

MOROCCO & WESTERN SAHARA

2-16 February 2011

Overview

The trip was a last-minute arrangement via “Birdforum”, with three strangers intent on seeing as much as possible of the birdlife of the region whilst spending as little as possible for the privilege. Flights were booked with Ryanair from Stansted to Agadir – the price paid depends upon length of time between booking and flight, as well as “extras” taken, but likely to be in the region of £80 - £120. Car hire was arranged through carrentals.co.uk, at a total cost of around £430 including accident damage waiver and two extra drivers; the car was a Dacia Logan (aka “Hotel Dacia Logan”) which performed well, coping with all road surfaces plus some rather dubious tracks, and provided adequate accommodation for eight of our fourteen nights. The lack of 4wd was not perceived as a problem; the boot was essential for security (a hatchback would not be recommended). By using a budget provider and being presented with a well-used car, there were no problems with returning the car in what could be described as a “lived-in” state. Food was mostly bread and tinned fish, spreads and cheese, plus fruit, bought cheaply from small shops, accommodation was used when convenient, typically costing £3 per night each for bed-only, and total expenditure was around £160 each for fuel, accommodation and food/incidentals, making a grand total of just over £400 each for the whole trip. A total of 6,882 km was covered over the two weeks.

Route

Agadir – Dakhla – Aoussard – Goulimine (Guelmim) – Oued Massa – Oukaimeden (High Atlas) – Ouarzazat – Boumalne du Dades – Erfoud – Zeida Plain – Dayet – Merja Zerga – Rabat – Essaouira – Tamri – Agadir.

General info

Currency – Dirham (just over 13 Dirham/£1 sterling). ATMs in all cities and many towns. Credit Cards do not appear to be accepted in many places.

Language – most locals speak French, a handful of key words will be fine for getting by, and most roadside checkpoints have someone who understands basic English.

Checkpoints – you will be asked for your passports/nationality, where you are going, where you have come from and your occupation. In Western Sahara the checks/questions are more detailed; printing several copies of the “fiche” (about 15 copies should suffice) and simply handing to them as soon as you are stopped will save hours of hassle (blank form at end of this report, with thanks to Rich Bonser for original proforma).

Accommodation – seldom used, but detailed below as and when. Most towns had a variety of cheap hotels available, and taking a sleeping bag meant not having to ponder upon their laundry arrangements. “Hot” (barely off-cold in many cases) showers were

usually charged separately. Driving for first few hours of darkness and getting as close as possible to morning's target site, then sleeping in car, seemed to be a better use of time than trying to find accommodation which would then be left in the early hours to arrive at dawn.

Driving – some roads, even what appear to be major routes, are in a poor state of repair, often with less than a single car width of tarmac (although most roads around the main cities are fine). In the south, sand also drifts across the roads. The edges are best avoided if you want to avoid damaging your tyres and/or suspension, which explains the Moroccan tendency to “tear along dotted line”. Don't forget to pull over when traffic approaches, though..... In the sandier areas, the dunes have a tendency to drift across the roads, so there may be less road to pull across into than you think! It's also worth noting that fuel prices in Western Sahara are roughly half that in Morocco.

Parking – the roads outside the hotels in many towns and cities appear to be patrolled overnight by “street guardians”, who typically charge 10dm/night. Our (accidentally) unlocked car was unmolested after a night in Inezgane (nr Agadir).

Wed 2 Feb

Arriving in the early evening and collecting our pre-battered car with no real problems, we spent the first few hours looking for the King's Palace, where Red-necked Nightjar had been seen by Dan on a previous visit. Eventually we found the site, and heard the Nightjar singing, but the Palace guard would not allow us to stay and look properly. Grey Heron and Stone Curlew were also noted here. Drove south overnight, stopping by the roadside around 3am and sleeping in car until daybreak.

Thu 3 Feb

Our first “target site” was the National Park at Khnifiss, but en-route we stopped at a series of coastal creeks between there and Tan-Tan. The first creek (Chebeika) held Osprey, Common Sandpiper, Sanderling, 500+ Flamingo, large numbers of Audouin's, Slender-billed and Yellow-legged Gulls, Caspian Tern and a pair of Black Wheatear, with 100s of Common Scoter just offshore. Various roadside stops between here and Khnifiss added Red-rumped Wheatear, Spectacled Warbler, Desert Wheatear, Black Redstart, Long-legged Buzzard, Moussier's Redstart, Chiffchaff, Swallow, Kentish Plover, Turnstone, Collared Dove and Thekla Lark to the trip list.

Khnifiss itself is a large tidal inlet/lagoon, with entry/parking (for 10dm) by the information centre. A large range of common waders were noted, including several Curlew Sandpipers, Ruff and Knot, with Spoonbill, Flamingo, Osprey, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-throated Pipit, Little Tern, Hoopoe Lark and Desert Wheatear seen, also Iberian Chiffchaff in the scrub below the cliffs, a surprise Redwing in the same area and Yellow Wagtail of the local race, their calls being totally unlike the familiar *flavissima* call.

One of the main reasons for visiting Khnifiss was the discovery of Kelp (Cape) Gulls in early 2008. However, recent reports have confused the issue, with some/most/all being identified as Great Black-backed Gulls. So, had the Kelp Gulls departed? Sadly, although we noted five candidates, only one was seen well enough to identify as Great Black-

backed, with the other four being too distant to be sure, especially with the added complication of heat haze.

