real coup in the form of Scrub Warbler, Maghreb Lark (a recent split of Crested) and Fulvous Babbler. At the Hassan Addakhil Dam we enjoyed good views of our first Northern Pintail, and then headed to our pleasant accommodation in Midelt for the night.

Leaving very early the following morning, we arrived at a site in search of the shy and retiring Dupont's Lark. We waited in the freezing cold for what seemed an eternity when suddenly they began to call, and soon a good number were heard singing. To our mounting frustration, however, in the early morning gloom we couldn't see them! It wasn't until a full two hours after arriving at the site that we obtained our first glimpses of the critter; our patience and perseverance were finally rewarded with good views for all. This was particularly pleasing for me and a fitting way to reach the magical milestone of 2000 species in Africa!!!!

After a well deserved breakfast we then made our way south to Erfoud, stopping once more at Hassan Addakhil Dam where we enjoyed a superb sighting of one thousand two hundred and fifty Marbled Duck. Near Erfoud we found a single Greater Short-toed Lark, the dainty Spectacled Warbler and both Northern and Desert Wheatears.

Our next day was an adventure into the great Sahara Desert. We left early and enjoyed watching the sunrise over the great sand dunes of Erg Chebbi. Our first stop yielded the highly sought after African Desert Warbler which, for once, was rather obliging and gave us a great show indeed. Our next stop was even more successful as the cries of Houbara Bustard rang through the air! A great find by Mark that saw us all enjoying good scope views. (This species has become rare in Morocco due to overhunting by Arab



falconers). A stop near several Auberge's finally produced two males and a female of the softly coloured Desert Sparrow and many Brown-necked Ravens. Our lunch break at the Merzouga Lake was very rewarding with sightings of Common Shelduck, one thousand Greater Flamingo, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Ruff and four Black Storks. We even found a Tawny Eagle, which is now considered to be very rare in Morocco. On our return to Erfoud we stopped at a rocky escarpment where we were treated to a pair of Pharaoh Eagle-Owl with two large chicks; what a way to end another great day!

Bidding farewell to the desert we made our way back to Ouarzazate. *En route* we were absolutely delighted to find a pair of Spotted Sandgrouse – a real coup and totally unexpected! In the late afternoon we spent some time at Barrage L'Mansoor Eddabbi where, after a concerted effort, we finally managed to find a single Iberian Chiffchaff.

We set off early on our final day for the drive of the beautiful Tiz-n-Tichka Pass. Stops along the way yielded some interesting species including European Robin and Red Crossbill; the latter new for the trip and a fitting finale to a wonderful and highly successful tour. Sadly, our adventure finally drew to a close and we headed for the airport for our return flights home.



Annotated List of Birds Recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List Ver 2.3 of Please cite: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Total species recorded: 176

Pheasants, Fowl & Allies Phasianidae

Barbary Partridge

Alectoris barbara

First seen crossing the road on the Tizi-n-Test Pass with further sightings near Tamri and five in the Dades Gorge

Common Quail

Coturnix coturnix

We heard a few calling at Oued Massa.

Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

We had wonderful scope views of five at Merzouga.

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Commonly recorded at many wetland sites including peak numbers of three hundred at Merzouga

Gadwall

Anas strepera

One male was seen at Oued Massa and a further four at Merzouga.

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

Two females were seen at Oued Massa, a male near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi and two at Merzouga.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Commonly recorded at most wetlands with peak numbers of twenty near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi.

Northern Shoveler

Anas clypeata

Recorded at several wetlands including peak numbers of two hundred at Merzouga

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta



Our first sighting was of six at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia with further sightings of twenty at Merzouga.

Eurasian (Green-winged) Teal *Anas crecca*

We found twenty at Ouarzazate Barrage and a further five at Merzouga.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

We had our first sightings of seven at Oued Massa with further sightings of large numbers of 1250 at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia and 1000 at Merzouga.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Up to seventy were seen at Oued Massa and peak numbers of three hundred at Merzouga.

Ferruginous Duck (Pochard) *Aythya nyroca*

One male was seen very well at Oued Massa and a further fifty were seen at Merzouga.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

A flock of thirty was seen at Oued Massa and a further two at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

We had great views of a male at Oued Massa. This was a very lucky find as it is a vagrant to Morocco and could have arrived from either Europe or America.

Petrels & Shearwaters Procellariidae

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

We enjoyed good views of eight birds flying north off Tamri.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Commonly seen at most wetlands with peak numbers of forty at Oued Massa

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Up to twenty were seen near Ouarzazate at Barrage L'Mansoor Eddabbi and a further twenty at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia.

