

WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS

With BIRD-ID

**Co-ordinated by HiNT
NORD-TRENDELAGE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**FIELD ID COURSE IN
CENTRAL MOROCCO**



**TRIP REPORT
FEBRUARY 6TH – 15TH 2014**

DAY 1 - MARCH 6TH 2014

MENARA AIRPORT (MARRAKECH) – OURIKA VALLEY

The weather was beautiful as we landed in Morocco, cloudless skies and a high temperature of 22C.

I met 10 students from BirdID, who arrived from various parts of Europe, at Menara Airport at 4pm with

Terje Kolaas the course leader. Their arrival was unfortunately too late to do much birding before it got dark, so our usual trip up to Oukaïmeden was postponed until the following morning.

However, we did manage to see some species at the airport where we were welcomed by a singing House Bunting and outside we saw Common Bubul, Collared Dove and a few House Martins. Our route took us through some lovely countryside as we drove into the Ourika valley. We stopped to look at some raptors circling on the thermals, there were 5 Short-toed Eagles, 3 Common Kestrel and a distant Bonelli's Eagle. We also saw a Great-grey Shrike (*algeriensis*) on a telegraph pole as well as a couple of White Storks.



Deeper into the valley we logged several Cattle Egrets and a few Little Egrets before we stopped at a regular breeding site for Little Swifts. Whilst we waited for the swifts to appear we logged several nice species; African Chaffinch, African Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackcap, Cetti's Warbler (heard), Levallant's Woodpecker (heard), House Martin and a few common species. Just as we were about to leave a flock of Little Swifts turned up, they circled over us for a while before diving down to their nests under the eaves of a building.

It was now getting dark so we left and drove the short distance to the hotel, thus ending our first day in sunny Morocco.

DAY 2 - MARCH 7TH 2014

OUKAIMEDAN (TOUBKAL NATIONAL PARK) - BOUMALNE DADES VIA AIT OURIR, THE TIZI-N-TICHKA PASS AND QUARZAZATE

We had a fantastic start to the day, the weather was absolutely brilliant with a beautiful clear sky and no wind, perfect for visiting the high Atlas Mountains.

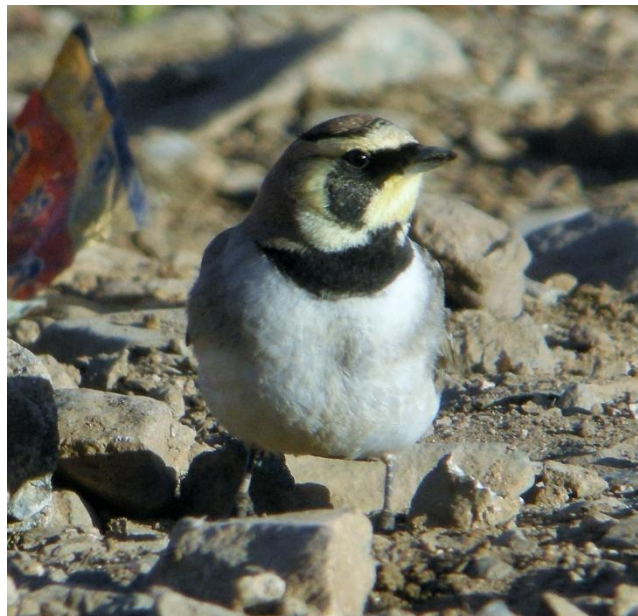
After a 6am breakfast we set off in the dark and headed up steep climb to Oukaïmeden, a few species were seen on the way but we never stopped as we intended to get to the top as early as possible. Our efforts paid off as soon as we arrived in the village of Oukaïmeden, there were hundreds of birds everywhere. It was amazing, several hundred Red-billed Chough mixed with similar numbers of Alpine Chough as they littered the whole area. Then we found our first group of Crimson-winged Finches they fed by the roadside and allowed very close approach. It got even better as we walked along the main track, we saw Common Raven, Atlas Horned Lark, Black Redstart, Rock Sparrow, Black Wheatears, Mistle Thrush and more finches, lots more.





a typical scene in the Atlas Mountains

We climbed back onto the bus and drove up to the radio masts where we found Rock Bunting and another of our target species, the Alpine Accentor. On the way back down we heard the call of the Levaillant's Woodpecker and after a little walk we found the bird stuck to the trunk of a tree. This was a superb find, I have never seen one at this altitude, 3000 metres!