Continuing south after lunch, a roadside pull-in at a likely-looking field just past Tarfaya was productive, with both Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed Larks, Moussier's Redstart, two Little Owls, Spectacled Warbler, Trumpeter Finch, Desert, Northern and Red-rumped Wheatear.

Laayoune was reached an hour or so before dusk – the marshes just north of the town held 200+ Black-winged Stilt, 15+ Ruddy Shelduck, Black Wheatear, Marsh Harrier, Whiskered Tern (a single winter plumaged bird) and several Little Stint.

Continuing south after dark, the town of Ehtoucan was reached and the remainder of the night was spent in the car just outside the town.

Fri 4 Feb

Awaking at first light, the hillside and masts atop were scrutinised without success, so we headed to the Café Chtoucan, by the km 169 (to Dakhla) road marker, where the pair of Pied Crow were found on the café roof (possibly the roost site), moving up the hillside as the morning progressed, towards the masts where their nest was just visible. Also around the area were Black and Moussier's Redstarts, Trumpeter Finch, Northern and Red-rumped Wheatear, Spectacled Warbler, Red-rumped Swallow and Green Sandpiper.

Progressing south, Cream-coloured Courser were seen at km 118, a male Lesser Kestrel (plus House Martin, 100+ Audouin's Gull, Gannet and Swallow) at km 112, also Long-legged Buzzard, Sardinian Warbler, Southern Grey Shrike (*elegans*), Brown-necked Raven, Black and Desert Wheatear from the car.

Approaching Dakhla, the road to the town itself was bypassed and a stop was made further down the bay, with a long walk to the beach producing relatively little by reward, just the usual waders, Flamingo, plus Marsh Harrier and both Pallid and Common Swift. We turned around at El' Argoub (Barbary Dove, Spanish Sparrow, Crag Martin and Northern Wheatear seen here) and returned to Dakhla. At the checkpoint by the turnoff to the town, Hoopoe Larks entertained us whilst our details were checked; continuing along the long road to the town, a flock of birds in flight attracted our attention, and checking the beach revealed a large mixed flock of terns, with over 40 Royal Terns, 34 Caspian and 3 Lesser Crested Terns, 6 Sandwich Terns, also 2 Osprey, 2 Little Terns, Long-legged Buzzard, 15+ Slender-billed Gulls and a good variety of waders. A flock of 30 Cattle Egret were seen in flight at the northern end of the town, and the tidal pools by the fishing village at the end of the peninsula held 40 Kentish Plover, 25 Curlew Sandpiper, 5 Little Stint and various other waders in small numbers, as well as a whopping 180+ Caspian Terns! A room just off the coastal strip, near the market place, was booked for the night (costing 120dm) which provided a welcome opportunity to shower (albeit a cold one) and change stale clothing.

Sat 5 Feb

With one of our number feeling poorly and left to recuperate, the peninsula area was revisited, primarily for a seawatch. Common Tern and Gannet were seen upon arrival, and shortly thereafter a petrel sp, identified from notes as a Madeiran, worked its way

southwards. Around 3 Storm Petrels were subsequently seen and photographed, but the Madeiran did not reappear. A Little Swift was hawking over the car as we departed. Refuelling at the checkpoint by the Dakhla turnoff (there being no fuel available beyond this point), it was time to venture into the unknown, and potentially one of the most exciting parts of the trip, along the road to Aoussard and beyond. The first 100km or so were fairly interesting, with Desert Lark, Brown-necked Raven, Hoopoe Lark, Southern Grey Shrike, several Cream-coloured Courser, 100s of Short-toed Larks, Spectacled Warbler, Desert Wheatear, Long-legged Buzzard and Quail seen, but it wasn't until the km56 marker that we started to encounter the specialities, with Cricket Longtail seen by two of us. Km45 produced the first Desert Sparrows, with 10 birds seen along with 2 Bar-tailed Larks, 10 Hoopoe Larks, 7 Cream-coloured Courser etc., then at km 43 we found our first Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks (tiny, animated birds, not at all what the writer was expecting!), with 4 pairs by the roadside. At least 3 Southern Grey Shrikes were also here, with 2 Black Kite, a Long-legged Buzzard and 3 more shrike at km41. A large flock of 300+ Short-toed Lark were seen at km34. Our final stop was at km25, Oued Jenna, where we pitched our tent near the track by the road. Exploring the area as night approached was rewarding, with Cricket Longtail seen well, and Tree Pipit, Spectacled Warbler, 2 Subalpine Warbler, Hoopoe Lark and Southern Grey Shrike seen.

Sun 6 Feb

Having survived my first night under canvas for nearly 40 years, we regrouped (with the tent being small, one of us had to sleep in the car) and explored the area to the south on foot. Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks were ever-present, calling and displaying overhead, and several Cricket Longtails were seen, mostly dashing between tussocks, but occasionally showing well, with at least 11 counted. Now separated, a roosting Barn Owl was found by one of us, with a group of 7 Fulvous Babbler seen and photographed by another – it was with some relief that the Babblers were later relocated by all of us just north of the road. Hoopoe, Brown-necked Raven, Subalpine Warbler, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and 3 Black Kite were also in the area. Crossing the road and heading up the northern side of the wadi, a Great Spotted Cuckoo was a nice bonus, seen well several times after giving us the run-around for a while, a Quail was flushed a couple of times, and Woodchat, Crag Martin, Lesser Whitethroat and Willow Warbler found their way onto the trip-list, as well as the aforementioned Fulvous Babblers.

