

# MOROCCO – AGADIR & BALD IBIS

3<sup>rd</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2006

by Alan Miller

A fortnight in the sun enjoying the sights and sounds of Agadir including a hire car for three days to search for Bald Ibis.

## General details

Anne and I booked a two-week package holiday through Eclipse Direct staying in Agadir at the Riu hotel Le Tikida Beach on an 'all-inclusive' basis. We flew direct from Manchester to Agadir with First Choice Airways with good flight times, departing Manchester at 14.25hrs on 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Agadir at 15.40hrs (20 mins late) on 17<sup>th</sup>. The flights were less than 4 hours long and there was no time difference between the UK and Morocco.

The hotel was excellent with a beach-front location and good-sized gardens. During the day it was fairly quiet as many guests were golfers, playing on a nearby golf course (6kms away).

We hired a car for three days through Norwestcars. The car, a VW Polo with air-conditioning, was fine and economical but the hire charge was a bit steep at £30 per day.

The weather for our stay was good. Our first day was a bit misty and our last day was overcast with a few spots of rain which didn't even wet the ground, but the rest was clear blue skies and sunshine with little wind. Throughout, even on the two days mentioned, the temperature during the day was in the high 20's and reached the high 30's a couple of times. For an evening walk after dinner it was 20-24 degrees. A jumper wasn't needed throughout.

Information was obtained from the Rough Guide to Morocco, A Birdwatching Guide to Morocco by Combridge and Snook, and the Moroccan birding website '<http://www.go-south.org>'

## Highlights

### The Hotel

The grounds were worth checking regularly, even from the sun-loungers. **Common Bulbul** was the noisiest resident with a supporting cast of **Spotless Starlings**, **White Wagtail**, **Chiffchaff** and **Sardinian Warbler**. On 12<sup>th</sup> we were treated to a **Wryneck** in a bush close to us. Looking out to sea there was a regular passage from the fish quay to our right, to a roost near the Kings Palace to our left. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** seamed

to out-number **Western Yellow-legged gulls** on a 3-1 ratio. Also seen over the sea were **Gannet, Gull-billed Tern** and on one occasion 2 **Caspian Terns**.

Throughout our stay butterflies were in flight with many **Painted Lady**, even on the beach, and **Large and Small Whites**. The first week was more productive and garden circuits with my net produced **African Grass Blue, Long-tailed Blue, Lang's Short-tailed Blue** and **Greenish Black-tip**.

### Agadir

Whilst walks along the beach were fabulous, it was slightly disappointing not to be able to walk more than a kilometre to the south because guards prevented tourists from walking past the Kings Palace into the mouth of the Oued Sous. The main gull roost was on the undisturbed stretch of beach near the Palace and could be viewed with binoculars when a friendly guard was on duty!

We read that it was worth visiting the Bird Garden as wild birds are often attracted to the cage birds. Other than **Collared Dove, House Sparrow** and **Feral Pigeon** this was not the case but there were some interesting captive birds and mammals including Bald Ibis and Mouflon, the wild sheep.

There were new hotels to the south of us with more under construction. There is a huge programme of landscaping on the land side of these hotels with lovely gardens with named plants, shrubs and cacti, many in flower. There we regularly saw the local race of **Magpie** together with **Willow Warbler** and **African Chaffinch**

### Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November

This was our first day with the car so after breakfast we headed north along the coast road in the direction of Essaouira with Tamri our target. Just after Cap Rhir we found **Moussier's Redstart** in a patch of scrub, and a little further on near a bridge **Black Wheatear**. The commonest bird we were seeing was **Stonechat**. As we rounded the corner to the Tamri inlet a dark patch of birds was visible next to the water. A check with the telescope revealed it to be 28 **Bald Ibis**. This was our target bird. We parked in the surfers' car park and walked to within 50 yards of the birds before they flew off when a hunting **Marsh Harrier** put everything up. These were to be the only Bald Ibis of the trip. Other birds seen around the Tamri inlet included **Audouin's Gull, Spoonbill, Kingfisher, Squacco Heron, Grey Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Moroccan Cormorant, Pintail** and **Garganey**. On our return journey we found a pool in the village of Aghdour which held **Spotted Redshank** and **Common Sandpiper**.

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November

Today was to be a mixture of culture and birding. We headed east to the old town of Taroudant, called the 'mini Marrakech'. Enroute we saw **Cattle Egret**, around a flock of sheep, not cows. In the Berber Souk in Taroudant we found our first **House Buntings**. Common around this area was the 'elegans' ssp of **Southern Grey Shrike**. On our way back into Agadir a **Barbary Partridge** flew across the road in front of us. We managed to

find a track down to the Oued Sous. There was a little water to the east of the bridge with **Plain Martin** hawking, and in the water **Little Grebe, Little Egret** and **Green Sandpiper**.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November

Our target today was Oued Massa, 40 kilometres south of Agadir. Enroute we found a **Black-shouldered Kite** hunting close to the road. As we turned off the main road we checked the rocky fields and found **Seebohm's Wheatear**. We parked at the official reserve car park then followed the track along the estuary. The water held **Greater Flamingo, Glossy Ibis, Pochard, Wigeon, Shoveler, Pintail, Little Grebe** and many **Coot** together with **Moroccan Cormorant** and **Grey Heron**. More **Moussier's Redstart** were in the track-side bushes. A **Marsh Harrier** was hunting over the reeds and an **Osprey** flew overhead and landed on a pylon. All too soon we had to move on but on the way out near the village of Belfa we found a **Levaillant's Green Woodpecker**. A last call at Oued Sous added a **White Stork** to our list.

