

MOROCCO – AGADIR AND SURROUNDS

5th to 19th NOVEMBER 2008

by Alan Miller

A wonderful fortnight enjoying the sights and sounds of Morocco with the highlight being 80 **Bald Ibis** feeding not 10 yards from the car.



General details

This report supplements Trip Reports placed on the ‘web’ following visits to Agadir in November 2006 and November 2007.

Once again, Anne and I booked a two-week package holiday through Eclipse Direct and stayed in Agadir at the Riu Hotel Le Tikida Beach on an ‘all-inclusive’ basis. We flew direct from Manchester to Agadir with Thompson Air with good flight times, departing Manchester at 10.00hrs on 5th, and Agadir at 14.35hrs on 19th. 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 beachfront location and good-sized gardens. During the day it was reasonably quiet as many guests were golfers, playing on a golf course (6kms away) owned by the hotel group. Guests had unlimited access and a free courtesy bus. Two visits to walk through the course proved very fruitful.

We hired a car for three days through Rezacars.com. The car, a small Kia with air-conditioning, proved adequate and very economical and the hire charge was ‘negotiated’ down about £20 per day.

The weather for our stay was excellent with mainly blue skies and sunshine with little wind. The one day of cloud and a little rain in Agadir was the day we travelled north to Essaouira and stayed in the sunshine. The temperature was usually a pleasant 20 to 30 degrees during the day however on one of the hotter days I left the thermometer in the full sun for a short period and it reached a scorching 45 degrees.

Before we left home, up-to-date information was obtained from 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 Starling**, **White Wagtail**, **Collared Dove**, **Chiffchaff** and **Sardinian Warbler**. On our first morning we were treated to a flyover of five **Bald Ibis**. Looking out to sea there was a regular passage of **Lesser**

Black-backed Gulls and **Western Yellow-legged gulls** between the fish quay to our right and a beach roost near the Kings Palace to our left. Also seen over the sea were **Moroccan Cormorant** and **Sandwich Tern**.

Butterflies were also seen in the grounds with the most regular being **Greenish Black-tip**, **African Grass Blue** and **Speckled Wood**. Other visitors included **Painted Lady**, **Small White**, **Long-tailed Blue**, **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** and **Cleopatra**.



Agadir

An imposing extension to the old promenade is currently being built connecting the new hotels at the south end of the bay to the old seafront. About half the three kilometre promenade is completed and work is well underway on the remainder which will take it almost to the King's Palace.

Notwithstanding the new promenade, it must also be said that the walk along the beach itself is wonderful, although still slightly disappointing not to be able to walk the last half a kilometre at the southern end round to the Oued Souss river mouth because guards prevented tourists from walking past the end of the Kings Palace gardens. The main gull roost was on the undisturbed stretch of beach near the Palace and could be viewed with binoculars.

Walking south on the land side of the beachfront hotels there is a superb stretch of landscaped gardens containing named plants, shrubs and cacti, many in flower. There we regularly saw the local race of **Magpie** together with **Stonechat**, **House Bunting**, **Collared Dove** and **Kestrel**



The road alongside the gardens has now been extended southwards past a new 'Sofitel' hotel under construction. The grounds away from the building works were untouched low scrub and in a small area near the road we found **Stone Curlew** on three occasions, as well as **Moussier's Redstart**, **Black Redstart**, **Crested Lark** and a **Blue Rock Thrush**. Walking back through the villas at the edge of the tourist area are patches of scrub awaiting building, together with more scrub around the outside of the area. Here we found more **Moussier's Redstart** and **Southern Grey Shrike**, **Sardinian Warbler** and a single **Spanish Sparrow**.



At the northern end of the bay between the end of the beach and the harbour and fish quays the new marina complex is virtually complete. Some of the flats were occupied, as were some of the shop units with exclusive outlets. A couple of pavement café's proved useful for sitting with a Moroccan mint tea and watching **Sandwich Tern** fishing just yards away and twice an **Osprey**. Also around the marina were



Grey Heron, Little Egret and on 13th an **Audouin's Gull**.

It was our routine to go for a walk after our evening meal and on 13th we took a different route on a wooded path and were delighted to hear a **Tawny Owl** calling several times.