Somewhat later than intended (approaching midday) we continued toward Aoussard, stopping occasionally as birds were spotted by the roadside. An interesting-looking lark at km20 was pinned down as our first Dunn's Lark after a little fast reversing in the car, and a second bird was close by, also at least 6 Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks, 4 Hoopoe Larks and a Brown-necked Raven near this road marker. Reaching Aoussard itself, the town was bypassed and we continued towards Mauritania along a new tarmac road, keeping one eye on the fuel, which had to last until we returned to Dakhla. Just past the turnoff to the town and the military base was a White-crowned Black Wheatear, our first of the trip. Counting distances from the turnoff, at 8km was a flock of 35 Desert Sparrow, single Brown-necked Raven and Bar-tailed Desert Lark and 6 Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, with at least 100 Desert Sparrow at 10km. A couple of Hoopoe Lark and a Northern Wheatear were at 27km; beyond this point the plains became much grassier. A group of

6+ Dunn's Lark at 30km gave stunning views as they wandered on the road itself at point-blank range, in loose association with a large flock of Short-toed Lark, also Desert and Northern Wheatear at this point, and a flock of over 150 Short-toed Lark was at 33km. A pair of Desert Lark with 2 young were at 38km, also 2 Desert and one Northern Wheatear, 2 Short-toed and 2 Hoopoe Larks at 40km, where we decided to turn back – the terrain seemed to stretch unchanged for several km further, and we did not want to risk running out of fuel (in the event, we returned with at least a quarter of a tank unused – we did however exercise caution by driving economically, with low speeds, cautious acceleration, no idling of the engine, and the car did not have air conditioning, which helped). The large flock of Desert Sparrow at 10km was revisited on our return trip, and was found to contain around 200 birds; walking around the area also yielded Great Spotted Cuckoo, Collared Dove, Subalpine Warbler, Chiffchaff, Yellow Wagtail and a couple of Trumpeter Finch in the wadi and near the water puddles here.

Back at Aoussard, a quick drive around the town itself, just for interest, and trying not to draw the attention of the authorities, produced another White-crowned Black Wheatear and our first Moroccan Wagtail.

Timing is always difficult on a birding trip, as good birds often cause delays, and our intention to reach a waterhole near the start of the Aoussard Road for dusk was clearly unachievable. We therefore stopped at km68, where Desert Warbler had been seen on a previous trip by one of our number. A hopeful walk just north of the road found Desert Wheatear, Hoopoe Lark, Spectacled Warbler and Brown-necked Raven, but it was not until we had almost given up hope when Desert Warbler finally hopped into view, eventually giving good views. Dusk approached, and two of us set off (in opposite directions!) for “comfort breaks” – incredibly, whilst doing so, we each saw Desert Warblers at point-blank range! We do not advocate the use of this technique for attracting birds in more densely populated areas.

Heading back to the north overnight, a possible African Wild Cat was spotted by the driver crossing the road 142km south of Laayoune; tiredness set in by 3am, with another night in the car by the roadside near to the fishing village of Tarouma.

Mon 7 Feb

A brief check of the area around Tarouma found Knot, Kentish Plover, Sanderling, Grey Plover and Dunlin in small numbers, with several Gannet offshore and both Yellow (*iberiae*) and White Wagtail along the coastline, as well as Northern Wheatear and 3 Ruddy Shelduck heading south. Next stop was Laayoune itself – the northern marshes from our earlier visit were checked again from different viewpoints, with 10 Avocet, 16 Ruddy Shelduck, 100+ Black-winged Stilt, 254 Flamingos, 7 Black-necked Grebe, 6 Little Grebe, 36 Spoonbill (in one impressive flock) and 4 Glossy Ibis were counted, also Moorhen and Coot seen.

Next stop was Khnifiss for another attempt at Kelp Gull, and a wander around a good birding spot. This time around we found 5 Pintail, 4 Shelduck, a male Marsh Harrier, 2 Black Redstart, 5 Red-throated Pipit, 30+ Trumpeter Finch, 2 Lanners hunting in tandem, 3 Osprey, a Bluethroat, 2 Stonechat, a pair of Black Wheatear with a juvenile bird, 2 Grasshopper Warblers (maybe wintering birds?), 2 Chiffchaff, 5 Meadow Pipit and 2 White Wagtail, with a similar collection of waders as our previous visit.

Moving on, with time against us we managed a brief roadside stop for another couple of Lanners, 4 White Storks at Oued Chebeika, a reservoir near El Ouatia with 2 Ruddy Shelduck, 2 Little Ringed Plover and an Osprey, plus a small pool before Tan-Tan with 2 Teal and a Moorhen. With sites to visit between Tan-Tan and Goulimime (Guelmim), our strategy and timing had become somewhat out of alignment, so we decided to look for accommodation in Goulimime and return to the area in the morning, despite an element of backtracking. Up to this point, everything had gone very smoothly indeed, so we were probably overdue for a problem – this came in the (octagonal) shape of the “international stop sign” (red-bordered, with an Arabic squiggle) at which we merely gave way at a junction, immediately being pulled over by the watchful traffic police, who demanded 700 dirhams for our heinous crime. Luckily, feminine wiles won him over, and we (and our wallets) continued unmolested. The night was spent in the Hotel L’ere Nouvelle, total cost 114dm including extra for hot showers.