Black-necked (Eared) Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

We had good views of two at Oued Massa.

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Our first sighting was five at Oued Massa with a further sighting of one hundred and twenty out at sea off Tamri heading north and possibly on migration. Peak numbers of 1000 were seen at Merzouga.

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

Storks Ciconidae

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

We found this species at many sites with peak numbers of three hundred seen near Ouarzazate at Barrage L'Mansoor Eddabbi. We also enjoyed seeing this species nesting on many houses and tall buildings.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

We enjoyed wonderful scope views of four at Merzouga.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Northern Bald Ibis (Waldrapp) *Geronticus eremita*

We enjoyed a wonderful sighting of forty birds near Tamri.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

A flock of sixty five was seen at Oued Massa.



Eurasian Spoonbill*Platalea leucorodia*

We saw a flock of thirty-eight at Oued Souss at dusk and a further three were seen at Oued Massa.

Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae**Squacco Heron***Ardeola ralloides*

One was seen at Oued Massa and a further two at Merzouga.

[Western] Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Commonly encountered throughout the trip

NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Western 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.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Commonly recorded throughout with a peak count of 66 at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Commonly recorded with peak counts of two hundred at Oued Souss and Merzouga

Gannets Sulidae**Northern Gannet***Morus bassanus*

Several were seen off Oued Massa with further sightings off Cap Rhir including some plunge diving.

Cormorants & Shags Phalacrocoracidae**Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus*

We had numerous sightings including two hundred near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Ospreys Pandionidae**[Western] Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

We had four sightings including one at Oued Souss and another at Oued Massa.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Black-winged(-shouldered) Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

We enjoyed good views of one hovering over a field en route to Oukaïmeden.

Black Kite*Milvus migrans*

Several sightings including a flock of twenty en route to Ouarzazate

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier)*Gypaetus barbatus*

We had magnificent views of an adult at Oukaïmeden, this species has become increasingly rare in Morocco and we can count ourselves particularly lucky to see one.

Short-toed [Snake] Eagle*Circaetus gallicus*

We enjoyed fantastic scope views of one en route to Ouarzazate.

Western Marsh Harrier*Circus aeruginosus*

Several sightings including at least ten at Merzouga

Eurasian Sparrowhawk*Accipiter nisus*

We enjoyed four sightings.

Long-legged Buzzard*Buteo rufinus*

We enjoyed many sightings especially in the southern deserts including ten at the Tagdilt track.

Tawny Eagle*Aquila rapax*

We had good views of one at Merzouga, another rare species in Morocco.

Golden Eagle*Aquila chrysaetos*

We had magnificent views of one at the Dades Gorge, another very fortunate sighting as becoming rare in Morocco.

Bonelli's Eagle*Hieraaetus fasciatus*

A total of five sightings, including a pair behind the Tin Mal Mosque and a pair at the Dades Gorge

Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae

Common (Eurasian) Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

As the name implies common and seen every day of the tour with peak numbers of 12 near Oued Massa and Tamri

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.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

We enjoyed good scope views of one en route from Erfoud to Ouarzazate.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco pefegrinus*

We had good views of one at the Tizi-n-Test Pass.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*

We had great scope views of one near Tinejhad.

Bustards Otididae

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*

Erg Chebbi (1 scoped, an exceptional rarity owing to over-exploitation by falconers)

Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Not common on our route, we enjoyed good sightings of three at Oued Massa.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Small numbers were seen at Oued Massa with a peak count of 2000 near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi and at Merzouga.

Cranes Gruidae

Common Crane *Grus grus*

We had great views of two at Oued Massa.

Stone-curlews Burhinidae

Eurasian Stone-curlew (Thick-knee) *Burhinus oedicnemus*

We heard several calling at the Oued Souss.

Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

We saw one at the Oued Souss and a further twenty-five at Merzouga.

Plovers Charadriidae

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

We heard several calling at the Oued Souss.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

We found two at a river en route from Marrakech to Oukaïmeden.

Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

We found one near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi and two at Merzouga.

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

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

We enjoyed good scope views of five at Merzouga.



Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
We found one at Merzouga	
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
We had good views of one at Merzouga.	
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
We had good views of one at Oued Massa and a further two at Merzouga.	
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
One was seen near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi.	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
We had good views of one at Oued Massa.	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
A flock of eight was seen on the rocks near Tamri.	
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Two were seen near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi.	
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
We enjoyed good views of three at Merzouga.	

Courasers & Pratincoles Glareolidae

Cream-colored Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
We enjoyed wonderful views of seventeen on the Tagdilt Track and a further five at Erg Chebbi.	