Golf du Soleil



The private, gated and walled Golf Course was a green oasis, reached by a courtesy bus from our hotel in 15 minutes. There is a path through the middle of the course allowing safe walking away from wayward balls, leading to a five-star hotel (also owned by the same hotel group and good for loos and a drink). Seen on the course were **Little Grebe, Coot, Serin, Common Sandpiper, Black Redstart, Grey Wagtail and Moroccan (White) Wagtail**.

Dragonflies were in evidence around the waterways and we recorded **Violet Dropwing, Orange-winged Dropwing, Epaulet Skimmer, Iberian Bluetail, Red-veined Darter, Common Darter and Blue Emperor**.



North of Agadir

We hired a car for three days and on the 16th November headed north to visit Essaouira. As it is a three-hour drive we concentrated on making progress but did check out gulls on the beaches just south of Tamri and on one found a group containing 300 **Audouin's Gulls** and 700 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**. Interestingly they were not intermingled and there was a clear line through the group, from a distance looking part grey and part black. As we passed the river mouth at Tamri we saw a group of 5 **Bald Ibis** feeding.

After visiting Essaouira, we had planned to visit the river mouth accessed via the sandy track to the south end of the promenade. When we got to the river we found major disturbance as the old bridge had been demolished and a new structure was being prepared. Consequently we only added **Mediterranean Gull** to the trip list.

It was getting towards dusk as we returned and about 5 kilometres north of Tamri we saw a flock of 80 **Bald Ibis** land in a sandy scrub area next to the road. We pulled over and waited and watched as they walked past the car, getting within 10 metres of us before flying off.

Oued Souss

We had failed to locate the mouth of the Oued (River) Souss on previous visits but made a concerted effort on the other two days with the hire car. In the end it proved easy by turning off the Agadir – Inzegane road at the signed junction to Golf du Soleil, then continuing past the golf course. The road runs to a dead end at the south side of the Kings Palace between the Palace walls and the river. There are several open viewing platforms. Our first visit was in the morning but viewing was difficult as most of the time we were looking into the sun. The second visit was made late afternoon where viewing was easier. Here we connected with many waders including **Black-winged Stilt, Greenshank, Redshank, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Grey Plover, Common Sandpiper,**

Curlew Sandpiper, Curlew, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit and Bar-tailed Godwit.
On the first visit there were 6 **Spoonbill**, and on the second visit there was **Marsh Harrier, Zitting Cisticola** and a **Bluethroat**.

Further details are available from the author who can be contacted on
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SIGHTINGS

1. **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* – 7 at Golf du Soleil on 8th, 6 on 12th.
2. **Moroccan (Great) Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus* – regular off Agadir beach and at Essaouira on 16th.
3. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* – 6 enroute Essaouira on 16th.
4. **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* – seen regularly, max. 6 at Oued Souss on 18th
5. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* – seen regularly, max 18 at Oued Souss on 17th and 18th; and 17 at Agadir Marina on 13th.
6. **Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* – 85 at Tamri on 16th; 5 on 11th and 6 on 14th at Agadir
7. **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* – 1 at Tamri on 16th; 6 at Oued Souss on 17th.
8. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* – 2 at Golf du Soleil on 8th and 1 on 12th
9. **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* – 1 at Agadir Marina on 10th and 13th.
10. **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* – 2 at Tamri on 16th; 1 at Oued Souss on 18th.
11. **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* – 1 at Golf du Soleil on 8th
12. **Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* – Up to 3 seen almost daily
13. **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* – 3 at Tamri on 16th.
14. **Coot** *Fulica atra* – 21 on 8th and 14 on 12th at Golf du Soleil; 8 at Tamri on 16th.
15. **Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* – 6 on 17th and 8 on 18th at Oued Souss.
16. **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* – 40 on 17th & 30 on 18th at Oued Souss
17. **Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oedicephalus* – 5 on 11th, 7 on 14th and 1 on 18th at Agadir
18. **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* – 4 on 17th and 12 on 18th at Oued Souss
19. **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* – 2 at Essaouira on 16th,
1 on 17th and 18th at Oued Souss.

20. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* – 1 on 17th at Oued Souss
21. **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* – 2 on 18th at Oued Souss
22. **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* – 4 on 17th at Oued Souss
23. **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* – 1 on 17th at Oued Souss
24. **Curlew** *Numenius arquata* – 1 on 17th and 6 on 18th at Oued Souss
25. **Redshank** *Tringa tetanus* – 4 on 17th and 12 on 18th at Oued Souss
26. **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* – 4 on 18th at Oued Souss
27. **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* – 1 on 18th at Oued Souss
28. **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* – 1 at Golf du Soleil on 8th and 12th;
3 on 17th and 2 on 18th at Oued Souss
29. **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* – 2 on 16th at Essaouira
30. **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* – 4 on 18th at Oued Souss
31. **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* – 2 on 17th and 4 on 18th at Oued Souss
32. **Western Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* – up to 1000 seen daily
33. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* – up to 1000 seen daily
34. **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* – 9 on 16th at Essaouira,
10 on 17th and 50 on 18th at Oued Souss
35. **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus gegei* – 1 on 18th at Oued Souss
36. **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* – 1 at Agadir Marina on 13th, 300 on beach south
of Tamri on 16th and 12 at Oued Souss on 18th
37. **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* – 2 or 3 regularly seen off Agadir Beach and in
the Marina. 1 at Essaouira on 16th.
38. **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia (domest.)* – Good numbers daily.
39. **Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus* – 1 on 12th at Golf du Soleil and 1 on 18th
at Oued Souss
40. **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* – 1 at Golf du Soleil on 8th
41. **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* – seen daily
42. **Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco* – 1 heard on 13th in Agadir

43. **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* – seen regularly. Max. 20 at Agadir on 14th
44. **Plain Martin** *Riparia paudicola* – 3 on 8th at Golf du Soleil
45. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* – Seen regularly. Max. 4 on 19th at Agadir
46. **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* – 1 at Golf du Soleil on 8th and 12th;
1 on 15th at Agadir
47. **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* – seen daily. Max 32 on 13th at Agadir
- 47a. **Moroccan Wagtail** *Motacilla alba subpersonata* – 2 at Golf du Soleil on 8th
48. **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* – 2 on 9th at Agadir
49. **Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* – seen daily. Max 18 on 8th
50. **Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* – 8 on 8th and 4 on 12th at Golf du Soleil; 1 at Agadir on
9th, 11th and 14th; 1 on 17th at Oued Souss
51. **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica svecica* – 1 on 18th at Oued Souss
52. **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* – 1 or 2 seen regularly
53. **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* – 3 on 11th and 1 on 14th at Agadir;
3 on 16th enroute Essaouira; 1 on 17th at Oued Souss
54. **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* – seen regularly. Max. 10 on 11th
55. **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* – 1 at Agadir on 11th
56. **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* – Seen daily
57. **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* – 1 at Oued Souss on 18th
58. **Reed Warbler** *Acrcephalus scirpaceus* – 1 at Golf du Soleil on 12th
59. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* – seen almost daily. Max 8 on 14th
60. **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* – seen daily. Max. 20 on 8th
61. **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis elegans* – 1 at Agadir on 7th, 11th and
14th; 4 enroute Essaouira on 16th; 2 at Oued Souss on 17th.
62. **Common Magpie** *Pica pica mauritanica* – Seen daily. Max. 22 on 12th
63. **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis* – 3 south of Essaouira on 16th
64. **Raven** *Corvus corax* – 2 north of Tamri on 16th

- 65. Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* – Common. High count 41 on 11th at Agadir
- 66. House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* – Common
- 67. Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* – 1 on 11th at Agadir
- 68. Serin** *Serinus serinus* – 5 on 8th at Golf du Soleil; 6 on 18th at Oued Souss
- 69. Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* – 5 on 14th at Agadir; 3 on 16th at Essaouira;
2 on 17th at Oued Souss.
- 70. Goldfinch** *Carduelis Carduelis* – 3 at Agadir on 11th; 7 at Essaouira on 16th;
2 on 17th at Oued Souss
- 71. House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata sahari* – Up to 3 seen regularly around Agadir;
6 at Essaouira on 16th

BUTTERFLIES

Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>
Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>
Lang's Short-tailed Blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>
Greenish Black-tip	<i>Elphinstonia charlonia</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>

DRAGONFLIES

Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>
Iberian Bluetail	<i>Ischnura graellsii</i>
Epaulet Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>
Violet Dropwing	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>
Orange-winged Dropwing	<i>Trithemis kirbyi</i>

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>
Egyptian Grasshopper	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>
Brown-banded Cockroach	<i>Supella longipalpa</i>
Ground Beetle sp.	
North African Water Frog	<i>Rana saharica</i>
Yellow striped Grasshopper	