

## Morocco and Western Sahara - March 12th - March 23rd 2010

Participants: Angelo and Alberto Nava, Remo Ciuffardi – birders from Northern Italy

### Itinerary

-----

12-3 Milano - Marrakech - Tiznit  
13-3 Tiznit - Goulimine - Sidi Akhfennir  
14-3 Sidi Akhfennir - Dakhla  
15-3 Dakhla - Aousserd - Dakhla  
16-3 Dakhla - Sidi Akhfennir  
17-3 Sidi Akhfennir - Oued Massa e Sous  
18-3 Oued Massa - Tamri - Temara  
19-3 Temara - Sidiyahya - Sidi Bourhaba - Moullay Bouselham - Temara  
20-3 Temara - Ifrane - Azrou  
21-3 Azrou - Erfoud - Rissani  
22-3 Rissani - Boumalne du Dades - Marrakech  
23-3 Marrakech - Milano

We had originally planned our annual birding trip on the excellent classic David Gosney guides, Northern and Southern Morocco. However, later on, reading various reports on sightings south of Goulimine as far as Dakhla – Aousserd we felt a strong urge to vary our initial itinerary. We spent 12 days in Morocco (two of which were for flights). We inflicted ourselves with a lot of driving but the birding highlights were undoubtedly satisfying.

### Friday 12.03.10

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March we arrived on an Easyjet flight at 13.00 local time. We changed currency and got our hired vehicle, a rather beaten up diesel Peugeot Partner with 160,000 kms on the clock. (NB in spite of warnings that there might not be petrol in the south it was available all the way to Dakhla.) We got sorted out by 15.00 hours took a deep breath and headed for Agadir. The road was pretty chaotic with some very dangerous driving, suicidal pedestrians and mopeds and no end of lorries. We reached Tiznit where we stayed the night at the 'Hotel de Paris' - three star. Cheap but not terribly satisfactory. The hotel opposite, 'Idou Tiznit' was probably much better. Stars in Morocco do not quite match up to European standards. From then on we picked up-market hotels but always checked the price first.

### Saturday 13.03.10

It was still dark when we set out at 6.00 and headed south for Km 22 Goulimine to look for our first birds. It was very windy and remained like that for the next three days. Remo, the photographer got to grips with TEMMINCK'S LARKS

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHY/S7Un\\_5dCEnl/AAAAAAAAAjM/\\_1m0j0fxgz/s1600/temminky.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHY/S7Un_5dCEnl/AAAAAAAAAjM/_1m0j0fxgz/s1600/temminky.jpg)

RED-RUMPED WHEATEARS

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHY/S7Uik4zI58I/AAAAAAAAAh0/M9MHsY6fDkU/s1600/monachella+testagrigia.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHY/S7Uik4zI58I/AAAAAAAAAh0/M9MHsY6fDkU/s1600/monachella+testagrigia.jpg)

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHY/S7UiQzZNa0I/AAAAAAAAAhs/LN1MOFqt1qE/s1600/mon+testa+grigia.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHY/S7UiQzZNa0I/AAAAAAAAAhs/LN1MOFqt1qE/s1600/mon+testa+grigia.jpg)

and BAR-TAILED DESERT LARKS

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UOjLJE0UI/AAAAAAAAAeM/Lim9KQ9u0LE/s1600/allodola+cb00002.JPG](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UOjLJE0UI/AAAAAAAAAeM/Lim9KQ9u0LE/s1600/allodola+cb00002.JPG)

Of course, we had hoped for a THICK-BILLED LARK, but it did not appear. Along the route we photographed a FAT SAND RAT. Next stop was at Oued Draa, just before Tan-Tan where we saw a flock (70+) of MARBLED DUCKS, maroccanus CORMORANTS and THEKLA LARKS

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7ZotUXu2pl/AAAAAAAAAj8/6dN24J90Srk/s1600/MARMO2.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7ZotUXu2pl/AAAAAAAAAj8/6dN24J90Srk/s1600/MARMO2.jpg)