Atlas Horned Lark



the beautiful Crimson-winged Finch

We then spent an hour or so driving back down the mountainside to look for more species, we found several Moussier's Redstarts as well as Barbary Partridge and our first Long-legged Buzzard.

Well by the time we got down to the valley floor it was almost 11am so we had to press on to our next destination. We made several stops throughout the rest of the day finding a lot more species. We added Crested & Thekla Lark, Moroccan Magpie, Great Grey Shrike, more Barbary Partridges and lots more species.

Our lunch stop produced three target species in a pine copse, Common Crossbill, Firecrest and Coal Tit. Other journey-birds included Desert Lark, White-crowned Wheatears, Desert Wheatears and Short-toed Eagle.



Levallant's Woodpecker

It was now getting late and our last stop was brief and a little disappointing. We stopped at the huge reservoir at Quarzazate but because of the lack of recent rains the water level was dreadfully low and hence very few birds were seen. A flock of 18 Black Kites was nice, we also saw Ruddy Shelduck, Marsh Harrier, White Stork, White Wagtail and a dozen Grey Herons.

The light finally went so we hopped onto the bus and finished the journey to Boumalne Dades where a hot shower and a lovely tajine dinner was waiting for us.

DAY 3 - MARCH 8TH 2014

TAGDILT TRACK AND SURROUNDINGS - LATE AFTERNOON TRIP TO DADES GORGE

We were down for breakfast at 6am and out in the car park at 6:45. It was quite light by then and we had a clear sky with fading stars, there was a chilly wind with a temperature of only 5C, it felt like 2C! You must remember that we are still at over 300 metres altitude.



out of the bus on the Tagdilt track



our hotel on the edge of the stoney plains at Boumalne Dades

We walked to a small area where rubbish had been tipped for the last few years and had a great time watching many birds. Trumpeter Finches numbered in the 20's and Short-toed Larks were seen in small flocks of 10-20 birds. We also listed Desert Wheatears, Desert Lark, Temminck's Horned Lark, Red-rumped Wheatears, Thekla Lark, two Eurasian Hoopoes and a small flock of Cream-coloured Coursers, what a great start to the day.



Trumpeter Finch

We jumped into the bus and drove a short way to the Tagdilt track about 1½ mile away. Tagdilt is 'LARK'S VILLE' they were everywhere and several species were listed. As well as those mentioned above we found Skylark, Crested Lark and two rather special ones. After walking for quite a while into this huge litter-strewn area of rubbish we found our most wanted bird, the Thick-billed Lark, three of them flew a short distance away and gave us the run-around for a while but we all had superb views in the end. We also found a single Lesser Short-toed Lark and several more Wheatears.



Red-rumped Wheatear

We moved further along the track towards Tagdilt village where we got off the bus to walk again. Over the next hour we found a few new species and lots more that were seen earlier. We added our ninth lark of the day when we found a Hoopoe Lark, we also found Subalpine Warbler, Willow Warbler and Great Grey Shrike (*elegans*) we then found a great species for Morocco in the shape of an Isabelline Wheatears, what a superb find.



It's unbelievable that you can find such great birds in a rubbish tip here we have Thick-billed Lark and Temminck's Horned Lark

As we moved to the next place we saw a flurry of raptor passage, we counted 18 Black Kites, 4 Short-toed Eagles, 3 Marsh Harriers and also a couple of Lesser Kestrel were seen out on the plains. Our last stop before lunch was at a small oasis where a small farm holding had a few fields of crops and a little orchard. We only added Meadow Pipit to the list but we saw our fourth Eurasian Hoopoe of the day and there were also a few Subalpine Warblers and a Common Redstart there too.



a male Thick-billed Lark

We bought our lunch in Boumalne Dades and drove up the gorge to each at a picnic site near the very strange rock formation locally known as "Monkey's Fingers". From there we drove right up through the gorge and over the top where we searched for our last two species of the day. First we found a pair of Bonelli's Eagles and then after some chasing we found a beautiful male Tristram's Warbler, fantastic and a great bird to finish the day off with.



Tristan's Warbler - taken by Terje Kolaas

After a nice hot shower we ambled down to the restaurant for a lovely dinner and a glass of wine (or beer).