Tue 8 Feb

Whilst reloading our car at dawn, House Buntings and Common Bulbuls found their way onto the trip list, with several of each species on rooftops and in trees alongside the road by the hotel. Returning to the south, a roadside stop 4km south of Goulimime held 10+ Corn Bunting, a Southern Grey Shrike and 100+ Spanish Sparrow, with our first port of call being Oued Sayad, 5km southwest of the town, where a bridge crosses the oued. What appeared to be a new polytunnel structure was noted to the north of the road, so we headed to the south along the riverbank. Several Common Bulbuls were seen, and a few common species were added to the list, with 3 Laughing Dove, several Fan-tailed Warbler, Linnet, Goldfinch, Spectacled Warbler, Hoopoe, Green Sandpiper, 3 Snipe, Blackbird (call noted as “tinnier” than in UK), 2 male Bluethroat, Sardinian Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Moorhen, Meadow Pipit, 15+ Corn Bunting, Little Ringed Plover, Moussier’s Redstart, Little and Cattle Egret all being seen here.

Continuing southwest, next stop was Oued Boukila, a site mentioned in Gosney’s latest guide (but with a slightly different spelling). Leaving the car just before the bridge over the oued and walking south, two pairs of Scrub Warblers were found here, with one pair along the main wadi and another pair beyond the raised reservoir just to the north. Also here were Green Sandpiper, Red-rumped Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, White Stork, Moussier’s Redstart, Stonechat, 21 Black Kite, Common Sandpiper and Ruddy Shelduck. Our final stop along this road was at the Tan-Tan 100km marker, a further 30km from Goulimime. This turned out to be an excellent spot. Walking north through low, sparse scrub, 50+ Trumpeter Finch, Scrub Warbler and Quail, Red-rumped and Desert Wheatear, 20+ Corn Bunting, Spectacled Warbler, Thekla Lark, Southern Grey Shrike, Hoopoe Lark, Black Kite and Long-legged Buzzard were all seen soon after arrival, with 4 Black-bellied Sandgrouse flying past in the distance. The stonier area beyond the scrub held 3 approachable Temminck’s Horned Larks, and the walk back to the car yielded a showy Tristram’s Warbler, along with a couple of Bar-tailed Desert Lark. On the other side of the road, just beyond a narrow grassy cultivated area, a pair of Thick-billed Larks were found, the only sighting of this species on the trip.

It was now time to head back towards the north, arriving at Oued Massa (about 50km south of Agadir) in the late afternoon. Along the approach road to the bridge and around

the village were Serin, Moroccan Magpie, Common Bulbul, Cattle Egret, Goldfinch and Chiffchaff, with Plain Martin seen almost immediately from the bridge itself (a new bridge, replaced when the old bridge was washed away in recent floods, which also removed much of the riverside vegetation between here and the sea, and has resulted in a general deterioration in bird numbers and variety at this site), also Grey Wagtail, Cetti's Warbler, Little Grebe, Moorhen and Coot. Continuing along the road through the village to the reserve itself, rather than crossing the bridge, we parked at the end of the road (after convincing a guide that we did not require his services) and walked towards the sea, noting Blackbird, Cirl Bunting, House Bunting, 6 Spoonbill, Sardinian Warbler, Wryneck, 37 Crane, Moussier's Redstart, Corn Bunting, Stonechat, Blackcap and Greenshank en route.

A night in the car did not appeal, and there was nowhere suitable to park up in any case, so we headed back to the bridge and crossed towards the campsite (with two Barn and two Little Owls seen en route), which turned out to be primarily a site for camper vans. The only accommodation available was a room which appeared to be used by employees, and was relatively expensive at 300dm for the night (almost £8 each!). Hot showers were included, and there was nowhere else close, so we accepted.

Wed 9 Feb

A quick look around the campsite and out to sea added Spotless Starling and Arctic Skua to the list, then it was back to Oued Massa for the day's birding. Around the bridge area were Great Tit, Kingfisher, Common Sandpiper, 3 Plain Martin, several Black-crowned Tchagra (with 3 seen and others heard, song rather like a slow Willow Warbler), Moustached Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Fan-tailed Warbler, Little Grebe, Bluethroat and Moroccan Reed Warbler (only recently described – clearly a Reed Warbler, but small, with very short primary projection, and apparently non-migratory, possibly a race of African Reed Warbler rather than European). Returning to the main reserve, walking to and from the coast added Stonechat, Green Sandpiper, Cattle Egret, Cirl Bunting, Cetti's Warbler, Serin, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Common Bulbul, Moussier's Redstart, Laughing Dove, 4 Spoonbill, Barbary Partridge, Linnet, Sardinian Warbler, Greenshank, Audouin's Gull, Little Ringed Plover, 40+ Arctic Tern, 39 Crane, Water Rail, Marsh Harrier and Little Owl to the day list, and a couple of Mongoose were also seen here. Driving back upriver and stopping at another likely spot we found a Little Bittern (seen in flight only), more Plain Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, Long-legged Buzzard, 3 Tufted Duck, Woodpigeon, 10+ Shoveler, a pair of Garganey and several Mallard. Spanish Terrapin littered the banks in this area.

Our destination for tomorrow morning was the High Atlas, a long drive along tricky mountain roads, so the sensible approach would have been to head straight there – too sensible for us! Instead we decided to try for Egyptian Nightjar at Oued Sous, as detailed in Gosney, being more or less en route (at Igoudar, near Taroudant). This turned out to be not exactly the best use of time; the tracks were poorly-defined, with seemingly far more junctions, turns and paths than in the guide, the tracks themselves were generally in a poor state and tricky/impossible to pass, and in all probability the nightjars hadn't actually arrived from their wintering grounds yet! We finally gave up around midnight, having seen Stone Curlew (admittedly, it was nice to see them close to the car in the

headlights), Barn Owl and Little Owl and a Red Fox, but not a lot else. Determination to reach our destination then took over, with a rally-style drive up the (mercifully) deserted mountain roads and a rather short kip in the car at the roadside close to Oukaimeden giving just enough time for the knots in the passengers' stomachs to disappear.