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UglSIZLwl/AAAAAAAAAhc/JqPiazlvdf8/s1600/marmo.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UglSIZLwl/AAAAAAAAAhc/JqPiazlvdf8/s1600/marmo.jpg)

Late in the afternoon we reached Sidi Akhfennir and stayed the night at the excellent 'La Courbine d'Argent', a small family-run hotel with a pleasant atmosphere and excellent fish-based meals. However before stopping at the hotel we did an exploratory visit to the nearby Khenifiss Lagoon. In 2008 KELP GULLS were found and in 2009 nesting took place. In spite of a howling sand-blasting wind we managed some digiscoping shots.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UjSUpxGSI/AAAAAAAAAh8/wcNx6D6TWWFQ/s1600/P1000238.JPG](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UjSUpxGSI/AAAAAAAAAh8/wcNx6D6TWWFQ/s1600/P1000238.JPG)

#### **Sunday 14.03.10**

The next day involved the long stretch to Dakhla. We had breakfast at Laayoune and admired PALLID and LITTLE SWIFTS. Just outside the town at Boujdour we got our second fine followed by a third later on! It seems to be a national sport! However away from the coast the police were less rigorous. After having passed many police road-blocks we arrived at Dakhla around 16.00 hours. We had prepared 'fiches' (kindly supplied by P. Bergier) with all our details for these stops. However, always the same questions, nationality, occupation, and sometimes just a friendly chat. We headed straight for the northern end of Dakhla Bay. One part was absolutely swarming with kite-surfers. Further south we waded out as far as we could at low tide in the hope of a ROYAL TERN. We tried again the next day from Pointe de la Sarga but without success. Only huge numbers of CASPIAN TERNS. Anyway we stopped the night at the excellent Sahara Regency Hotel – again wonderful fish meals.

#### **Monday 15.03.10**

Today we drove along the 250km stretch from Dakhla to Aousserd. We did about 100km in the dark and were amazed at one point to be driving through thick fog! No birds along this first stretch. Round about the Army Camp or barracks a flock of about 30 startlingly white small birds flew ahead of our car. They landed some way ahead and to our joy they were all DESERT SPARROWS.

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Ukd0IMEvI/AAAAAAAAAiU/UGZxBkNTra4/s1600/passero+del+deserto.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Ukd0IMEvI/AAAAAAAAAiU/UGZxBkNTra4/s1600/passero+del+deserto.jpg)

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UkOasdwfI/AAAAAAAAAiM/MiB4EZOuTZg/s1600/passera+del+deserto.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UkOasdwfI/AAAAAAAAAiM/MiB4EZOuTZg/s1600/passera+del+deserto.jpg)

They hopped about at great speed for a few minutes and then flew off. More or less at the same time we heard the song of a HOOPOE LARK

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UURoxJNtI/AAAAAAAAAek/2brYj2h5oQM/s1600/beccocurvo.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UURoxJNtI/AAAAAAAAAek/2brYj2h5oQM/s1600/beccocurvo.jpg)

and began to slow down. Alberto suddenly braked and reversed. On a small mound there were two male THICK-BILLED LARKS (unfortunately they flew off immediately) and 6 DUNN'S LARKS (first official sightings in 2006).

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UbPSBLf9I/AAAAAAAAAgM/RBI7578J3A4/s1600/dunn.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UbPSBLf9I/AAAAAAAAAgM/RBI7578J3A4/s1600/dunn.jpg)

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UboTS11SI/AAAAAAAAAgU/TRwrxR09OTc/s1600/dunn1.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UboTS11SI/AAAAAAAAAgU/TRwrxR09OTc/s1600/dunn1.jpg)

Also another HOOPOE LARK. This was a great boost to our morale! By now the temperatures were 'torrid' I reckon close to 35°C! We explored both sides of the road as far as Km 41 Aousserd.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7jwFIUWxkl/AAAAAAAAAkM/II4-AwJesxl/s1600/100\\_4781.JPG](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7jwFIUWxkl/AAAAAAAAAkM/II4-AwJesxl/s1600/100_4781.JPG)

We got out of the car and wandered about. It was pretty desolate but then we began to hear 'crickets'. Of course, CRICKET WARBLERS!