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>
We had wonderful views of eight at Oued Souss and a further two at Oued Massa.	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
We had good scope view of one at Oued Massa and twenty-six at Merzouga.	
Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus audouinii</i>
We found good numbers at Oued Massa and Tamri, totaling one hundred and eighty.	
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
We found five at Oued Souss and a further twenty at Oued Massa.	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
A peak count of one thousand was seen at Oued Massa.	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
We had good views of twenty at Oued Massa.	

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>
We had great views of a pair flying past us near Erfoud, a very lucky find! Like most sandgrouse nomadic and hard to find.	
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
On route to Boumalne du Dades we had superb views of thirty four flying over and the following day further flocks on the Tagdilt Track.	
Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>
We were fortunate to see one flying over the Tagdilt Track.	

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Common (Rock) Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Seen every day of the trip with sighting in cities, towns and small villages	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
We had wonderful views of eight at Oukaimeden and a further two at Oued Massa.	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>



Seen daily with counts of up to twenty

Laughing Dove*Spilopelia senegalensis*

Rather scarce on our route, we enjoyed good sightings of two at Oued Massa.

Owls Strigidae**Pharaoh Eagle-Owl***Bubo ascalaphus*

We had magnificent scope views of two adults and two chicks at their day roost near Erfoud.

Little Owl*Athene noctua*

We enjoyed wonderful sightings of two near Oued Massa and a further pair at Erfoud and one near Ouarzazate.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae**Red-necked Nightjar***Caprimulgus ruficollis*

We heard one calling near the Oued Souss.

Swifts Apodidae**Common Swift***Apus apus*

A flock of twenty was seen at Oued Massa.

Pallid Swift*Apus pallidus*

We had great views of one near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi where the pale edges to the body feathers were clearly evident giving a scaled effect.

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

One was seen during the drive from Marrakech to Oukaimeden.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae**Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

We had wonderful scope views of one at the Oued Massa and another near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi.

Hoopoes Upupidae**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

We found one near Oued Massa and a further two near Ouarzazate.

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 4th is sometimes recognized, West/Central African U. senegalensis. We only recorded the nominate Palearctic form U. e. epops.

Woodpeckers Picidae**Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

We had superb views of one at Oued Massa.

Great Spotted Woodpecker*Dendrocopus major*

One was seen very well at Oukaimeden.

Levaillant's Woodpecker*Picus vaillanti*

We enjoyed good scope views of one at Oukaimeden.

Bushshrikes Malaconotidae**Black-crowned Tchagra***Tchagra senegalus*

We had superb views of three at Oued Massa including scope views of a singing bird.

Shrikes Laniidae**Southern Grey Shrike***Lanius meridionalis*

Seen virtually daily in small numbers



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 Grey Shrike and the migrant Steppe Shrike (*L. pallidirostris*). Clements recognizes the split from Northern Shrike but not the further splits of the Southern Grey Shrike group.

Crows & Jays Corvidae

Eurasian Magpie

Pica pica mauratanica

We enjoyed several sightings in the Oued Massa area. This very smart sub-species has a distinctive blue eyepatch.

Red-billed Chough

Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax

We enjoyed superb views of up to thirty at Oukaimeden.

Alpine (Yellow-billed) Chough

Pyrrhonorax graculus

Large flocks of up to two hundred were seen alongside the previous species at Oukaimeden.

Brown-necked Raven

Corvus ruficollis

We had superb views of a flock of six in the sand dunes near Erfoud

Northern (Common) Raven

Corvus corax

This species is fairly common throughout, we had many sightings.

Tits Paridae

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

We found three of these active little birds at Oukaimeden

Great Tit

Parus major

Several were seen at Oukaimeden

African Blue Tit

Cyanistes teneriffae

At to six were seen daily around Oukaimeden

Larks Alaudidae

Greater Hoopoe-Lark

Alaemon alaudipes

We found several of these impressive birds at the Tagdilt Track and others near Erfoud

Thick-billed Lark

Ramphocoris clotbey

After an extensive search we finally managed to find a large flock of thirty on the Tagdilt Track

Bar-tailed Lark

Ammomanes cinctura

We enjoyed great views of several daily in the Erfoud area.

Desert Lark

Ammomanes deserti

We enjoyed good views of a pair near the Tagdilt Track.

Greater Short-toed Lark

Calandrella brachydactyla

We were very fortunate to find an obliging individual near Erfoud

Lesser Short-toed Lark

Calandrella rufescens

We had brief views of a large flock of forty at the Tagdilt Track with further good sightings of five near Zeida.

