Morocco Trip Report
Casablanca, Atlas Mountains and Sahara
2\textsuperscript{nd} to 15\textsuperscript{th} April 2016

Tour Leader: David Hoddinott

Some of the top species seen during the tour:

1. Northern Bald Ibis
2. Egyptian Nightjar
3. Pharaoh Eagle-Owl
4. Moussier’s Redstart
5. Cream-coloured Courser
6. Dupont’s Lark
7. Tawny Owl
8. Greater Hoopoe-Lark
9. Common Firecrest
10. Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
Tour Summary

After arrival in Casablanca we settled in at our comfortable hotel and over dinner we discussed the plans for the exciting days ahead. The following morning we departed early, missing the traffic around the capital, Rabat. Our first destination was the Mediya harbour mouth, where we were delighted to find several Razorbill. One of these fabulous alcids was seen sitting on the water at the harbour entrance and allowed superb scope views. Delighted with our find we headed off to the nearby Sidi Bourhaba, a fabulous wetland tucked nicely away in the dunes. Here we were soon enjoying a host of waterfowl which included great views of the sought after Marbled Duck, handsome Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck and the specialty and main target White-headed Duck. Other species seen included a Purple Heron skulking in the reeds, several Western Marsh Harrier, smart Western Swamphen and our only Red-knobbed Coots of the trip.

After a delicious tapas lunch we explored a little of the city and enjoyed some time in the local souks.

The following day we headed to the Zaer region around Sidi Yahya and then continued on to Ifrane via Meknes. Our first birding area in the cork woodlands of the Zaer produced several Barbary Partridge, a hovering Short-toed Eagle, a displaying Black-crowned Tchagra which showed very well, migratory Woodchat Shrike, Eurasian Jay, Western Bonelli’s Warbler and a Common Nightingale which showed rather well for this shy species. Continuing on, we noted a number of White Stork seen nesting in several towns. Once in the old capital of Meknes, we enjoyed a wonderful tagine lunch. Over lunch we were entertained with great views of Alpine Swift, Western Jackdaw and Spotless Starling. Arriving at Ifrane we found several migrant Lesser Kestrel and then a walk through some nearby thickets produced Eurasian Wren, European Robin and delightful Cirl Bunting.

A cold and wet morning in the middle atlas around Ifrane meant that the birding was going to be challenging. However a keen group of participants set out early, in search of some great birds and we were not to be disappointed. The nearby Dayet (Lake) Aoua held good numbers of waterbirds including a wonderful flock of Black-necked Grebe amongst all 3 species of grebes, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Common Pochard, Great Egret, Little Ringed Plover, Common Snipe, Green Sandpiper, Ruff, a confiding Levaillant’s Woodpecker, singing Woodlark, Short-toed Treecreeper, Meadow Pipit and Common Linnet. Continuing on the drive to Midelt we found good numbers of Ruddy Shelduck and a little further on, Northern Wheatear of the distinctive race seebohmi.
Early the next morning we set off in search of the highly elusive Dupont’s Lark. The tussock grasslands around Zeida host this enigmatic species and, on arriving at dawn at a suitable place, we disembarked from our vehicle and were immediately greeted by their lovely song. For about an hour we searched in vain in the sub zero temperatures and on our final effort as we walked back to the vehicle, suddenly one appeared and we all managed to see it rather well. Delighted we set off back to breakfast when suddenly one was spotted near the roadside and then another and another and soon we had seen a magnificent five birds. Wow, how lucky can you get! Leaving the Atlas Mountains we headed down to the great Sahara Desert where we based ourselves at Erfoud.

The following morning we headed into the desert using 4x4 vehicles. Erg Chebbi was our first destination and here we noted the impressive red sand dunes, some of the highest in the world. Whilst enjoying the scenery and taking photos the call of the nomadic Spotted Sandgrouse was heard and soon we were watching a wonderful flock right alongside the vehicles. Other notable sightings during our day in the desert included a splendid pair of Cream-coloured Courser, a single European Turtle Dove, cracking Pharaoh Eagle-Owl, a cryptic day roosting Egyptian Nightjar, Brown-necked Raven, displaying Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Desert and Bar-tailed Lark, Western Olivaceous Warbler singing from Tamarisk bushes, African Desert Warbler – yet another sought after species, elusive Mourning Wheatear and lovely Desert Sparrow.

Leaving the desert we travelled via Er Rachidia to Boumalne. En route we stopped at various wadis for some superb birding. Our first stop yielded an unexpected Thick-billed Lark which is a highly sought after species. It showed remarkably well giving us all great views and deservedly makes the top ten list for the trip. Next was the cute Streaked Scrub Warbler seen carrying nesting material, then a bright yellow Melodious Warbler popped out of a thicket, as did Spectacled Warbler and finally a pair of Trumpeter Finch were enjoyed as they fed on some low bushes. We weren’t done yet and a little further down the road we managed to find a confiding group of Fulvous Babbler. What a splendid mornings birding!