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UpjgoTqhI/AAAAAAAAAj0/cyD9cgB5sdw/s1600/vocifero.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UpjgoTqhI/AAAAAAAAAj0/cyD9cgB5sdw/s1600/vocifero.jpg)

Small groups (20+) of very flighty small birds not unlike scrub warblers with a very long tail were flitting about in the long grass. Again a relatively new sighting first found in 2008. Further exploration did not reveal anything new apart from some BAR-TAILED DESERT LARKS and a GREAT-SPOTTED CUCKOO. We were missing a target bird for this area: BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW LARK, first seen in 1999 and then from 2006 on. However, nothing! The heat was almost unbearable and it was almost midday. We decided to drive on to Oued Jenna which was only a few kms from Aousserd. There, too, only 4 CRICKET WARBLERS and a 'payni' DESERT LARK.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7URvMGBrFI/AAAAAAAAAeU/2h3Gajowxhk/s1600/allodola+del+desrto.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7URvMGBrFI/AAAAAAAAAeU/2h3Gajowxhk/s1600/allodola+del+desrto.jpg)

We didn't go as far as Aousserd but got just past the barracks where we saw more DESERT SPARROWS 10+. We then turned round and started to drive back, stopping at Km 41 once again. Remo had already seen BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW LARKS so he had a snooze in the car. Angelo & Alberto being tenacious birders quartered the whole area and managed to spot three birds flying around briefly and then dropping down between the clumps of grass. Yes, BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW LARKS!

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UkxoWXzTI/AAAAAAAAAic/9V2uar0SXiQ/s1600/passero+testabnera.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UkxoWXzTI/AAAAAAAAAic/9V2uar0SXiQ/s1600/passero+testabnera.jpg)

Remo was woken and dragged to the prescribed spot and took only one shot, which can only be described as a 'glimpse'! Very good! We then spent the afternoon around Dakhla Bay and Pointe de la Sarga. Loads of birds but no ROYAL TERNS! We stopped the night at the hospitable Sahara Regency Hotel and enjoyed another splendid fish dinner.

### **Tuesday 16.03.10**

Next day we left early for the long drive north. Round about km 169 we stopped at a petrol station (Chtoukane) surrounded by what looked like an enormous rubbish dump. Loads of passerines here. Last year in December PIED CROWS were seen in the area. However after much walking about we didn't see anything. Then Alberto had a bright idea, he showed the pump attendant a picture of the bird. We were then treated to the life story of these birds and

he assured us there were still two around. The Nava brothers soon got an idea of where the birds might be (under the wireless mast). One flew down less than 70 metres away. Unfortunately the area was full of stray dogs which immediately ran after the bird barking. Remo managed two shots in flight.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UYGwKdH0I/AAAAAAAAAfc/OsGnUILNeZo/s1600/cor+bianco+e+ne.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UYGwKdH0I/AAAAAAAAAfc/OsGnUILNeZo/s1600/cor+bianco+e+ne.jpg)

Around 17.30 we stopped at Khenifiss Lagoon. This time the wind was not too bad and we spotted another 6 KELP GULLS. Also on show, FLAMINGOES, SPOONBILLS and various waders. We stayed the night at 'La Courbine d'Argent'.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7jzfA6SfYI/AAAAAAAAAKU/dQd3yug2CO0/s1600/M+GF1+033m.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7jzfA6SfYI/AAAAAAAAAKU/dQd3yug2CO0/s1600/M+GF1+033m.jpg)