Dupont's Lark

Chersophilus duponti

After a very patient wait in the freezing cold we were all rewarded with scope views of this elusive species. This was certainly another of the many highlights of the trip!

Crested Lark

Galerida cristata

Seen at several sites with at least ten seen near Ouarzazate

Maghreb Lark

Galerida randonii

We enjoyed good views of several near Tinejhad and Erfoud.

Thekla Lark

Galerida theklae

Not nearly as common as the previous species, we enjoyed good views of two near Zeida.

Eurasian Skylark

Alauda arvensis

We had superb views of a dozen at the Tagdilt track.

Horned (Shore) Lark

Eremophila alepstris



The heavy winter meant large numbers were present at Oukaimeden where we found up to fifty daily.

Temminck's Lark*Eremophila bilopha*

We found at least ten at the Tagdilt Track and a further one near Zeida.

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.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae**Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)***Riparia riparia*

We recorded six near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Recorded daily in small numbers with a peak count of one hundred near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Eurasian Crag Martin*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Small numbers seen at scattered sites including a peak count of eighty near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

[Common] House Martin*Delichon urbicum*

We had good sightings of ten near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Red-rumped Swallow*Cecropis daurica*

Our first sighting was of one at the Tin Mal Mosque with a further sighting of two near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Cettia Bush Warblers & Allies Cettidae**Cetti's Warbler***Cettia cetti*

We had good views of one at Oukaimeden and another at Oued Massa.

Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae**Common Chiffchaff***Phylloscopus collybita*

We recorded this species daily throughout the trip with a peak count of up to one hundred near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

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.

Iberian Chiffchaff*Phylloscopus ibericus*

We were very fortunate to find one bird near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae**Sedge Warbler***Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

We had several sightings including peak numbers of four near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**Zitting Cisticola***Cisticola juncidis*

We found at least three at Oued Massa including great scope views of one.

Scrub Warbler*Scotocerca inquieta*

We had fantastic views of one near Tinejhad and another two near Erfoud.

Babblers Timaliidae

Fulvous Babbler (Chatterer)*Turdoides fulvus*

We found two wonderful flocks near Tinejhad and a further three near Erfoud.

Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae**[Eurasian] Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

We found several near Oukaïmeden.

African Desert Warbler*Sylvia deserti*

We had superb views of one near Erfoud

Dartford Warbler*Sylvia undata*

One was seen in the Todra Gorge

Tristram's Warbler*Sylvia deserticola*

At least three of these smart and localized warblers were seen at Todra Gorge.

Spectacled Warbler*Sylvia conspicillata*

We had good views of several near Erfoud.

Sardinian Warbler*Sylvia melanocephala*

We had wonderful views of five at Oued Massa

Goldcrests & Kinglet's Regulidae**[Common] Firecrest***Regulus ignicapilla*

We had wonderful views of a pair at Oukaïmeden.

Wrens Troglodytidae**Winter Wren***Troglodytes troglodytes*

We had superb views of two at Oukaïmeden.

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

We had superb views of one near Oukaïmeden.

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

We had wonderful views of ten eating dates, near Oued Massa.

Thrushes Turdidae**Ring Ouzel***Turdus torquatus*

After an extended search we were rewarded with great views of three at Oukaïmeden.

Common (Eurasian) Blackbird*Turdus merula*

As the name implies common and seen virtually every day of the trip

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

We had superb scope views of one at Oued Massa. We were lucky as this species is shy and tricky to find in Morocco.

Mistle Thrush*Turdus viscivorus*

We enjoyed wonderful views of up to ten at Oukaïmeden

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae**European Robin***Erithacus rubecula*

One was seen at Oued Massa and another on the Tizi-n-Tichka Pass.

Bluethroat*Luscinia svecica*

We were very fortunate to see two near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Black Redstart*Phoenicurus ochruros*

Small numbers were seen virtually every day of the trip.



Moussier's Redstart*Phoenicurus moussieri*

This stunning North African endemic was seen on several occasions including five males at Oued Massa.

European (Common) Stonechat*Saxicola rubicola*

Seen on several days in small numbers with a peak count of eight at Oued Massa

Red-rumped Wheatear*Oenanthe moesta*

We enjoyed numerous sightings on the Tagdilt Track where up to thirty were seen.

Northern Wheatear*Oenanthe oenanthe*

We had good views of a male near Erfoud.

Desert Wheatear*Oenanthe deserti*

We had good scope views of one near Erfoud.

Mourning Wheatear*Oenanthe lugens*

We enjoyed scope views of a pair of this splendid wheatear on the Tagdilt Track.