DAY 4 - MARCH 9TH 2014

TRANSFER DAY - BOUMALNE DADES TO MERZOUGA WITH STOPS NEAR GOULMIMA AND RISSANI

The nice weather broke today as we were faced with heavy cloud, light rain and a very cold wind, it was just 3C as we boarded the bus after another delicious and filling breakfast. I cannot praise the Hotel Soleil Bleu enough, the rooms are lovely, the food great and the staff are so nice and friendly.

We left around 6:45am and drove to the 'new' Tagdilt track first, we walked for quite a while in the very cold and wet conditions hoping to see sandgrouse but failed, I am not surprised considering the weather. A little further we visited the small farm holding which is a bit of an oasis, again we were hoping for migrants as we did yesterday. We thought the weather may have 'dropped' some new birds in but not a lot extra was found. A Spanish Sparrow was a nice find but we also saw Black Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Meadow Pipit, Common Bubul, Thekla Lark, Long-legged Buzzard, Serin and several other common birds.



THEKLA LARK

Now we set off for the desert region in the Southeast of the country, but we had two quick stops in succession after only a few kilometres. The first was to look for Pharaoh Eagle Owl which failed to show in the rain and the second was to look for Lanner Falcon at its' nest but that bird also failed to turn up, how annoying! Just

minutes later a superb consolation prize after missing the owl was the sighting of a Magreb Wheatears, two of us saw it from the bus and after some searching a couple more the group found the bird, however it quickly disappeared before the rest of the group got to see it.

We then drove for a couple of hours before stopping for a lunch break at a roadside restaurant, it was only 11:45am but we had eaten our breakfast at 6am. Within an hour we were on the road again noting Common Raven, Long-legged Buzzard, Great Grey Shrike, Common Kestrel and several larks along the way.



TRISTRAM'S WARBLER

After an hour we stopped once more just passed Goulmima where we set off on foot into a large wadi, a Great Grey Shrike was the first bird to be seen followed by a Desert Wheatear and we found a Common Chiffchaff and our prized target species the Scrub Warbler. After showing for a short while the bird disappeared, it gave us the run around for a while. In the meantime a group of Fulvous Babblers grabbed our attention. Then we relocated the Scrub Warbler and ended up with some smashing views.

So off we went again towards Erfoud and the desert region, we only got to about 15km. Southeast of Goulmima when we stopped at a bridge over the Oued Gheris, a Moroccan Wagtail (a sub-species of White Wagtail - *subpersonata*) was found very close to the road and after a 30 minute search we came up with; Little-ringed Plover, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Common Moorhen, Great Cormorant, Little Egret and a few passerines. One excellent little excursion found us watching; Spectacled Warbler, Subalpine Warbler and Tristram's Warbler all in the same bush, fantastic.



walking the wadi

Two more stops were made before we reached our destination, the first was almost in the centre of Erfoud when a Booted Eagle came down the road towards us. This pale morph individual was very low and decided to circle right above us. The last stop was in Rossini to look for the strange sub-species of the Crested Lark called the Long-billed Crested Lark. As we got off the bus one these Larks flew towards us and landed within 10 metres of us on a dirt mound, click, click! Thank you very much. Whilst there we scanned around and found a Black-eared Wheatear, a Tawny Pipit and a few Linnets.



This is not a photographic tour, is it?



LONG-BILLED CRESTED LARK

Well that ended the day's birding, we had a slow start but finished with a flurry. We arrived at our hotel just as the sun went down, with adequate time, enough for a shower and a short relaxation period before going to dinner. The hotel had a terrific Moroccan feel to it and a lovely peaceful ambience, dinner was the best we had eaten so far.

DAY 5 - MARCH 10TH 2014

ERG CHEBBI SAND DUNE SYSTEM and AREAS AROUND RISSANI

The weather was fantastic today, clear blue sky, a lovely breeze and about 22C.

We were all up and out at 6:30am walking the grounds and gardens of our new hotel. The hotel backs onto the huge dune system called ERG CHEBBI in the small town of Merzouga, we are now in the far south-eastern region of Morocco. Plenty of Subalpine Warblers were seen in tamarisk bushes as well as a few Eurasian Chiffchaff in and the sun rise was very beautiful.