### **Wednesday 17.03.10**

We left at 6.00 and headed for Oued Massa, south of Agadir. We followed Gosney's instructions (Southern Morocco P. 10). At the river ford we turned left. Remo photographed some AFRICAN CHAFFINCHES. Further along (about 400 metres) we found some BROWN-THROATED MARTINS perching on stalks in the middle of the river. Remo managed a few shots and just missed a MONGOOSE.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Uob5u97KI/AAAAAAAAAjc/hYsjVgfxmbc/s1600/topino+golabruna.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Uob5u97KI/AAAAAAAAAjc/hYsjVgfxmbc/s1600/topino+golabruna.jpg)

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UoNSc5u2I/AAAAAAAAAJU/9Kj9\\_qf0rKs/s1600/top+golabru.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UoNSc5u2I/AAAAAAAAAJU/9Kj9_qf0rKs/s1600/top+golabru.jpg)

Later back near the ford we wandered into the fields and managed to entice a BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA out of the bushes.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UnyqnXsYI/AAAAAAAAAJE/MnVVwjdxDCQ/s1600/tchagra.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UnyqnXsYI/AAAAAAAAAJE/MnVVwjdxDCQ/s1600/tchagra.jpg)

Also in the vicinity a MOUSSIER'S REDSTART.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UW7JiEriI/AAAAAAAAAFM/bIYqbY8adcw/s1600/cod+alg.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UW7JiEriI/AAAAAAAAAFM/bIYqbY8adcw/s1600/cod+alg.jpg)

We then drove down a bumpy track into the Park to the exclusive Auberge Ksar Massa of Sidi Rabat. There was also another big hotel here but the authorities shut it because it was inside the National Park of Souss-Massa. Remo was rather tired and stayed at the hotel but the Nava brothers drove north to Oued Souss to try for RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR. These birds are found alongside a Royal Palace and, unfortunately, the guards promptly dropped the barrier. However, the birds were easily heard rather than seen. Meanwhile Remo walked along the beach with a local and saw a GREEN TURTLE.

### **Thursday 18.03.10**

Today we enjoyed the luxury of a real breakfast. We then drove to Tamri to look for NORTHERN BALD IBIS. The light was really terrible (as on most days really, photographic light was usually around 10.00 then the sky progressively hazed over every day), however after scanning the lake and other areas we were about to go north when we spotted birds not far from the radio masts. We quickly turned back and drove down a track which took us near the masts. Yes, a group of Dutch birders just coming back from their observations. There were 22 iridescent birds in all, rather intent on feeding rather than worrying about humans.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Ue-IOugAI/AAAAAAAAAhE/OpDBqJaElxQ/s1600/ibis.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Ue-IOugAI/AAAAAAAAAhE/OpDBqJaElxQ/s1600/ibis.jpg)

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UfWDRp0bl/AAAAAAAAAhM/ovStZO1xe4g/s1600/ibis+s.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UfWDRp0bl/AAAAAAAAAhM/ovStZO1xe4g/s1600/ibis+s.jpg)

The Zaer was our next destination so we left at once in the direction of Rabat, the Capital. We took the motorway at Marrakech for Casablanca. Along the route vast 'forests' of Argan Trees. We stayed the night at Hotel Panorama, Temara Plage. Adequate, but with a good cuisine.

### **Friday 19.03.10**

In order to get to Sidiyahya, in the Zaer by dawn, we left at 5.15 in the morning. Following Gosney's indications, Northern Morocco and Bergier, 'A Birdwatchers' Guide to Morocco' we manage to find the location for DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLIN. We stopped at the parking spot indicated just past the Royal Hunting Reserve. For quite a long time we heard and saw nothing! We then moved along the road towards Sidi Bettache and at Km 17 raised a pair of DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLINS which shot off at great speed. However we needed a better view. After a while, listening to numerous BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRAS singing in the undergrowth we heard a DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLIN loud and clear right in front of us. We crept down a very muddy track (Many areas of Northern Morocco had been flooded recently) and, yes! There was a fine male perched on top of a dead trunk. After a good look through bins the photographer got really close. His only regret was the extremely low light conditions.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UaoZd8\\_zl/AAAAAAAAAf8/bYzWBtqC47g/s1600/doppiosperone+ok.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UaoZd8_zl/AAAAAAAAAf8/bYzWBtqC47g/s1600/doppiosperone+ok.jpg)