After lunch we visited the spectacular Todra Gorge. Here we picked up a distant Bonelli’s Eagle, several Blue Rock Thrushes and Grey Wagtail before making our way to our comfortable lodgings at Boumalne.

Having notched up many of the key targets for the tagdilt already, we could concentrate our efforts on other species and also enjoy a break at midday. The gravel plains of the tagdilt produced some wonderful birds and during our first foray we found more Thick-billed Larks, Temminck’s and Greater Short-toed Larks and Desert and Red-rumped Wheatear. The next area produced the surprise of the trip when we came across a small flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse feeding near the roadside. They gave wonderful views and we marvelled at their beautiful patterns. Shortly thereafter we found the smart Black-bellied...
Sandgrouse, Long-legged Buzzard and Cream-coloured Courser. In the afternoon we visited the scenic Dades Gorge where we enjoyed a great sighting of Bonelli’s Eagle.

From Boumalne we travelled to the coast at Agadir. Here we enjoyed a splendid pelagic trip on very calm seas. I was a little anxious as the seabirds tend to enjoy at least a little wind which aids their foraging. This was fortunate as no sooner had we passed a fishing fleet then suddenly there were the birds. A Common Scoter was seen hurriedly passing by then the key species appeared, Balearic Shearwater which gave good views and we ended up seeing several, Northern Gannets were seen right alongside the boat and also seen fishing – great to watch, both Great Skua and Parasitic Jaeger and yet another Razorbill put in an appearance. In the afternoon we headed to Tamri where we notched up a surprise Black Stork, several Audouin’s Gull, a single Lesser Crested Tern in the large tern roost and a fine migrant Black-eared Wheatear. The main reason for visiting this area was to see the endangered Northern Bald Ibis. It took a bit of finding but once we found one, then we were treated to great views.

The following day was devoted to the impressive estuaries of Oued Massa and Oued Souss. An early start saw us arriving just after dawn at Oued Massa and here we enjoyed splendid scope views of a superb male Little Bittern, a nice flock of the sought after Marbled Duck, Glossy Ibis, migrant European Turtle Dove, a cute pair of Little Owl, Black-crowned Tchagra, wonderful Cetti’s Warbler which was fairly confiding, Eurasian Reed Warbler, several Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Common Nightingale, lovely Moussier’s Redstart, European Stonechat, Spanish Sparrow, European Serin in full song and a Corn Bunting. The afternoon at Oued Souss was equally rewarding with good numbers of species and notable sightings included our only Common Shelduck of the trip, a huge flock of 250 Eurasian Spoonbill migrating north, Western Osprey, Eurasian Stone-Curlew which gave great views, Eurasian Oystercatcher, large flock of Pied Avocet, Kentish Plover, Spotted Redshank, Dunlin in breeding plumage, beautiful pink Slender-billed Gull, Gull-billed, Caspian and Little Terns and in the evening, a Red-necked Nightjar whizzed by.

From Agadir we travelled into the high Atlas Mountains at Oukaimeden via the very scenic Tiz n’ Test Pass. En route to our hotel we observed several Booted Eagle, a superb Eurasian Sparrowhawk, enjoyed great scope views of a Common Cuckoo calling, a flock of Little Swift, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Red-rumped Swallow, migrant Spotted Flycatcher and Rock Bunting. In the evening we enjoyed a glass of wine or cold beer whilst waiting to see if the Tawny Owl would make an appearance. After some time and when we were about to give up, suddenly it called and shortly thereafter an adult flew in with prey and later entered what appeared to be its nest hole. After enjoying this good sighting we settled in for a good night’s sleep.
The next morning we spent time around the very scenic Oukaimeden area. There was still snow on the ground and it made for great photos. Our first stop yielded a splendid pair of Barbary Partridge with chicks and a pair of White-throated Dipper on a stream, shortly followed by a singing Eurasian Wren, Red-billed and Alpine Choughs were milling around the meadows, Coal Tit, Common Firecrest and Hawfinch showed well in the conifers, Mistle Thrush, Black Redstart, Common Rock Thrush appeared in the rocky areas and on the top Rock Sparrow, Horned Lark and very sought after African Crimson-winged Finch gave great views. We had to work a little harder for Alpine Accentor but in the end we enjoyed great views. Thereafter we headed back to Marrakech where we enjoyed our final dinner. After experiencing some culture and shopping the following morning we said goodbye to those returning home and the rest of us continued on to Madrid for the start of the Canary Islands tour.