Thu 10 Feb

This part of the trip was the most eagerly-anticipated (for the writer at least), and hopes were high as dawn broke. Driving into Oukaimeden, the snowy landscape was spectacular and in total contrast to the past few days. "African" Chaffinch was the first species noted, with Grey Wagtail, Rock Bunting, Common Redstart (not exactly expected in the High Atlas in February!), Coal Tit, African Blue Tit and Black Redstart following close behind. Distant flocks of Chough were eventually found to contain both Red-billed and Alpine, subsequently seen in large numbers feeding around the village of Oukaimeden, and Rock Sparrow around the village numbered at least 50. A stop just past the entrance to the village produced 4 Crimson-winged Finch close to the car - stunning birds - with 4 Dipper around the partly frozen lake, also Black Wheatear, Raven and Mistle Thrush, but we were totally unprepared for the sight awaiting our arrival at the main car park at the foot of the ski lift. The whole area was dotted with birds; well over 100 Crimson-winged Finch, and similar numbers of Atlas Shore Larks, were picking amongst the gravel! To think we were expecting a long walk to just catch a glimpse of these species..... The snow line was more or less at this point, which presumably concentrated the birds in this area; the early arrival was also important, as most birds had moved on by the time we left the village.

Just before the car park, a road headed up to the right, through the village towards a transmitter tower, so we drove up here to check out the area. A flock of 6 Alpine Accentors was found on the way up, with 5 Barbary Partridges near the tower itself, and best of all, a Levillant's Woodpecker was feeding on the treeless slopes on our way down, totally unconcerned by our presence as we stopped and watched.

The descent from the mountain was relatively sedate compared with the previous night's ascent, and we headed towards Ouarzazate with a real sense of achievement, having seen the majority of our target species already. A few bits and bobs were seen along the route, including the first Sparrowhawk of the trip; a field at Ait-Ourir held 500+ Cattle Egret and 120+ White Stork in a tightly-packed group (with local kids apparently shooting at the birds with catapults), and other birds seen included Long-legged Buzzard, Black and White-crowned Black Wheatear, and Little Owl. A "good Samaritan" act, giving a lift to a broken-down local, meant we overshot the turning to look for Mourning Wheatear near Amerzgane (per Gosney), so our next stop was at the reservoir just beyond Ouarzazate itself. Here we found Long-billed Crested Larks almost immediately, along the water's edge, with Yellow Wagtail, 5 Red-rumped Swallow, 30+ Crag Martin, House Martin, Swallow, Little and Pallid Swift, Bluethroat, 3 Little Ringed Plover, 3 Pallid Swift and 3 Moroccan Wagtail in the same spot. Moving further along, there were several tracks off the road to Boumalne du Dades, all of which gave views over the reservoir, with 50+ Ruddy Shelduck, 2 Marsh Harrier, 11 Great Crested Grebe, 28 Marbled Teal, single Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Teal, Lanner, Osprey and Little Egret seen, also 4 Little Grebe and over 1,000 Eurasian Coot.

Leaving the reservoir at dusk, we headed on to Boumalne du Dades, staying at the Hotel Tamazirte (the first hotel on the right as you enter the town) – our ensuite room cost 140dm for the night, with tajines for 35dm and coke 10dm. The writer's (relative) age was also brought home to him here; checking-in on behalf of the group, he was asked if his companions were his children!

Fri 11 Feb

We set off just after dawn for the Tagdilt Track, which starts on the outskirts of town by the dump. Using the Gosney guide we headed along the main track, but soon came unstuck by the sheer number of tracks and junctions, none of which are shown in the guide. Short-toed and Lesser Short-Toed Larks, 4 Temminck's Horned Larks, Long-legged Buzzard, Red-rumped Wheatear, Thekla Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Cream-coloured Courser and Black Wheatear were all seen, but we were unable to find the "wheatear wall", so we headed back towards the main road and went along the Ikniouen Road. Approaching the "wall" from this direction we found 4 Rock Dove, 80+ Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Moussier's and Black Redstart, desert Lark and White-crowned Black Wheatear, but conspired to miss Crowned Sandgrouse (as we discovered by speaking to another crew later). Determined to find our "missing" wheatear, we carried on towards Tinghir (Tinerhir), stopping at the km14 marker, and almost immediately finding a male Maghreb Wheatear by the roadside! Also here were Moussier's Redstart and Desert Lark. Next on the agenda was the Rissani area. Along the road from Erfoud to Rissani is an obvious right-hand turn by a petrol station at Ziz; about 5km along this road is a car park on the right. We walked along the undercliff looking for the ridges described in Gosney; evidently we walked too far, as the ridges described are actually the tiny ones within 15 minutes walk of the car park, not the more substantial ridges much further along. Apart from a small group of apparently stoned teenagers, we had no hassle from wannabe guides or car monitors. At least 20 Ravens were seen here, as well as 5+ White-crowned Black Wheatear and a female Subalpine Warbler; eventually we all saw the Pharaoh Eagle Owl, roosting in a fissure in the rock face, thanks to a local birder who (despite the adverse publicity) had to be almost forced to accept a small donation of 40dm for his services – we were pleased to find the owl ourselves, but only after the local guy had explained that it was only visible by standing on the scree slope, not from the ridges. With the sun setting we rushed to Oued Ziz, by the bridge before Rissani – (Saharan) Olivaceous Warbler was heard here, and seen briefly in the smaller tamarisks on the western bank (untickable views, sadly), but the rapidly-failing light was against us, and the only other bird seen here was a Hoopoe. Returning to the car we were lightly grilled by the local surete, who told us that parking where we were was OK, but parking on the bridge was illegal – as we weren't parked on the bridge anyway we couldn't understand what they were on about! Another fruitless attempt for Egyptian Nightjar nearby (site as per Gosney) followed, then a long drive north towards Azrou.