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UayXq0e\\_l/AAAAAAAAAgE/BbDRzrQfXQo/s1600/doppiospeok.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UayXq0e_l/AAAAAAAAAgE/BbDRzrQfXQo/s1600/doppiospeok.jpg)

We celebrated with a breakfast of dry biscuits and a drink of water! Then we phoned Hassan Dalil for the AFRICAN MARSH OWL. Our Appointment was for 16.00 hours at the Restaurant-Cafe Milano, Moulay-Bousselham. Meanwhile we still had time for a visit to the Sidi Bou Ghaba Reserve. Access pretty difficult owing to roads blocked. A very nice place indeed. Around 11.00 we see our first RED-KNOBBED COOTS and a pair of MARBLED DUCKS.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UcuhWCsfl/AAAAAAAAAgc/43Gpk1o02Y8/s1600/foIag.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UcuhWCsfl/AAAAAAAAAgc/43Gpk1o02Y8/s1600/foIag.jpg)

Also RED-CRESTED POCHARDS and a BRISTLE-THIGHED TORTOISE. At 15.00 hours we sat outside the Restaurant Milano, Moulay-Bousselham, sipping a Coke while we waited for Hassan to finish his prayers at the mosque. After a somewhat uncomfortable ride round the Merja Zerga and through very poor areas with hundreds of little kids everywhere we arrived at the prescribed spot and hung on till dusk. The AFRICAN MARSH OWL obliged but the photographer had to use 1.000 ISO!

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UeEeBxaYI/AAAAAAAAAgS/iXD19M1NFt4/s1600/gufo+p.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UeEeBxaYI/AAAAAAAAAgS/iXD19M1NFt4/s1600/gufo+p.jpg)

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UeWwRWgYI/AAAAAAAAAg0/5vphe89JD7s/s1600/gufo+pal+capo.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UeWwRWgYI/AAAAAAAAAg0/5vphe89JD7s/s1600/gufo+pal+capo.jpg)

We then returned to Hotel Panorama, Temara Plage.

### **Saturday 20.03.10**

The next day we set out for Ifrane-Azrou. In the morning we stopped at Lake Aoua (Daiet Aoua). More RED-KNOBBED COOTS. However today's target bird was LEVAILLANT'S GREEN WOODPECKER. Much searching but no luck. We then did the circuit of the Cedar Woods just south of Azrou. To our amazement deathly silence in spite of nearly an hour of hunting. (Some reports said it was 'easy'.) We then went to the park at Ifrane but unfortunately it was Saturday, a holiday, and full of people. Of interest, three trees full of CATTLE EGRETS nesting over the ponds. In the afternoon we went back to the Cedar Woods. This time the troop of BARBARY APES caught our attention.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UmriVXdbl/AAAAAAAAAis/dtuxoBXfvxc/s1600/scim.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UmriVXdbl/AAAAAAAAAis/dtuxoBXfvxc/s1600/scim.jpg)

We stopped to take photos and at the same time we heard drumming. The Nava brothers quickly hopped over a nasty-looking barbed wire fence and disappeared under the trees! Fifteen minutes later the photographer got a look too, though somewhat out of breath. We then drove out of the forest and along a small track where a solitary trunk showed a splendid LEVAILLANT'S GREEN WOODPECKER.

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UgX\\_I2C8I/AAAAAAAAAhU/YbhdaAIJuq8/s1600/levaill.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UgX_I2C8I/AAAAAAAAAhU/YbhdaAIJuq8/s1600/levaill.jpg)

We saw another two and also a MOUSSIER'S REDSTART. We stayed the night at the hospitable Hotel Panorama at Azrou.