And so ended our wonderful 14-day private Morocco tour. Besides seeing some incredible birds, we had seen diverse and spectacular scenery, seen ancient Kasbahs and Medinas, stayed in some superb accommodations and enjoyed fabulous meals. The trip, which took us from the northern wetlands to the highest snow-covered mountains to rugged Atlantic cliffs via stony desert, the magnificent Sahara and the Atlantic Ocean, gave us a good cross section of North African species including the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis, majestic Pharaoh Eagle-Owl and camouflaged Egyptian Nightjar. All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable tour with great birding and great company.

Annotated List of Birds Recorded 202 species (3 heard only)

**Ducks, Geese & Swans  Anatidae**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Shelduck</th>
<th>Tadorna tadorna</th>
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<tr>
<td>Some of these large birds were seen near the Oued Souss estuary.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ruddy Shelduck</th>
<th>Tadorna ferruginea</th>
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<tr>
<td>We had great views of 30 during the drive from Ifrane to Midelt and a further three at Oued Massa.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Mallard</th>
<th>Anas platyrhynchos</th>
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<tr>
<td>We enjoyed good views of 10 at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 20 at Dayet Aoua, Ifrane.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Northern Shoveler</th>
<th>Anas clypeata</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two stunning males were seen at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 40 at Dayet Aoua.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Eurasian Teal</th>
<th>Anas crecca</th>
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<tr>
<td>We had superb views of a pair at Dayet Aoua.</td>
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**NOTE: This species has been split into 2 species, the nominate Eurasian Teal (which is the one we recorded in Morocco) and Green-winged Teal A. Carolinensis. This split is not recognized by Clements.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marbled Duck</th>
<th>Marmaronetta augustirostris</th>
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<tr>
<td>In the last couple of years this species has become a little difficult to find. We were very pleased to find 10 at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 14 at Oued Massa.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Red-crested Pochard</th>
<th>Netta rufina</th>
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<tr>
<td>We enjoyed wonderful views of 30 at Sidi Bourhaba.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Common Pochard</th>
<th>Aythya ferina</th>
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<tr>
<td>We recorded 6 birds at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 12 at Dayet Aoua.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ferruginous Duck</th>
<th>Aythya nyroca</th>
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<tr>
<td>We had great views of five at Sidi Bourhaba.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Common Scoter</th>
<th>Melanitta nigra</th>
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<tr>
<td>We had good views of one during the pelagic off Agadir.</td>
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<tr>
<th>White-headed Duck</th>
<th>Oxyura leucocephala</th>
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<tr>
<td>A splendid total of 30 were seen at Sidi Bourhaba.</td>
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</table>
Pheasants & Allies Phasianidae
Barbary Partridge Alectoris barbara
Six birds were seen in the Zaer and later we enjoyed splendid views of a pair at Oukaimeden
Double-spurred Francolin Pternistis bicalcaratus
We heard one calling in the Zaer

Shearwaters and Petrels Procellariidae
Balearic Shearwater Puffinus mauretanicus
We had good views of 5 birds during our pelagic out of Agadir, including some very close individuals.

Grebes Podicipedidae
Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis
We found 10 at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 20 at Dayet Aoua.
Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus
Six were seen at Sidi Bourhaba including some displaying and a further 10 were seen at Dayet Aoua.
Black-necked Grebe Podiceps nigricollis
A large flock of over 100 were seen at Dayet Aoua

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae
Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber
A flock of 30 was seen at Sidi Bourhaba and a further 50 were seen at Oued Souss

Storks Ciconidae
Black Stork Ciconia nigra
A single bird was seen at the Tamri estuary.
White Stork Ciconia ciconia
Recorded on 7 dates during the tour with birds on nests in many towns

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae
Northern Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita
Despite a positive change in this population over the last few years, the estimate is still of under 250 mature adults in Morocco! We had good views of several near Tamri including one confiding individual.
Glossy Ibis Platalea leucorodia
A flock of ten was seen very well at Oued Massa
Eurasian Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia
A number of birds were seen well around Oued Souss and Oued Massa on the coast near Agadir. A particularly notable sightings was of a large flock of over 200 seen migrating north at the Oued Souss estuary.

Herons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae
Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus
We had wonderful views of one at Oued Massa
Western Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis
Recorded on nine dates during the tour, with some of the best numbers on the first morning, which usually produces the highest count of the tour
Grey Heron Ardea cinerea
Recorded on 7 dates during the tour with sightings at most of the larger waterbodies
Purple Heron  
*Ardea purpurea*
We had good scope views of one at Sidi Bourhaba

Great Egret  
*Egretta alba*
A flock of 6 was seen at Dayet Aoua

Little Egret  
*Egretta garzetta*
This bird was recorded on a few days of the tour, including good numbers during the drive from Midelt to Erfoud.

Gannets  
*Sulidae*

Northern Gannet  
*Morus bassanus*
About 20 were seen, some very well and at close range during the pelagic trip off Agadir.