Sat 12 Feb

Arriving at Zeida Plain in the wee small hours, we found the "crossroads" described in Gosney with relative ease, parking on the east side of the road and sleeping in the car

until first light. At least 4, maybe 5, Dupont's Larks were singing before dawn, but all had stopped singing by sunrise. Slowly walking and scanning the area finally paid off, with good prolonged views obtained of a single bird as it fed amongst the low scrub – a possible contender for “bird of the trip” for one of the crew. Also here were 40+ Lesser Short-toed Larks, 45+ Raven and 5 Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

Continuing north, it was a relatively short journey to the lakes near Ifrane (about 50km south of Fes). A wander around the nearby woods added Coal Tit, Nuthatch and Short-toed Treecreeper to the list, with African Blue and Great Tits, Chaffinch and Mistle Thrush also seen. The first lake (Dayet Hachlaf) was checked out, and held a huge raft of at least 1,400 Coot, the vast majority of which were Crested Coot – so much for having to pick one out! Around 250 Little Grebes were also on this relatively small lake, plus 300 Shoveler, 25 Mallard, 4 Black-winged Stilt and 2 Common Sandpiper, and 2 Marsh Harrier, a Long-legged Buzzard and both European and Spotless Starling seen. Dayat Aoua held far fewer Coots, but 200+ Ferruginous Duck were noted, as well as 50+ Black-necked Grebe, 2 Pochard, 16 Ruddy Shelduck, a Little Egret, 2 White Storks on a nest, Mistle Thrush and 4 African Blue Tit.

As often seems to happen, time passed rather too quickly, and we were once again a little behind schedule upon leaving for the long drive to the coast. Consequently very few stops were made en route, but we did manage to see Booted Eagle, Marsh Harrier, Skylark, White Stork, Kestrel, Little Egret and many Cattle Egrets on the journey. A short-cut to the west of Fes (to avoid driving through the city itself) looked good on the map, but turned out to be a rough track across a rubbish tip, taking a good 20 minutes to traverse but probably still saving time. Our aim was to arrive at Merja Zerga in time to look for Marsh Owl leaving the campsite roost – sadly we didn't quite make it, mainly because the roads in the area were quite possibly the most diabolical in the known universe - so we popped into the campsite gatehouse, chanced upon more by luck than judgement on our arrival in the town, to enquire about accommodation and access arrangements. We were pointed towards a hotel in the town, which turned out to be far too pricey, and the second alternative given (a private house just along the entrance road to the campsite) was “full”, although we believe we were turned away because we weren't an all-male group. As the campsite was just 85dm for the night, with showers, we decided to stay onsite, pitching our tent and venturing into the town for a fish tajine and coke (135dm for all three of us).

Sun 13 Feb

An early walk to the edge of the campsite overlooking the marshes proved fruitless, with no sign of any Owls, and not a great deal else, just Great Spotted Woodpecker added to the trip list and a few Marsh Harriers quartering the reeds. It was decided to remain in the general area all day, with an initial shortish drive to the north, towards Larache, to check out three other “Merjas” mentioned in the Bergier guide, namely Oulad Sgher, Bargha and Halloufa. Actually finding the merjas proved to be a problem – the whole area, including Merja Zerga itself, appears to be suffering from “creeping agricultural development”, and the lakes are presumably losing water as a result, as well as losing habitat to farming and grazing. The standard of the roads and tracks was also very poor, and we grounded the vehicle on one track, luckily on soft mud. A couple of Squacco

Hérons and 3 Greylag Goose found their way onto the trip list, but otherwise the venture was a bit of a waste of time. At Merja Zerga, most birds were distant, and very few ducks were noted, but there were good numbers of waders, Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Snipe, Lapwing and Bar-tailed Godwit all seen, with a supporting cast of 5 White Stork, a confiding Little Owl and assorted common species. Personally, I found the site to be a bit of a let-down, being one of the better-known areas and being keenly anticipated before the trip. Returning to the campsite, we packed the tent away, just getting caught in a torrential downpour, had a shower and tidy-up, then left for the southern tip of the merja, down now-familiar bumpy tracks, to arrive as dusk approached. A single shadowy shape overhead, with a distinctive call, was all we were able to note on the Marsh Owl seen leaving from its roost to hunt over the marshes, but it was better than nothing! We lingered for an hour or so on the offchance of a repeat sighting, but to no avail, so on we went, down to Rabat and beyond, bypassing the city and heading for Temara, where the turning to Sidi Yaya Zaer was found with little difficulty (in fact, using Bergier, it was Temara that was almost overlooked, as it seems to have become almost a suburb of Rabat). Apart from having to navigate out of a construction site (with help from a passer-by), we found the road from Sidi Yaya Zaer to Sidi Bettache fairly easily, a couple of Barn Owls seen along the roadside, and parked up in the car park just south of the Royal Hunting Lodge, where we spent the remainder of the night in the car.