### **Sunday 21.03.10**

We left at 06.00 and headed for the Col Talghomt pass (1,907 metres). On our way there at the village of Zebzat we spotted a BARBARY FALCON.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7US0Z2LcUI/AAAAAAAAAec/EuzqTgcpS40/s1600/barber.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7US0Z2LcUI/AAAAAAAAAec/EuzqTgcpS40/s1600/barber.jpg)

We then reached the signpost 'Er-Rich' – Errachidia 114'. We descended the gully on the right. Plenty of MOUSSIER'S REDSTARTS but no TRISTRAM'S WARBLER. Alberto went further down and then called out, "It's here!". We eventually reached the bird and got some souvenir shots.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UpV9cBotI/AAAAAAAAAjs/43AgcLmfhZA/s1600/tristr.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UpV9cBotI/AAAAAAAAAjs/43AgcLmfhZA/s1600/tristr.jpg)

We carried on through the spectacular Gorges du Ziz.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7kBsIKCLQI/AAAAAAAAAkc/4ecwHliJEwk/s1600/M+GF1+344m.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7kBsIKCLQI/AAAAAAAAAkc/4ecwHliJEwk/s1600/M+GF1+344m.jpg)

Along the way a BONELLI'S EAGLE flew overhead.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UWW7i2JI/AAAAAAAAAe8/iXm7yvdaZH4/s1600/bonelli.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UWW7i2JI/AAAAAAAAAe8/iXm7yvdaZH4/s1600/bonelli.jpg)

The Tafilalt was now close and we entered Erfoud-Rissani. We headed straight for the Auberge Kasbah Derkaoua Oasis. We drove out into the desert for about 5 kms. This hotel was a very pleasant place indeed for weary travelers! We left our luggage and went to look for the AFRICAN EAGLE OWL. We parked at the prescribed spot and a young lad, Brahim Mezane turned up on his scooter and offered to take us to the owl. We could have done this on our own really but we accepted his help. Well, after about 1½ kms walk, in a howling wind, we saw the bird in a crack on the cliffs. Again unheard of ISO ratings to get a shot!

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UenoV2lul/AAAAAAAAAg8/K1GGhEUs-X4/s1600/gufo+reale.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UenoV2lul/AAAAAAAAAg8/K1GGhEUs-X4/s1600/gufo+reale.jpg)

As we had not found an AFRICAN DESERT WARBLER on the Dakhla-Aousserd road we left Brahim and took the Rissani – Merzouga (Erg Chebbi) road and took the track to Auberges Yasmina and Caravane. We stopped at point 4 in Gosney (The Deserts p. 13). Remo, the photographer, is now nearly 70 and remembers wandering around with just a Gooders and a Bruun-Singer Guide when he started birdwatching. The Nava brothers whipped out a GPS Nokia phone, dialed co-ordinates, hit the exact spot and from the phone played the bird's song. In less than three minutes the bird was in the bag!

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UnU4duYnI/AAAAAAAAAi8/VH2TMALV08I/s1600/sterpa+dese.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UnU4duYnI/AAAAAAAAAi8/VH2TMALV08I/s1600/sterpa+dese.jpg)

There was still some light so we drove towards Rissani. More or less near the Auberge Tresor (horrendous!) we wandered around in the hope of seeing an EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR. We heard distant calls but saw nothing. We then went to the hotel for dinner. Afterwards the photographer went to bed. (We had been up since 5.00!) The Nava brothers settled by the swimming pool in the hope of a nightly appearance. The bird passed over the pool at about 23.00 hours. Alberto was woken and the bird passed once again. The tenacious birders went to bed at 12.45!

### **Monday 22.03.10**

We got up at 5.30 and checked the hotel surroundings. We indulged in breakfast and left at 8.00. We began the long road back to Marrakech. Around midday we reached Boumalne Dades and set out on the 'new' Tagdilt Track, entering at "Ikniouen Km 40" and driving on to Gosney's point 6 (The Deserts, Page 21). We then drove south-west and joined up with the 'old' Tagdilt Track. There were hundreds of SHORT-TOED LARKS on view. Many were hunted by LANNER while 'cirtensis' LONG-LEGGED BUZZARDS perched nearby. We then drove back up towards the town. On the way we drove through a rubbish dump. We were lucky. There was a fine male THICK-BILLED LARK on view and we managed some shots.