After a really lovely breakfast we set off for the Cafe Yasmina which is found at the far eastern edge of the dunes, but first we stopped to search for a few scrub-birds. We stopped at the side of a huge expanse of dry vegetation in a wadi, we spread out and began to walk. We hadn't walked far when we found an African Desert Warbler, what a little stunner, it showed really well for all of us. Our walk continued through the wadi and we listed another new bird almost straight away when a Bar-tailed Desert Lark appeared in front of us. We also listed: Hoopoe Lark, two of them were seen singing from low perches, Trumpeter Finch, Black-eared, Desert and White-crowned Wheatears were also seen.

We got back onto the bus and continued our journey, as we approached Café Yasmina we saw several Brown-necked Ravens on the open sandy areas and another Great Grey Shrike.



Bar-tailed Lark

It was a mixed bag of results at Café Yasmina, the seasonal lake usually present up until late March had completely dried up and to make things worse the ringing group that usually spend some time there in March had not arrived yet. As a consequence very few birds were seen, including one of our target birds the Desert Sparrow. We all walked across the dried out pool area to check the tamarisk bushes for warblers and as we did so we had a tremendous stroke of luck when one of the group tripped up and inadvertently 'kicked' up an Egyptian Nightjar, how cool was that? The bird flew a short distance but was quickly relocated and we all had superb views.



Egyptian Nightjar

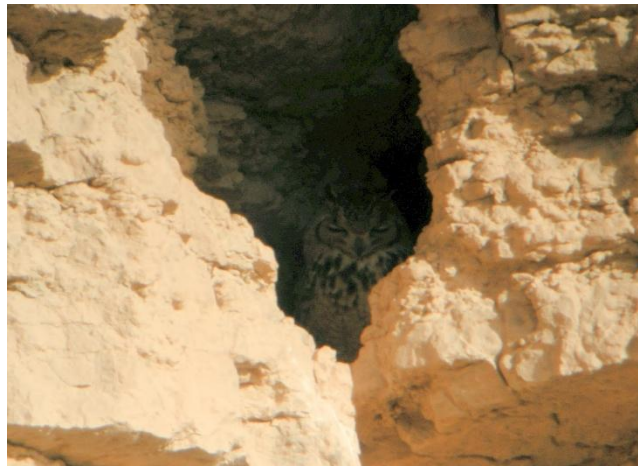
From Yasmina we hired a couple of large 4*4 trucks to take us into the desert to look for Desert Sparrow, the drivers took us straight to a couple of breeding pairs. Then a second stroke of luck happened when a very pale Martin flew over us several times, we got good pictures of it and from them we identified it as a Rock Martin, this was incredible and such a great find.

On the way back we found a small flock of Thick-billed Larks, also some more Bar-tailed Larks and several other species.



Great Grey Shrike - subspecies *elegans*

The rest of the afternoon was spent in the hills and rocky gorges around Rissani, it was there that we found Pharaoh Eagle Owl and later a couple of small flocks of Spotted Sandgrouse, we also saw other sandgrouse in flight but we never saw them well enough to confirm their ID.



Pharaoh Eagle Owl roosting

We drove back in the dark and arrived at the hotel at 7:15pm, it had been another long day but our new sightings were well worth getting a little tired for.

DAY 6 - MARCH 11TH 2014

TRANSFER FROM THE DESERT REGION TO TALIOUINE IN THE SOUS VALLEY.

The day started nicely with little cloud but it was very chilly, as the day wore on it clouded over and we drove through rain and some snow, the temperature dropped to 5C by the time we reached our destination.

It was a day of very little birding, we set off from Merzouga at 8am and made a short stop for birding in Rossini. We were hoping to catch up with the sub-species of Olivaceous Warbler that is only found in this desert region of Morocco, called appropriately, the Saharan Olivaceous Warbler. But none showed up, we did find our first Little Owl and we saw several Subalpine Warblers, a Chiffchaff sp. a couple of Serin and several other species.

From Rossini we drove out onto the Alnif road and for the next couple of hours we only stopped to look at passing raptors; sightings included Common Raven, Long-legged Buzzard, Black Kite, Marsh Harrier and a single Montagu's Harrier.

We ate lunch sitting out in the sunshine at Agdz before driving off for our second birding excursion. We arrived in an area of dry woodland with scattered Acacias, a few Palms and some Almond trees.