NOTE: Some authorities have recently split Mourning Wheatear into two species namely Mourning Wheatear, O. lugens of the Middle East and Maghreb Wheatear, O. halophila of North West Africa. We observed the latter species in Morocco however this split is not yet widely accepted and IOC and Clements do not accept it as yet.

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

We found this species to be particularly common in the Erfoud area. Our peak count was 42 en route from Erfoud to Ouarzazate.

Black Wheatear*Oenanthe leucura*

We had great views of a pair at Oukaïmeden and others on the Tizi-n-Tichka Pass.

Blue Rock Thrush*Monticola solitarius*

Seen at a number of sites including Oukaïmeden and Oued Massa

Dippers Cinclidae**White-throated Dipper***Cinclus cinclus*

We enjoyed wonderful views of this delightful species at Oukaïmeden where we found three individuals.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

Seen in towns and villages everyday

Spanish Sparrow*Passer hispaniolensis*

Small numbers were seen at Oued Massa and near Tinejhad.

Desert Sparrow*Passer simplex*

After an intensive search we were rewarded with superb views of two males and a female near Erg Chebbi

Rock Petronia*Petronia petronia*

This year they were particularly common at Oukaïmeden, a peak count of 42 around our hotel.

Accentors Prunellidae**Alpine Accentor***Prunella collaris*

After a length search we were finally rewarded with stunning scope views of a flock of five at Oukaïmeden

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**[Western] Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

We found several near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

We found two at Oukaïmeden and one at Dades Gorge

White Wagtail*Motacilla alba*

Seen daily with a peak count of eighty at Merzouga



Meadow Pipit*Anthus pratensis*

Seen at scattered sites including Oukaimeden and at Hassan Addakhil Dam, Er Rachidia

Tree Pipit*Anthus trivialis*

We found one near Ouarzazate at Barrage L' Mansoor Eddabbi

Red-throated Pipit*Anthus cervinus*

We had good views of one on the Tagdilt Track.

Finches Fringillidae**[Common] Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

We enjoyed good sightings at Oukaimeden.

European Serin*Serinus serinus*

We had sightings at several sites including stunning views of up to twenty at Oued Massa.

European Greenfinch*Carduelis chloris*

We had numerous sightings including three on our first day during the drive up to Oukaimeden.

European Goldfinch*Carduelis carduelis*

We enjoyed sightings on most days of the trip with good views of a flock en route from Agadir to Ouarzazate

Common (Eurasian) Linnet*Carduelis cannabina*

We found several at Oukaimeden and enjoyed further sightings at Oued Massa

[African] Crimson-winged Finch*Rhodopechys alienus*

After an extensive search we finally found a flock of 29 at Oukaimeden

NOTE: Most authorities split the African Crimson-winged Finch, R. alienus from the Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch, R. sanguineus. Clements does not yet accept this split.

Trumpeter Finch*Bucanetes githagineus*

Our first sighting was of three en route from Agadir to Ouarzazate with a further sighting of seven on the Tagdilt Track.

Hawfinch*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

We were fortunate to find one at Oukaimeden, a scarce species in Morocco.

Buntings & Allies Emberizidae**Corn Bunting***Emberiza calandra*

We found a flock of twenty during our drive from Agadir to Ouarzazate and a further one near Tinejhad

Rock Bunting*Emberiza cia*

We found a pair at Oukaimeden and a further three in Dades Gorge.

Cirl Bunting*Emberiza cirlus*

We had good scope views of one en route to Oukaimeden

House Bunting*Emberiza sahari*

We enjoyed our first sightings en route to Oukaimeden with small numbers seen almost daily thereafter.

Annotated List of Mammals Recorded

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

Total: 5 species**Ground Squirrels Rodentia****Barbary Ground-Squirrel***Alantocerus getulus*

We enjoyed good scope views of several at Oukaimeden.



Gerbils Gerbillinae

Fat Sand Rat (North African Gerbil) *Psammomys obesus*

We recorded at least ten on the Tagdilt Track and several more daily in the Erfoud area.

Gundis Ctenodactylidae

Common Gundi *Ctenodactylus gundi*

We enjoyed fantastic views of two at Dades Gorge

Dogs & Allies Canidae

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

We had very brief views of one at Oukaimeden and a further one on the Tagdilt Track

Pigs Suidae

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

We enjoyed great scope views of one at Oued Massa.

Photo Credits: Northern Bald Ibis, Moussier's Redstart, Tristram's Warbler and Erg Chebbi by Adam Riley, Greater Hoopoe-Lark by Jonathan Russouw

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