Cormorants & Shags  
*Phalacrocoracidae*

Great Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax carbo*
Recorded on seven days during the tour in small numbers

Ospreys  
*Pandionidae*

Western Osprey  
*Pandion haliaetus*
Our first sighting was of one near Erfoud and later we had good views of another at Oued Souss

Note. IOC splits Osprey into two species Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, which we saw and Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus*. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles  
*Accipitridae*

Black-winged Kite  
*Elanus caeruleus*
We had good views of one during the drive from Boumalne to Agadir.

Short-toed Snake Eagle  
*Circaetus gallicus*
We had good views of an adult hovering overhead in the Zaer.

Booted Eagle  
*Hieraaetus pennatus*
Seen on seven days of the tour including many great sightings

Bonelli’s Eagle  
*Aquila fasciata*
We continued Rockjumper’s 100% record for this species on a Morocco tour with good sightings at Todra and Dades Gorges.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk  
*Accipiter nisus*
We had good views of two during the drive from Agadir to Oukaimeden.

Western Marsh Harrier  
*Circus aeruginosus*
We had great views of both males and females at Sidi Bourhaba.

Black Kite  
*Milvus migrans*
We saw this species on eight days of the tour, in small numbers.

Long-legged Buzzard  
*Buteo rufinus*
Seen on three days of the tour, including some good views especially on the tagdilt

Rails, Gallinules & Coots  
*Rallidae*

Western Swamphen  
*Porphyrio porphyrio*
We enjoyed superb scope views of two during our time at Sidi Bourhaba.

Common Moorhen  
*Gallinula chloropus*
Several were seen at Sidi Bourhaba.

Red-knobbed Coot  
*Fulica cristata*
We had great scope views of two at Sidi Bourhaba.

Eurasian Coot  
*Fulica atra*
This species was seen on four days during the tour, with the highest numbers, up to 500, at Dayet Aoua.
**Stone-curews, Thick-knees  Burhinidae**

Eurasian Stone-curew  *Burhinus oedicnemus*
Some of us had great scope views of two at the Oued Souss estuary and on another occasion we observed several flying over at dusk at the same site.

**Oystercatchers  Haematopodidae**

Eurasian Oystercatcher  *Haematopus ostralegus*
A superb flock of 9 was seen at Oued Souss.

**Stilts & Avocets  Recurvirostridae**

Black-winged Stilt  *Himantopus himantopus*
Seen on four days of the tour with good sightings at Oued Souss
Pied Avocet  *Recurvirostra avosetta*
A flock of fifty was seen at Oued Souss

**Plovers  Charadriidae**

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover  *Pluvialis squatarola*
This species was only seen at Oued Souss where we observed three birds
Common Ringed Plover  *Charadrius hiaticula*
This species was seen on both days we visited Oued Souss, where we had good views of twenty.
Little Ringed Plover  *Charadrius dubius*
We had good sightings of two at Dayet Aoua.
Kentish Plover  *Charadrius alexandrinus*
We had great close-up views of six birds at Oued Souss.

**Sandpipers & Allies  Scolopacidae**

Common Snipe  *Gallinago gallinago*
We had good scope views of one at Dayet Aoua
Whimbrel  *Numenius phaeopus*
We had good views of two at Oued Souss
Eurasian Curlew  *Numenius arquata*
One was seen flying past us during the pelagic off Agadir
Spotted Redshank  *Tringa erythropus*
One was seen at the Oued Souss estuary
Common Redshank  *Tringa totanus*
Two were seen at Oued Souss.
Common Greenshank  *Tringa nebularia*
Two were seen at Dayet Aoua and a further five at Oued Souss
Green Sandpiper  *Tringa ochropus*
We had good views of two at Dayet Aoua
Wood Sandpiper  *Tringa glareola*
One was seen at Dayet Aoua
Common Sandpiper  *Actitis hypoleucos*
One was seen at Agadir port and another at Oued Massa
Ruddy Turnstone  *Arenaria interpres*
We had good scope views of one at Oued Souss
Sanderling  *Calidris alba*
We saw a dozen at the Oued Souss estuary.
Little Stint  *Calidris minuta*
We had good scope views of one at the Oued Souss estuary.
Curlew Sandpiper  
*Calidris ferruginea*
We enjoyed good scope views of two at Oued Souss

Dunlin  
*Calidris alpina*
A number of birds were seen feeding on the edge of Oued Souss, including one in breeding plumage

Ruff  
*Philomachus pugnax*
A single bird was seen at Dayet Aoua

**Coursers & Pratincoles  **

*Glareolidae*

Cream-coloured Courser  
*Cursorius cursor*
We found a pair in the Erg Chebbi area and a further four on the Tagdilt Track obtaining awesome views.