Our sighting including a couple of very nice warblers which were new for our list. First a male Western Orphean Warbler was found which was quickly followed by a sighting of Western Olivaceous Warbler. After

a little more searching we returned to the bus and on the way back we found our second Isabelline Wheatear of the trip, how fantastic, a very rare and unusual sighting for Morocco, now seen twice.



scenery en-route

More excitement followed about 2 hours later when drove through the town of Tazenakt, it had been raining extremely heavily and it looked like we had just missed it. Large puddles were everywhere and flash flooding could be seen in the fields. We came across about 100 Black Kites sitting by the side of the road and another 50 or so were feeding on a carcass in the fields, it was a great sight and was probably due to the heavy rain, the birds had been grounded. A short distance further on we saw an Osprey on a telegraph pole by the side of the road, again this bird was probably brought down by the weather.



Isabelline Wheatears - our second of the trip

For the last 50 kilometres we passed through some high passes that had a covering of snow and the rain continued all the way to Taliouine. We arrived just as it was getting dark, we had enough time for a shower before eating another lovely evening meal.

DAY 7 - MARCH 12TH 2014

TRANSFER FROM TALIOUINE TO AGADIR WITH STOPS AT AOULOUEZ GORGE -SOUS VALLEY ARGANA FOREST - OUED SOUS NATIONAL PARK.

WEATHER: lovely sunshine all day, windy late afternoon.

We started our day's birding at 6:45am by walking in the cultivated area behind the Auberge where we were staying. It was alive with birds, we added a few new species to the list, the first of which was Woodchat Shrike. Lots of finches were singing, we saw both of the African sub-species of Greenfinch and Goldfinch as well as African Chaffinch.



Woodchat Shrike

The area where we walked consisted of small fields of Alfalfa and lots of olive and almond trees, with surrounding ditches and streams of water. There were also some areas of open scrub which held, Cirl & Corn Bunting, Sardinian Warbler, more shrikes and Spanish Sparrows, a Hoopoe was a nice bonus.



Aoulouez Gorge

After breakfast we drove some 30 kilometres towards AGADIR and stopped at a bridge over the river Sous and because the water level was quite low there were a lot of species there. A couple of Black Storks joined a throng of Little & Cattle Egrets, there was also Grey Heron, Yellow, Grey, White and Moroccan Wagtails. A Common Kingfisher dashed by and was seen by a few of the group and a Common Cuckoo sat on a power line showing extremely well for all of us.

We walked into the Aoulouez Gorge and found more species; Meadow Pipit, House Bunting, Blackcap, Common Bulbul, Green Sandpiper, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel and we also started noticing a small raptor passage overhead. A few Booted Eagles drifted over as did another Black Stork, then two other Black Storks flew up to join it.



Common Cuckoo

Further into the gorge a small section of farmland held more birds, we found several Serins , Common Chiff-chaff, Willow Warbler and we heard a Common Nightingale, but our best find was a small colony of roosting Black-crowned Night Herons.

Back on the bus we drove for another hour before stopping next to a large expanse of open scrub and farmland. We search for Black-winged Kite without success but we did find Bonelli's Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Great-grey Shrike, Crested and Thekla Larks, Barbary Partridge and a few other species.

Further into the journey we stopped for lunch and then made a short stop at Touradant to look for Pallid Swifts, we never saw any swifts but we did see our first Spotless Starlings.



House Bunting

We finally arrived at AGADIR where we drove straight to the Oued Sous estuary, by now the wind had picked up and the temperature had dropped. However there were plenty of birds to see. We found six species of gulls including Slender-billed and Audouin's Gulls, lots of waders and a nice flock of Greater Flamingos. Further down the estuary we saw Sandwich and Gull-billed Terns and another Peregrine Falcon. But our sightings were well down on previous visits because access was restricted, most of the area was out-of-bounds due to a Royal Golfing Tournament next to the King's Palace, the whole area was crawling with security guards who didn't like scopes, cameras and bins.

Lastly we drove round to an area of open heath where found our last bird of the day, Stone Curlew, two birds were seen. It was now after 6pm and it was getting dark, so we hopped onto the bus and drove to our hotel just 5 minutes away.

DAY 8 - MARCH 13TH 2014

SOUSS MASSA NATIONAL PARK ALL DAY

We had a fabulous day in the Souss Massa National Park, the weather was just perfect with overcast conditions until lunchtime when the sun burnt the cloud off, There was a nice cooling breeze all day.