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UVkSQLKI/AAAAAAAAAes/v\\_oxQ9FYVzQ/s1600/beccogrosso.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UVkSQLKI/AAAAAAAAAes/v_oxQ9FYVzQ/s1600/beccogrosso.jpg)

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UV7GYRekl/AAAAAAAAAe0/I0GyQxne5mk/s1600/beggogro+1.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7UV7GYRekl/AAAAAAAAAe0/I0GyQxne5mk/s1600/beggogro+1.jpg)

On joining the main road we spotted a SEEBOHM'S WHEATEAR.

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Um-wb4T1I/AAAAAAAAAi0/M9BL6h4XQI8/s1600/selbnomi.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Um-wb4T1I/AAAAAAAAAi0/M9BL6h4XQI8/s1600/selbnomi.jpg)

Driving along the Valée du Dades we stopped at the bridge at El-Kelaa' M'Gouna. Luckily in the fields below there were several 'subpersonata' PIED WAGTAILS.

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Zo7fQK2ql/AAAAAAAAAke/Wif\\_1rz9alQ/s1600/BALLER.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_SfG7bWXpHYy/S7Zo7fQK2ql/AAAAAAAAAke/Wif_1rz9alQ/s1600/BALLER.jpg)

From Ouarzazate to Marrakech, going over the Tizi-n-Tichka Pass (2,300 metres) the extremely long winding mountain road wore us out. We didn't reach Marrakech until 20.45. We spent the night at Hotel Corail, just along from Marrakech Station.

### **Tuesday 23.03.10**

We caught our Easyjet flight at 11.35 and reached Milan, Malpensa at 15.50 hours.

Precious info was given by Adriano Talamelli, Patrick Bergier and Lee G. R. Evans  
 Kilometres.: 6.070 – Below list of 164 species seen.

	<b>1. CHECK LIST</b>	
1	2. RUDDY SHELDUCK	
2	3. MALLARD	
3	4. SHOVELER	
4	5. MARBLED DUCK	
5	6. POCHARD	
6	7. RED-CRESTED POCHARD	
7	8. FERRUGINOUS DUCK	
8	9. TUFTED DUCK	
9	10. DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLIN	
10	11. QUAIL	
11	12. LITTLE GREBE	
12	13. GREAT CRESTED GREBE	
13	14. GANNET	
14	15. CORMORANT also 'maroccanus'	
15	16. CATTLE EGRET	
16	17. LITTLE EGRET	
17	18. GREY HERON	
18	19. PURPLE HERON	
19	20. WHITE STORK	
20	21. NORTHERN BALD IBIS	
21	22. SPOONBILL	
22	23. FLAMINGO	
23	24. OSPREY	
24	25. BOOTED EAGLE	
25	26. BONELLI'S EAGLE	
26	27. BLACK KITE	
27	28. MARSH HARRIER	

28	29. LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD 'cirtensis'	
29	30. SPARROWHAWK	
30	31. BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE	
31	32. KESTREL	
32	33. LESSER KESTREL	
33	34. HOBBY	
34	35. BARBARY FALCON	
35	36. LANNER 'erlangeri'	
36	37. COMMON MOORHEN	
37	38. COOT	
38	39. RED-KNOBBED COOT	
39	40. OYSTERCATCHER	
40	41. AVOCET	
41	42. BLACK-WINGED STILT	
42	43. STONE-CURLEW	
43	44. CREAM-COLOURED COURSER	
44	45. LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	
45	46. RINGED PLOVER	
46	47. KENTISH PLOVER	
47	GREY PLOVER	
48	48. SANDERLING	
49	49. TURNSTONE	
50	50. DUNLIN	
51	51. GREEN SANDPIPER	
52	52. COMMON SANDPIPER	
53	53. REDSHANK	
54	54. GREENSHANK	
55	55. BAR-TAILED GODWIT	
56	56. EURASIAN CURLEW	
57	57. BLACK-HEADED GULL	
58	58. SLENDER-BILLED GULL	