**Gulls, Terns and Skimmers  **

*Laridae*

Slender-billed Gull  
*Chroicocephalus genei*
An adult and juvenile were seen well on the water at Oued Souss.

Black-headed Gull  
*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Recorded in good numbers at Oued Souss

Audouin's Gull  
*Ichthyaetus audouinii*
One was seen during our pelagic out of Agadir and a further two at the Tamri estuary

Mediterranean Gull  
*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*
Two birds were seen at the Oued Souss estuary

Yellow-legged Gull  
*Larus michahellis*
A number of birds were seen at scattered sites around Agadir during the 3 days we had in the area.

Lesser Black-backed Gull  
*Larus fuscus*
This species was abundant around all birding sites in the Agadir area, including during our pelagic.

Gull-billed Tern  
*Gelochelidon nilotica*
We enjoyed good sightings at the Tamri Estuary and at Oued Souss

Caspian Tern  
*Hydroprogne caspia*
We had good views of four at Oued Souss

Lesser Crested Tern  
*Thalasseus bengalensis*
We had great scope views of one at the Tamri Estuary and a further two at Oued Souss

Sandwich Tern  
*Thalasseus sandvicensis*
Our first birds were seen at Sidi Bourhaba and later we had large numbers at the Tamri Estuary and at Oued Souss.

Little Tern  
*Sternula albifrons*
We had good scope views of one at Oued Souss

**Skuas  **

*Sternidae*

Great Skua  
*Stercorarius skua*
We had good views of 1 during our pelagic off Agadir.

Parasitic Jaeger  
*Stercorarius parasiticus*
We had good views of one during our pelagic; we have not often seen this species on our Morocco tours.

**Auks  **

*Alcidae*

Razorbill  
*Alca torda*
We had splendid views of four at Mediya Plaga, including one sitting on the water at the harbour mouth and a further one during our pelagic off Agadir

**Sandgrouse  **

*Pteroclididae*
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*
We had splendid views of 6 birds on the Tagdilt, a wonderful surprise!

Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*
We enjoyed watching fifty birds coming in to drink during the mid-morning near Erg Chebbi, where we enjoyed fabulous close-up views.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*
Nine birds were scoped and then seen closer in flight on the Tagdilt track.

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**Doves & Pigeons Columbidae**

Rock Dove *Columba livia*
Recorded every day in all towns with birds in wild plumage noted at Oukaimeden, Todra and Dades Gorges.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*
Recorded on four days in small numbers; mainly around Marrakech and Agadir.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
Our first sighting was of one near Rissani and later we enjoyed great views of six at Oued Massa.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
A common resident that was recorded almost daily in and around most towns.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*
We had numerous sightings of these small doves in many locations, with largest numbers around the Oued Massa area.

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**Cuckoos Cuculidae**

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
We had splendid scope views of a calling individual, whilst making our way up the Tiz n Test Pass.

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**Owls Strigidae**

Pharaoh Eagle-Owl *Bubo ascalaphus*
We had great scope views of two in the late afternoon near Rissani. One of the most sought-after species in North Africa and always a great bird to see!

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*
We had splendid views of an adult near Oukaimeden

Little Owl *Athene noctua*
Our first sighting was of one during the drive from Boulmane to Agadir and a further pair was seen near Oued Massa.

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**Nightjars Caprimulgidae**

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*
This large nightjar was heard and seen very briefly in flight near Oued Souss.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*
Undoubtedly one of the star birds of the trip. We were treated to long unobstructed views of the bird and many photographs were taken.

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**Swifts Apodidae**

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*
We observed a nice flock of 20 during our lunch stop at Meknes

Common Swift *Apus apus*
A flock was seen during the drive from Erfoud to Boumalne.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*
We recorded large numbers around Agadir and later over the town of Ouarzazate.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*
We found one small flock of ten during the drive from Agadir to Oukaimeden

**Bee-eaters Meropidae**

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*
We had good views of four at Erfoud and a further one during the drive from Boumalne to Agadir.

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*
Seen commonly throughout the trip with peak numbers of 80 seen during the drive from Agadir to Oukaimeden

**Hoopoes Upupidae**

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*
Unusually scarce this year as we only recorded a handful of species at various locations, including during the drive from Midelt to Erfoud and from Boumalne to Agadir.
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 sometime recognized, West/Central African *U. senegalensis*. We only recorded the nominate Palaearctic form *U. e. epops*.

**Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae**

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*
One was seen very well at Oukaimeden.

**Levaillant’s Woodpecker** *Picus vaillantii*
We had a superb sighting of one at Dayet Aoua. A north-west African endemic.

**Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae**

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*
We had superb views of 20 at Ifrane

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*
Many birds were recorded during the trip in a wide variety of areas, with records on almost every day on our route.