Souss Massa is one of my favourite places in all of Morocco you are always guaranteed a good range of species and some lovely scenery. We arrived at about 8am after driving from AGADIR and stopping to watch Little Owls along the way.

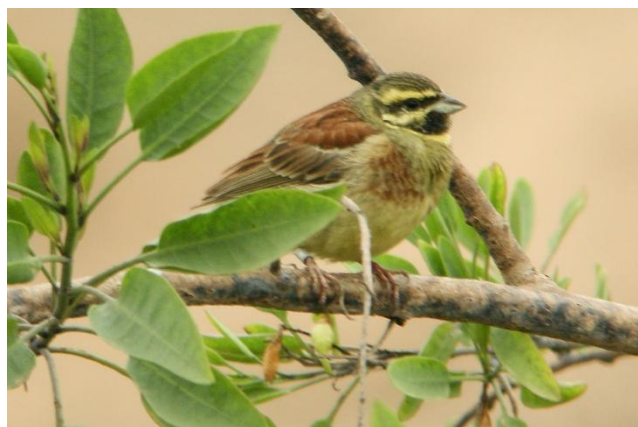
The walk began outside the reserve on a track that ran some way above the river affording great views over the river and the meadows surrounding it. We started our listing with a Moussier's Redstart, a male posed well for the cameras.



MOUSSIER'S REDSTART

Birds came thick and fast, we saw our first Common Stonechat of the trip, then a pair of House Buntings showed well. The hedgerows were full of warblers and another new sighting was a Reed Warbler, we also saw Zitting Cisticola lots of Chiffchaff and several Blackcap.

Back on the walk we stopped to look for a Wryneck that was calling, it eventually showed well across the river as did another sought after species the Black-crowned Tchagra. A little further on we found Olivaceous Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Kingfisher, Laughing Dove, more Stonechats and another pair of Moussier's Redstart.



CIRL BUNTING

The Cirl Bunting is always nice to see, we had good views of them as well as House Bunting. As we entered the reserve the farmland reduced and more scrubland appeared.



‘Desert’ Little Owl-*Athene noctua saharae*

The bird numbers thinned out too, we did see a couple of harriers fly over, one each of Montague's and Marsh. Lots of Serins and Linnets buzzed around us but generally it was quiet.



SERIN

Birds on the water were few and far between, a bunch of Common Coots were joined by a single Northern Pintail and few Great Cormorants flew or perched on logs.



LOOKING UP-RIVER TOWARDS SOUSS MASSA
VILLAGE

At the mouth of the river a huge sand-bar covers the exit to the sea and on it sat hundreds of gulls and terns with a few waders. We listed four of the gulls seen yesterday and only one tern species, Sandwich Tern. Waders included a flock of four Avocets, Sanderling, Kentish Plover and Eurasian Curlew.



SPANISH SPARROW

It was now very warm but the sea breeze kept us cool as we watched Balearic Shearwaters, Arctic Skua and Northern Gannet out at sea.



BLACK CROWNED TCHAGRA

We ate lunch on a terrace of a hotel overlooking the sea where we added Great Skuas to our list.



YELLOW WAGTAIL - *iberiae*

The rest of the afternoon was spent looking in the cultivated fields and open farmland areas near the river a little further inland. We were hoping for Plain Martin but never saw one. A huge bonus was the finding of a Black-winged Kite. This bird was roosting so we kept very quiet and got some decent pictures of, lovely.



watching the Black-winged Kite

We set off home a little early because everyone was very tired after our epic walk this morning, our list was now approaching 170, very good for just 8 days in the field.



HOUSE BUNTING

DAY 9 - MARCH 14TH 2014

OUED SOUS – CAPE RHIR – TAMRI – OUED KSOB - ESSAOUIRA

Our last full day began with a bang! We had perfect weather conditions, no wind with a lovely clear sky. We also managed to avoid the security around the Palace by getting up early, this allowed us to walk all the way down the Oued Sous to the beach. We also managed to view the secluded pools on the heath very near to the Palace walls which were very productive.



GREATER FLAMINGO in the morning light

Our morning began near the golf course where the Hassan Golf Tournament was being held, this required unbelievable security measures but not at 6:30am. On the upper section of this part of the Oued Sous we found an Osprey, a flock of Oystercatcher, Curlew, Common Sandpipers and a few species of common gulls.