59	59. YELLOW-LEGGED GULL	
60	60. AUDOUIN'S GULL	
61	61. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	
62	62. KELP GULL <i>Larus dominicanus vetula</i>	
63	63. SANDWICH TERN	
64	64. CASPIAN TERN	
65	65. ROCK PIGEON	
66	66. WOOD PIGEON	
67	67. COLLARED DOVE	
68	68. LAUGHING DOVE	
69	69. TURTLE DOVE	
70	70. CUCKOO	
71	71. GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO	
72	72. 'PHAROAH' EAGLE OWL	
73	73. MARSH OWL	
74	74. RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR	
75	75. EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR	
76	76. PALLID SWIFT	
77	77. LITTLE SWIFT	
78	78. HOOPOE	
79	79. KINGFISHER	
80	80. EUROPEAN BEE-EATER	
81	81. LEVAILLANT'S GREEN WOODPECKER	
82	82. GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	
83	83. SKYLARK	
84	84. CRESTED LARK	
85	85. THEKLA LARK	
86	86. WOODLARK	
87	87. SHORT-TOED LARK	
88	88. DESERT LARK 'payni'	
89	89. BAR-TAILED DESERT LARK	

90	90. DUNN'S LARK	
91	91. BLACK-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK	
92	92. CALANDRA LARK	
93	93. THICK-BILLED LARK	
94	TEMMINCK'S LARK	
95	GREATER HOOPOE LARK	
96	BROWN-THROATED MARTIN	
97	CRAG MARTIN	
98	SWALLOW	
99	HOUSE MARTIN	
100	TAWNY PIPIT	
101	MEADOW PIPIT	
102	TREE PIPIT	
103	PIED WAGTAIL also 'subpersonata'	
104	GREY WAGTAIL	
105	YELLOW WAGTAIL 'iberiae'	
106	ROBIN	
107	NIGHTINGALE	
108	BLACK REDSTART	
109	MOUSSIER'S REDSTART	
110	NORTHERN WHEATEAR also SEEBOHM'S	
111	BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR	
112	WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR	
113	BLACK WHEATEAR	
114	DESERT WHEATEAR	
115	RED-RUMPED WHEATEAR	
116	STONECHAT	
117	MISTLE THRUSH	
118	BLACKBIRD	
119	CRICKET WARBLER	
120	BLACKCAP	

121	COMMON WHITETHROAT	
122	SARDINIAN WARBLER	
123	SPECTACLED WARBLER	
124	SUBALPINE WARBLER	
125	AFRICAN DESERT WARBLER	
126	TRISTRAM'S WARBLER	
127	MOUSTACHED WARBLER	
128	FAN-TAILED WARBLER	
129	CETTI'S WARBLER	
130	REED WARBLER	
131	WILLOW WARBLER	
131	CHIFF CHAFF	
132	FIRECREST	
133	WREN	
134	GREAT TIT	
135	COAL TIT	
136	AFRICAN BLUE TIT 'ultramarinus'	
137	NUTHATCH	
138	SHORT TOED TREECREEPER	
139	GREAT GREY SHRIKE 'algeriensis-elegans'	
140	WOODCHAT SHRIKE	
141	BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA	
142	COMMON BULBUL	
143	MAGPIE 'mauretanic'	
144	JAY	
145	JACKDAW	
146	RAVEN	
147	PIED CROW	
148	BROWN-NECKED RAVEN	
149	SPOTLESS STARLING	
150	HOUSE SPARROW	

151	SPANISH SPARROW	
152	ROCK SPARROW	
153	DESERT SPARROW	
154	CHAFFINCH 'africana'	
155	LINNET	
156	GOLDFINCH	
157	GREENFINCH	
158	SERIN	
159	TRUMPETER FINCH	
160	CIRL BUNTING	
161	CORN BUNTING	
163	ROCK BUNTING	
164	HOUSE BUNTING	