**NOTE:** Some authorities including IOC 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.

**Bushshrikes Malaconotidae**

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus*
We had good views of one in the Zaer and another at Oued Massa

**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis*
A common bird with up to ten seen on some days, we had some good scope views.

**NOTE:** This complex, which used to be lumped with Northern Shrike *L. excubitor*, is being considered for further splitting. Saharan Shrike (*L. leucopygos*) is the form we recorded in Morocco during our tour. Further compounding the confusion the Collins Field Guide lumps Southern Grey Shrike with Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*) but splits off *Lanius Meridionalis* as a separate species Iberian Grey Shrike. There is clearly much work to be done with this group of birds.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator*
This beautiful shrike was seen on many occasions with peak numbers of thirty seen during the drive from Boumalne to Agadir.

**Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae**

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*
We had good views of three in the Zaer.
Eurasian Magpie  
*Pica pica*
Common around Agadir, where we recorded the species many times. This distinctive race has a striking area of blue around the eye.

**NOTE:** There is a possibility that this species could be considered for splitting into several species and if this is the case then the subspecies we recorded could be elevated to a full species known as Maghreb Magpie *Pica mauritanica*. This possible split is accepted by neither the IOC nor Clements.

**Red-billed Chough**  
*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
About 30 birds were seen around the ski resort at Oukaimeden, which is an unusually low count for this area. They were seen mixed with the species below.

**Alpine Chough**  
*Pyrrhocorax graculus*
We had a large number of birds around the buildings at Oukaimeden.

**Western Jackdaw**  
*Coloeus monedula*
We had superb views of numerous birds in the Rabat area as well as at Meknes.

**Brown-necked Raven**  
*Corvus ruficollis*
This is a true desert loving species and we had good views of six around the Erg Chebbi’s dunes.

**Northern Raven**  
*Corvus corax*
We had good numbers in the Rabat area.

**Tits Paridae**

**Coal Tit**  
*Periparus ater*
Two birds were found as we made our way towards Oukaimeden.

**African Blue Tit**  
*Cyanistes teneriffae*
We had good views of several in the Ifrane area.

**Great Tit**  
*Parus major*
One was seen at Sidi Yahya a further two at Oukaimeden

**Larks Alaudidae**

**Greater Hoopoe-Lark**  
*Alaemon alaudipes*
The area around Erfoud and Erg Chebbi produced the goods and we found at least 2 pairs of these large, handsome larks, some of which gave great views and one or two of which performed their distinctive display.

**Thick-billed Lark**  
*Ramphocoris clotbey*
We had superb views of several near Er Rachidia and again on the Tagdilt. What a great bird!

**Desert Lark**  
*Ammomanes deserti*
This is not really a lark of the sand deserts in these parts as they prefer more rocky terrain. We had great sightings of several pairs near Erfoud.

**Bar-tailed Lark**  
*Ammomanes cincturus*
This is a true desert-loving species and we found several birds near Erg Chebbi.

**Thekla Lark**  
*Galerida theklae*
This lark is more common at higher levels than Crested Lark and we recorded it at Midelt and again on the Tagdilt.

**Crested Lark**  
*Galerida cristata*
A common and widespread lark except in the true desert areas. We saw up to 30 of this species on five days at many roadside stops.

**Maghreb Lark**  
*Galerida macrorhyncha*
We had great looks at this recently split species as we drove around the Erfoud region.

**NOTE:** Clements lumps this species with Crested Lark but the IOC accepts it as a valid species.

**Horned Lark**  
*Eremophila alepstris*
We had awesome looks at this species with some down to almost point blank range at Oukaimeden, where a total of four were seen.

**Temminck’s Lark**  
*Eremophila bilopha*
The Tagdilt Track is the place to see this species in Morocco and we weren’t disappointed. As usual it was one of the first species we saw on our arrival and by the time we left we’d logged 14 of this attractive species.

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

A species that is fairly uncommon in the area – we were fortunate to find 20 birds that showed fairly well on the Tagdilt.

**Dupont’s Lark**  
*Chersophilus duponti*

Often considered one of the hardest birds to see in the Western Palearctic area. Soon after arriving at our site before daybreak on the Zeida Plain we heard a few birds calling around us. After some time and effort we managed to all get very good views of this skulking species at close range. Justifiably one of the top 10 birds of the tour.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark**  
*Alaudala rufescens*

Another lark that was seen well near Midelt.

**Bulbuls** *Pycnonotidae*

**Common Bulbul**  
*Pycnonotus barbatus*

Recorded throughout Morocco in many places, we recorded up to 20 daily and it was often the first species to be logged for the day.

*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 may be recognized as distinct once genetic analysis and further study is completed.*

**Swallows** *Hirundinidae*

**Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)**  
*Riparia riparia*

One was seen during the drive from Erfoud to Boumalne

**Barn Swallow**  
*Hirundo rustica*

Recorded on virtually every day of the tour at scattered locations

**Eurasian Crag Martin**  
*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Recorded on four days at widely scattered locations. Largest numbers were at various rocky slope and gorge sites during the tour.