EURASIAN SPOONBILL

We finally got to an area where we could view the pools on the heath, they were crammed with birds! A flock of Marbled Duck was a superb find, a most wanted species by the group but we also found several new waders species for the trip list. Common Snipe, Ruff, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo, Redshank, Greenshank & Spotted Redshank, a few Yellow Wagtails and Northern Shoveller were all seen in or around the pool.

We beat a hasty retreat as a palace guard was eyeing us up but we managed to get back onto the beach without being thrown off the area. In the estuary we saw Slender-billed Gulls, Audouin's Gulls along with the three common species of gull.



PIED AVOCETS

Back in the car park we jumped onto the bus and set off northwards through Agadir to visit Cape Rhir, along the way we made a couple of stops to view roosting gull flocks but never saw anything new.

Cape Rhir was superb, surrounded by dry heath we had an elevated view out to sea, we never saw many species but the colours, the sunshine and the habitats around us made it a lovely stop. Many Northern Gannets were passing and we did see one Great Skua but not much else.

At Tamri we walked along the shoreline to the huge brackish lagoon where we hoped to see Morocco's most famous bird the Bald Ibis. We found Little Ringed Plover, Ruddy Shelduck, Grey Heron, Sedge, Subalpine & Sardinian Warblers and Common Whitethroat. Then the mythical Bald Ibis appeared, five of them drifted over the far hill and circled on the thermals for a while, they never gained much height and they eventually drifted over the hillside.

Another few kilometres further north found us at the breeding site of the Bald Ibis, we couldn't approach the colony which is situated on a cliff overlooking the sea but we did see another Ibis flying to the cliff carrying nesting material. The sloping hillside also held many species, we found 3 Eurasian Hoopoe, Great Grey Shrike, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Black-eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike and plenty of Linnets.

Our last venue of this final day was the Oueb Ksob which runs into the sea on Southern edge of Essaouira. We got off the bus at a bridge some 3km inland from the beach and set off on foot towards the beach. Our target species was the Plain Martin which appeared almost straight away. We saw up 50 of these cute little birds and a large number perched out in the sun ideal for the cameras.



Plain Martin - aka Brown-throated Martin

Our walk took us 3km all the way to the beach, we walked along the river bed which wasn't quite dry and where large pools had developed, a good number of waders were seen and many passerines came down to drink.

We saw a dozen or so of Green Sandpipers, fewer numbers of Greenshanks, Common Sandpiper and both Little Ringed and Greater Ringed Plover. A Common Kingfisher was nice, also Cirl Bunting. The Serins and

Greenfinches looked outrageously bright in the afternoon sunshine and even Song Thrushes and Blackcaps looked more colourful.

The walk ended at the beach where the large river mouth held flocks of Greater Flamingo, Pied Avocet, Eurasian Spoonbills and a large gull roost.

The light began to fade and a beautiful orange sky developed over the sea as we witnessed an amazing African sunset.



The birding was over, we made our way to the bus and drove into town to find our hotel which was absolutely fantastic, a real gem found in the side streets of the old wall town.

Tomorrow we drive to Marrakech to catch an early flight so we don't anticipate any further birding.

DAY 10 - MARCH 15TH 2014

TRANSFER FROM ESSAOUIRA TO MARRAKECH AIRPORT

Another early morning start saw us at the breakfast table at 6am and on the road by 6:30am it was just beginning to get light. The journey to Marrakech takes 3 hours and we had a clear sky all the way with a beautiful sunrise too. The birding highlights consisted of two stops, one was to look for Calandra Lark, which some of the group saw and another was to look at a Falcon on a pylon. My thoughts were that it was Barbary Falcon, small compact and neat with very light undersides and blue grey back, but we couldn't see the head very well and no-one got a good view of the head when it flew off, most of the group thought it was a Lanner Falcon.

We arrived at the airport at 9:15am in good time for the flight which left on time.

The tour was over, we had recorded 186 species which included 2 species only heard and not seen, migration was a little disappointing with only short bursts of raptor passage and very few areas where lots of passerines were found.

However nearly all of the specialities of Morocco were seen well and the group went home with many nice memories of another superb trip in a fantastic country.