Mon 14 Feb

Overnight rain had cleared by morning, and the area around the car park was examined. Stone Curlews had been calling in the dark but had melted away by first light; Barbary Partridge were calling from several spots, as were Black-crowned Tchagra (eventually seen well), and other birds here included Wren, Song Thrush, Serin, Cattle Egret, Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard and Blackcap. A track had been seen from the car park, looking down the valley, so we turned left out of the car park and along the road to where the track started, then headed along this track to the top of a hill, at the point at which a fire break pointed to the north-east (satnav reading N 33.70679, W 6.92117). The track was driveable with caution, as there were a few large cracks in the surface and several sections were somewhat rough. There was an extensive regeneration programme underway here, with 30 or so locals planting tree “whips” (young trees); walking around the area, a pair of displaying Marsh Harriers entertained us overhead, until eventually a Double-spurred Francolin was flushed a couple of times. Unfortunately it was only seen well enough by one of us, so we continued our walk, eventually reaching the far side of the valley with the fire break. In the distance, a small bird mobbing a Long-legged Buzzard was scrutinised, and soon revealed itself to be a Black-shouldered Kite, the only one we saw. We decided to wait at the top of the valley and scan down the fire break; after about 15 minutes or so, a Double-spurred Francolin wandered out of the undergrowth at the foot of the valley, looked at us for a few seconds, and flew across the break and over the small trees alongside, soon landing and disappearing from view. Despite waiting for a further half-hour or so this proved to be our final sighting, so we headed back to the car and away, pausing at a nearby pond for Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard etc.

Timing issues had dictated the overnight location, as the Francolins ideally needed to be looked for in the early morning, but this had meant bypassing our next destination, so we backtracked for the second time this trip and headed for Lac de Sidi Bourhaba, about 30km north of Rabat. Other trip reports had mentioned Marsh Owls at this site, and we were keen for better views of this declining species. The lake itself is divided into two sections, with a large reedbed in the middle. The majority of the ducks were in the first section; our first stop produced a few Red-crested Pochard, which was not entirely unexpected, but the White-headed Ducks were, as there was no mention of this species in Bergier! Over the whole area we found well over 30 White-headed Ducks, 40+ Red-crested Pochard, 10+ Ferruginous Duck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal, Pochard, Garganey and 20+ Crested Coot, also Cetti's Warbler, Osprey, Marsh Harrier (several), Sand Martin, Great Crested Grebe, Kingfisher and Purple Swamphen, with the last-named seen from the hide in the reserve, being as far round as it is possible to drive. Freak accident of the trip was also seen here (there were surprisingly few incidents seen on the whole, considering the state of the roads and local driving techniques) – a tree had come down on the cab of a large lorry (presumably clipped by the trailer), and the road was almost blocked – the road itself only led to the nature reserve, so why the lorry was there is a complete mystery!

The area of the northern causeway was where Marsh Owls had been reported, so we positioned ourselves here as dusk approached, a huge roost of Cattle Egrets and Cormorants in nearby trees providing entertainment, accompanied by a variety of frogs (with Stripeless Tree Frog seen in the car headlights as they crossed the road, also seen earlier in daylight by just one of us) making an almighty din. Sadly no owls appeared, and we left this otherwise excellent site around 9pm. Being so far north of Agadir, there was a lot of travelling left to do before our departure on Wednesday, and we still had a couple of target species to attempt, so we decided to use the toll roads between Kenitra and El-Jadida. These enabled us to travel safely at 120km/hr+ with no potholes, cyclists or donkeys in the road, a real luxury and well worth the cost (not noted, with several toll booths, but certainly less than £10 all in). A “traditional” night in the car at a random roadside stop en route followed.

Tue 15 Feb

Completing the relatively short final leg of the journey to Essaouira, it took a couple of attempts to get our bearings but we soon located the lighthouse on the southern outskirts of the town and headed along the track opposite, which looked like a track to a tip but actually led to a newish bridge to the village of Diabat, on the opposite bank of the Oued Ksob. Viewing the river from the bridge, the most obvious bird below was our target, a dark-phase Western Reef Heron! The satnav reading here was N 31.48550, W 9.76561. A track led down to the riverbank from the start of the bridge, so we drove closer and watched the heron feeding in the river alongside 9 Little Egrets. A couple of Moroccan Wagtail, 4 Little Ringed Plover, Common Bulbul, Serin, Spanish Sparrow, Grey Wagtail and Mediterranean Gull were seen by the river and on a short walk downstream to the sea. Buoyed with our success, we carried on towards the only real “missing” species from our target list, noting House Bunting and 5+ Pallid Swift on our journey, and arrived in Tamri rather sooner than expected, then drove back about 5km to scan the hillsides