**Common House Martin**  
*Delichon urbicum*

A single bird showed well at the Dades Gorge and a further two at Oukaimeden

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

Small numbers were seen at scattered sites with a peak count of 20 seen during the drive from Agadir to Oukaimeden.

**Cettia Bush Warblers and allies** *Cettidae*

**Cetti’s Warbler**  
*Cettia cetti*

After we heard this bird on several occasions we finally managed to get good views of two at Oued Massa.

**Streaked Scrub Warbler** *Scotocercidae*

**Streaked Scrub Warbler**  
*Scotocerca inquieta*

Many tours fail to see this species, but with a bit of effort we managed to get everyone good views of this very shy species in some bushes during the drive from Erfoud to Boumalne.

**Leaf Warblers and allies** *Phylloscopidae*

**Common Chiffchaff**  
*Phylloscopus collybita*

Small numbers were seen at Sidi Yahya

*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.*
Western Bonelli’s Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*
We had superb views of two in the Zaer with scattered sightings elsewhere.

**Reed Warblers and allies Cisticolidae**

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
We had good views of one at the Tamri Estuary.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
We enjoyed good views of 8 birds at Oued Massa.

Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca*
We had good views of one near Erfoud and another at the Tamri Estuary.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*
We had good views of one near Er Rachidia.

**Cisticolas and allies Acrocephalidae**

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola junci*
We saw a number of these birds in the Oued Massa area.

**Babblers, Parrotbills Timaliidae**

Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulva*
We found a cooperative group during our drive from Erfoud to Boumalne. These charming, gregarious birds are endemic to north-west Africa and they are always good fun.

**Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae**

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
A few birds were seen, with some good views of male and female birds in the Oukaimeden area.

Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*
We had superb views of one during the drive from Boumalne to Agadir and another near Tamri

African Desert Warbler *Sylvia deserti*
A very sought-after species that was seen superbly well in the Erg Chebbi area. Both birds were very cooperative and we all enjoyed great views.

Tristram’s Warbler *Sylvia deserticol*
We had good views of one during the drive from Midelt to Zeida

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*
We had superb views of two in the Errichidia area.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*
We had good views of two at the Tamri Estuary and another at Oued Massa

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*
Fairly common particularly during the first few days of the tour, where we had particularly good numbers in the Oued Massa area.

**Kinglets Regulidae**

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*
We had crippling views of a calling male on the way up to Oukaimeden. Always a favourite on the tour.

**Wrens Troglodytidae**

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
One was seen very well at Sidi Yahya and another high up at Oukaimeden.

**Creepers Certhiidae**
**Short-toed Treecreeper**  *Certhia brachydactyla*
A single bird was seen very well at Dayet Aoua.

**Starlings _Sturnidae_**  
*Sturnus unicolor*
Seen in very good numbers particularly around Agadir and Oued Massa areas.

**Thrushes & Allies _Turdidae_**

*Common (Eurasian) Blackbird*  *Turdus merula*
A common species that was seen daily throughout the tour with big numbers seen on some days.

*Mistle Thrush*  *Turdus viscivorus*
We had good views of several at Ifrane and a further 3 of these large birds were found at Oukaimeden where they gave good close views.

**Chats, Old World Flycatchers _Muscicapidae_**

*Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin*  *Cercotrichas galactotes*
We enjoyed superb views of two at Oued Massa.

**Spotted Flycatcher**  *Muscicapa striata*
We had good views of one during the drive from Agadir to Oukaimeden.

*European Robin*  *Eriithacus rubecula*
We saw this familiar Christmas card bird near Sidi Yahya.

**Common Nightingale**  *Luscinia megarhynchos*
We enjoyed good views on several occasions including at Sidi Yahya, Erg Chebbi and Oued Massa.

**Black Redstart**  *Phoenicurus ochruros*
We had wonderful views of 8 during our time at Oukaimeden.

**Moussier’s Redstart**  *Phoenicurus moussieri*
This beautiful north-west African endemic was seen very well on a number of occasions at Oued Massa and Oukaimeden. Other birds were seen at various sites throughout, mostly in dry bushy habitats.

**Common Rock Thrush**  *Monticola saxatilis*
We had great views of a male at Oukaimeden.

**Blue Rock Thrush**  *Monticola solitarius*
We had good sightings at the Dades and Todra Gorges.

**European (Common) Stonechat**  *Saxicola rubicola*
We saw three of these smart looking birds at Oued Massa.

**Northern Wheatear**  *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Scarcer than some of the other wheatears on this route. We had a few birds in the Zeida area.
We also observed several of the beautiful and distinct race, *seebohmi*, on the tagdilt.