SPECIES RECORDED			
1	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	✓
2	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓
4	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	✓
6	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	✓
7	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	✓

8	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	√
9	Balearic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	√
10	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	√
11	Great Cormorant	<i>Phal. Carbo moroccanus</i>	√
12	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	√
13	Cattle Egret	<i>Bulbulcus ibis</i>	√
14	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	√
15	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	√
16	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	√
17	oBlack Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	√
18	(Northern) Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	√
19	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	√
20	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	√
21	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	√
22	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	√
23	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	√
24	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>	√
25	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	√
26	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	√
27	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	√
28	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	√
29	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus cirtensis</i>	√
30	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	√
31	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	√
32	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	√
33	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	√
34	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrines</i>	√
35	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	√
36	Common or Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	√
37	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	√
38	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	√
39	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	√
40	Stone-Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	√
41	Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	√
42	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	√
43	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	√
44	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	√
45	Grey or Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	√
46 m	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	√
47	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	√
48	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	√
49	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	√
50	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	√
51	Common Sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>	√
52	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>	√
53	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	√
54	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	√
55	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	√
56	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	√
57	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	√
58	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	√
59	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	√
60	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	√
61	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	√
62	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	√
63	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	√
64	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	√
65	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	√

66	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	√
67	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	√
68	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	√
69	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	√
70	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>	√
71	Rock Dove	<i>Columbus livia</i>	√
	Rock Dove (domestic)	<i>Columbus livia</i>	√
72	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	√
73	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	√
74	Laughing Dove	<i>Strep. Senegalensis arenicola</i>	√
75	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus conorus</i>	√
76	Pharaoh Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	√
77	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	√
78	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	√
79	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	√
80	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	√
81	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	√
82	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	√
83	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	√
84	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	√
85	Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	√
86	Levaillant's Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus vaillantii</i>	√
87	Great-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	H
88	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	√
89	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	√
	Long-billed Crested Lark	<i>Galarida c. riggenbachi</i>	√
90	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	√
91	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella b. rubiginosa</i>	√
92	Lesser short-toed Lark	<i>Candella rufescens minor</i>	√
93	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti payne</i>	√
94	Bar-tailed Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes c. arenicola</i>	√
95	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	√
96	Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>	√
97	Temminck's Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	√
98	Atlas Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris atlas</i>	√
99	Hoopoe Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	√
100	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	√
101	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	√
102	Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	√
103	Eurasian Crag-Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	√
104	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	√
105	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	√
106	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	√
107	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	√
108	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	√
109	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	√
110	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	H
111	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla .f. iberiae</i>	√
112	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	√
	Moroccan White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba subpersonata</i>	√
113	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	√
114	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	√
115	Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	√
116	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	√
117	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	√
118	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	√
119	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	√
120	Moussier's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	√

121	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	√
122	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	√
123	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	√
124	White Crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	√
125	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	√
126	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	√
127	Red-rumped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	√
128	Magreb Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe halophila</i>	√
129	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata rubicola</i>	√
130	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	√
131	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus deichleri</i>	√
132	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	√
133	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	√
134	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	√
135	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	√
136	Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	√
137	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	√
138	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	√
139	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	√
140	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	√
141	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	√
142	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	√
143	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	√
144	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	√
145	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>	√
146	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>	√
147	Western Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>	√
148	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Hippolais hortensis</i>	√
149	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	√
150	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	√
151	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	√
152	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus colybita</i>	√
153	Firecrest	<i>Regales ignicapilla</i>	√
154	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	√
155	Great Tit	<i>Parus major excelsus</i>	√
156	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	√
157	African Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>	√
158	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Larius excubitor elegans</i>	√
	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Larius excubitor algeriensis</i>	√
159	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	√
160	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	√
161	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	√
162	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Turdoides fulva</i>	√
163	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica mauritanica</i>	√
164	Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	√
165	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	√
166	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	√
167	Browned-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	√
168	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	√
169	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	√
170	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	√
171	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	√
172	Rock (Petronia) Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	√
173	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelops</i>	√
	African Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs africana</i>	√
174	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	√
175	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	√
176	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis parva</i>	√

177	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris voousi</i>	√
178	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	√
179	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	√
180	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxix curvirostra poligyna</i>	√
181	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	√
182	Crimson –winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys sanguineus</i>	√
183	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	√
184	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza circlus</i>	√
185	House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>	√
186	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	√