Further details are available from the author who can be contacted on alanmiller@electric-magic.co.uk

## SIGHTINGS

1. **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* – 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 1 at Oued Sous on 10<sup>th</sup> and 1 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
2. **Northern Gannet** *Sula bassana* – regular of Agadir beach. Max 20 on 8<sup>th</sup>
3. **Moroccan (Great) Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus* – 5 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> and 30 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>
4. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* – 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>
5. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* – 4 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 2 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> & 40 around Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
6. **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* – 12 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 1 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> & 6 on 11<sup>th</sup> at Oued Massa and Oued Sous.
7. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* – seen regularly. High count 12 at Agadir on 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.
8. **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* – 1 at Oued Sous on 11<sup>th</sup>.
9. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* – 10 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>
10. **Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* – 28 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
11. **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* – 4 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
12. **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber* – 60 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>
13. **Wigeon** *Anas Penelope* – 6 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.

14. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* – 6 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> & 12 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
15. **Pintail** *Anas acuta* – 3 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> & 6 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
16. **Shoveler** *Anas clypeatra* – 5 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
17. **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* – 2 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
18. **Pochard** *Aythya farina* – 40 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
19. **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* – 1 near Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
20. **Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caetuleus* – 1 between Agadir and Belfa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
21. **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* – 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> & 1 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
22. **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* – 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
23. **Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* – 1 or 2 seen almost daily
24. **Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara* – 1 near Agadir on 10<sup>th</sup>.
25. **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* – 3 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
26. **Coot** *Fulica atra* – 20 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> & 200 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
27. **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* – 40 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
28. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* – 2 at Agadir on 12<sup>th</sup>.
29. **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* – 2 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
30. **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* – 1 at Aghdour on 9<sup>th</sup>.
31. **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* – 1 on 10<sup>th</sup> & 3 on 11<sup>th</sup> at Oued Sous
32. **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* – 1 at Aghdour on 9<sup>th</sup>.
33. **Western Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* – up to 400 seen daily
34. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* – up to 1000 seen daily
35. **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* – 40 near Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
36. **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* – seen almost daily. 26 at Agadir on 15<sup>th</sup>.

37. **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* – 3 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
38. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* – 2 at Agadir on 5<sup>th</sup>.
39. **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia (domest.)* – Good numbers daily.
40. **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* – seen daily
41. **Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* – 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
42. **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* – 1 at Le Tikida Beach hotel grounds on 12<sup>th</sup>.
43. **Levaillant's Green Woodpecker** *Picus vaillantii* – 1 near Belfa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
44. **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* – 30 Agadir to Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 8 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> & 20 near Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
45. **Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae* – 2 near Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
46. **Plain Martin** *Riparia pauldicola* – 10 at Oued Sous on 10<sup>th</sup> & 15 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
47. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* – 1 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>, 1 on 14<sup>th</sup> & 2 on 15<sup>th</sup> at Agadir.
48. **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* – seen daily
49. **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* – 1 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup>.
50. **Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* – seen daily
51. **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* – 1 near Cap Rhir on 9<sup>th</sup> & 2 at Tamri on 11<sup>th</sup>.
52. **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* – 1 at Cap Rhir and 1 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 5 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
53. **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* – 60+ on coastal scrub on 9<sup>th</sup>. 6 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
54. **Seebohm's Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe seebohmi* – 2 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
55. **Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucura* – 2 near Cap Rhir on 9<sup>th</sup>.
56. **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* – 1 near Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
57. **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* – 1 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
58. **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* – Seen daily
59. **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* – 2 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup> & 1 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup>.

- 60. Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* – daily in hotel El Tikida grounds, Agadir
- 61. Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* – 2 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 1 at Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Agadir on 14<sup>th</sup>.
- 62. Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* – seen almost daily around hotel grounds
- 63. Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis elegans* – seen on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> outside Agadir. High count 12 on 10<sup>th</sup> around Taroudant.
- 64. Common Magpie** *Pica pica mauritanica* – Up to 9 seen regularly around Agadir. 20 near Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup>.
- 65. Common Raven** *Corvus corax* – 2 seen between Cap Rhir and Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 66. Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* – seen most days. High count 50 on 5<sup>th</sup> at Agadir
- 67. House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* – Seen daily
- 68. African Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs africana* – 2 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup> & 4 at Agadir on 13<sup>th</sup>.
- 69. Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* – 10 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 70. Goldfinch** *Carduelis Carduelis* – 3 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>, 3 at Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> and 3 at Oued Massa on 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 71. Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* – 20 at Tamri on 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 72. House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata sahari* – 2 at Taroudant on 10<sup>th</sup> & 2 at Agadir on 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **BUTTERFLIES**

Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>
African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>
Lang's Short-tailed Blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>
Greenish Black-tip	<i>Elphinstonia charlonia</i>

### **REPTILES**

Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>
Spur-thighed Tortoise	<i>Testudo graeca</i>

### **OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST**

Migratory Locust	
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>
Bat sp.	