**Desert Wheatear**  *Oenanthe isabellina*
We found a few around Boumalne Dades and Erg Chebbi, with final good views at the roadside stop we made heading towards Tinejdad.

**Black-eared Wheatear**  *Oenanthe hispanica*
We had good looks of three near Tamri and a further two at Oued Massa.

**Red-rumped Wheatear**  *Oenanthe moesta*
We had very good views of around 20 of these sought-after birds on the Tagdilt track, with a few other sightings in the region.

**Black Wheatear**  *Oenanthe leucura*
These birds were fairly common around the Tagdilt Track and Dades Gorge.

**White-crowned Wheatear**  *Oenanthe leucopyga*
This is the common Wheatear of the lowland desert areas and we recorded the species on five consecutive days, with greatest numbers when we were in the Erfoud region.
Mourning Wheatear  
*Oenanthe lugens*
We had great views of a male near Rissani, a tricky species to find!

**Dippers Cinclidae**

White-throated Dipper  
*Cinclus cinclus*
After a bit of searching we located two birds near Oukaimeden.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae**

House Sparrow  
*Passer domesticus*
As to be expected a common species that was seen on all dates during the tour.

Spanish Sparrow  
*Passer hispaniolensis*
A flock of 10 birds was found at Oued Massa.

Desert Sparrow  
*Passer simplex*
A major target of the tour and one that can sometimes prove to be tricky to locate. After a bit of searching near a small settlement we enjoyed great and extended views of this dapper species. Unfortunately they keep getting pushed further into the desert as House Sparrow follows the settlements deeper.

Rock Sparrow  
*Petronia petronia*
We had great views of six at Dayet Aoua and a further 30 at Oukaimeden.

**Accentors Prunellidae**

Alpine Accentor  
*Prunella collaris*
One of the principal targets at Oukaimeden. As it was getting cold we were about to give up finding them when we had one fly in that showed well.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**

Western Yellow Wagtail  
*Motacilla flava*
Several birds were seen at Dayet Aoua. All birds were of the iberiae race.

Grey Wagtail  
*Motacilla cinerea*
We enjoyed good views of two at Todra Gorge.

White Wagtail  
*Motacilla alba*
We had good sightings of one at Oued Souss and another at Tamri

Tawny Pipit  
*Anthus capestris*
One was seen near Zeida

Meadow Pipit  
*Anthus pratensis*
We had good views of three at Dayet Aoua.

**Siskins, Crossbills & Allies Fringillidae**

Common Chaffinch  
*Fringilla coelebs*
We recorded this species on 6 days of the tour, with biggest numbers in the higher areas near Ifrane

Hawfinch  
*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
One was seen briefly whilst en route to Oukaimeden and later we obtained great views of another at Oukaimeden.

African Crimson-winged Finch  
*Rhodopechys alienus*
We had fabulous views of a flock of fifteen at Oukaimeden

Trumpeter Finch  
*Rhodopechys githagineus*
A bird that was seen well on a few days of the tour, in different dry areas. Best views were had at a wadi near Er Rachidia.

European Greenfinch  
*Chloris chloris*
We had good views of two birds at Oued Massa

Common Linnet  
*Linaria cannabina*
We had good views of six at Dayet Aoua

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*
As for the above species also seen well at Dayet Aoua with scattered sightings elsewhere

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus*
We had good sightings of several at Oued Souss and Oued Massa

**Buntings Emberizidae**

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*
Our first sighting was of one at Sidi Yahya and later we had great views of another at Oued Massa.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia*
We found good numbers at roadside stops on our way up to Oukaimeden.

**Cirl Bunting** *Emberiza cirlus*
We had good views of one near Ifrane

**House Bunting** *Emberiza sahari*
This species was commonly recorded at many different sites on the tour, especially in towns

**Annotated List of Mammals Recorded**

**Ground Squirrels Rodentia**

**Barbary Ground Squirrel** *Alantocerus getulus*
This species was recorded on at least 3 days, with good views being enjoyed at Oukaimeden.

**True Mice and Rats Gerbils, Spiny Mice, Crested Rat Muridae**

**North African Gerbil (Fat Sand Rat)** *Psammomys obesis*
This is a group of rodents that has a wide variety of very similar species that can be very hard to distinguish. At least some of the animals we recorded along the Tagdilt Track were this species.

**Pigs Suidae**

**Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa*
We had good views of one in the Zaer at Sidi Yahya

**Dolphins Delphinidae**

**Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin**
We had great views of a pod of 8 during our pelagic trip off Agadir

**Annotated List of Reptile Recorded**

**Flap-necked Chameleon** *Chamaeleo dilepis*
We had great views of one during the drive from Boumalne to Agadir

**Mediterranean Turtle** *Mauremys leprosa*
We found a few at Oued Massa.