between the road and the sea. A flock of birds were spotted from the moving car which, upon closer inspection, revealed themselves to be Bald Ibis – success! At least 30 birds were in small groups, feeding amongst the vegetation, and were unconcerned by our presence. The cliffs held many more Ibis, and small flocks regularly took short flights along the cliff edge. Spectacled Warbler, Raven, a pair of Lanners and a couple of Moussier's Redstarts were also seen here, whilst around the town were Osprey, Fan-tailed Warbler and several Audouin's Gulls. With no other targets in mind, we decided to try a little seawatching, so we drove the short distance to Cap Rhir and stayed here until dark. Cory's Shearwater was the undoubted highlight, with 3 north and 2 f/a; also seen were at least 2,500 Gannet, 3 Arctic Skua, a Balearic Shearwater, 112 Common Scoter, 10 Flamingo and 3 Great Skua, all passage being to the north. A pod of 7 or 8 Risso's Dolphins added a little cetacean spice to the proceedings. Attempting to leave the headland in the dark proved to be interesting, as the track effectively disappeared, so we had to inch our way to the road to avoid disappearing down some rather nasty crevasses! We had already decided to spend our last night in "proper" accommodation, so we could pack and shower before our return home (or onward journey to Ireland in Dan's case), and we therefore headed through Agadir to Inezgane (a suburb of the city, on the southern outskirts) which was conveniently located for a morning at Oued Massa prior to our flight. A room was found for 100dm at the Hotel Tafraout, which appeared to be in the centre of the main drug-dealing region, but which was more than adequate for our purposes. Showers (actually hot, for once!) were supposedly an extra 8dm each, but the guy who checked us in was perhaps too spaced-out to recall this when it came to settling-up. Chicken and chips were bought nearby as a treat, hot meals having been a rarity on this trip!

Wed 16 Feb

Our final morning was spent at Oued Massa. The bridge area held much the same species as previously, with Plain Martin ever-present, but instead of heading for the reserve and the coast we decided to venture further upstream. Sedge Warbler, 4 Glossy Ibis, 3 Tufted Duck, Moustached Warbler, 6 Marbled Teal and 28 Shoveler were seen, and we had excellent views of a pair of Little Bitterns making their way through the reeds on the opposite bank of the river. Just before leaving, an Alpine Swift appeared and lingered overhead for a while, followed by single Little, Common and Pallid Swifts. With a few more hours before our flight we revisited the campsite area over the bridge, continuing to the village, where we found approximately 50 Bald Ibis feeding around the village outskirts, a couple of Stone Curlew, 15 Corn Bunting, 24 Cranes, 4 Spectacled Warblers, Southern Grey Shrike and a Black Redstart.

It was finally time to leave, so we reluctantly headed for the airport (an easy drive), pausing on the way to clean out the more obvious mess from the car, and made it back to the car rental drop-off with at least a teaspoonful of fuel left in the tank. The flight left on time, and we arrived back at Stansted shortly before midnight.

Conclusion

An excellent trip, with (we believe) few, if any, species missed. The timing of our trip was almost ideal, with day length reasonable, most wintering species still present and daytime temperatures comfortably pleasant on the whole. We also encountered surprisingly good numbers and variety of early migrants. We were too early for certain summer arrivals, but you can't have it all! The route was challenging but achievable, certainly not exhausting; we all coped well and got on with each other without any real problems, and it is hard to imagine how the trip could have been completed on a tighter budget! More accuracy with directions to some sites would have saved a little time on occasion, and had we found the Bald Ibis at Oued Massa on our first visit we could have avoided the need to visit Tamri and chosen another site instead, but apart from this, we believe the route covered all key sites in the most sensible order. We can thoroughly recommend Morocco as a destination!

Trip list:

Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>
Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>
Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>
Balearic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>
Madeiran Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma castro</i>

Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Western Reef-Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Western Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Purple Gallinule (Swamphen)	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Crested Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>

Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
(Red) Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>
Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetyus audouinii</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Pharaoh Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Marsh Owl	<i>Asio capensis</i>
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>

Levaillant's Woodpecker	<i>Picus vaillantii</i>
Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica pica mauritanica</i>
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Greater Hoopoe-Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>
Dupont's Lark	<i>Chersophilus duponti</i>
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>
Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>
Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>
Dunn's Lark	<i>Eremalauda dunni</i>
Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
[Long-billed Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata carthaginis?]</i>
Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Shorelark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
Temminck's Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>
Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Eurasian Crag-Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
African Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Cricket Warbler	<i>Spiloptila clamans</i>
Streaked Scrub-Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>
Moustached Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>

[Moroccan] Reed-Warbler	<i>Acro. scirpaceus/baeticatus</i>
[Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>] heard only
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>
Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>
Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Moussier's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>
White-crowned Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>
Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Maghreb Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe halophila</i>
Red-rumped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
Blue Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Fulvous Babbler	<i>Turdoides fulva</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
[Moroccan Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba subpersonata</i>]
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
House Bunting	<i>Emberiza striolata</i>

Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Crimson-winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys sanguineus</i>
Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>

220 species

Species dipped

The only species that we may have missed out on, given our itinerary and timing, were Seebohm's Wheatear (maybe not enough attention was paid to roadside Northern Wheatears, or we simply didn't encounter any), Barbary Falcon, nightjar sps and sandgrouse sps, as described in the body of the report.

Participants:

Dan Chaney
Milda Sniaukstiene
Mark Andrews

Proforma for checkpoints:

Nom : (surname)

Prenoms : (forenames)

Date de Naissance : (dob)

Lieu de Naissance : (place of birth)

Situation Familiale : (Cohabiter avec l'amie (eg))

Nom de Pere : (Father's name)

Nom de Mere : (Mother's name)

Nationalite : (Britannique (eg))

Profession : (Job)

Adresse : (home address)

Numero de Passeport :

Date de Deliverance : (date passport issued)

Lieu de Deliverance : (GBR (eg))

Date D'expiration : (date passport expires)

Motif du Voyage : (Tourisme)

Marque du Vehicule :

Matriculation :

Date D'entrée en Maroc : (02.02.2011)

Ville D'entrée : (Agadir, Al Massira Airport)

Numero de Police : (the number of the stamp in your passport on entry.)