


## Morocco (Agadir to Mergouza) 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Following a highly successful trip to the Goulimine area the previous year, the Bockhill birders planned another Moroccan raid in April 2012, this time heading to Mergouza to target species like Desert Sparrow and Egyptian Nightjar. Participants, Brendan Ryan, Phil Chantler, Jack Chantler. More photos can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/brendan2010/>





### Itinerary



<b>10<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Arrived at Agadir around 9.30am local time, and after a long time getting through immigration, we picked up the hire 4x4 from Europcar and set off west towards Quarzazate picking up species like Spotless Starling and "Moroccan " Magpie from the car as we left the Agadir area. After a few stops along the way, arrived mid-afternoon in the area south of Amerzgane which was described in Gosney as a location for Maghreb Wheater. After a couple of hours searching the area in which we briefly saw what was almost certainly a pair of the target species, we decided to head for Barrage El Mansour, for the last hour of birding. However the light was fading by the time we found a view point and after adding a few useful trip ticks, we headed off to Boumaine-ed Dades where we arrived at the birders hotel of choice, Hotel Soleil Bleu to find it unexpectedly closed. Eventually found alternative accommodation at nearby hotel.
<b>11<sup>th</sup> April</b>	An early start meant that we were out along the Tagdilt track before first light, hoping for Dupont's Lark. We birded the area until about 9.30 before returning to the hotel for breakfast. We left Boumaine and drove to Rissani birding along the way, encountering many Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and White-crowned Black Wheatears east of Igli. We arrived at "the" Pharaoh Eagle Owl stakeout mid afternoon and started to walk to the designated spot. We were soon joined by two "guides" who


	<p>assured us that the owls weren't there but they knew of another site about three Km away. We ignored them and persisted and eventually found a bird on the cliff face not far from the road. We quickly moved on to Auberge Yasmina (where we stayed for the next two nights) arriving in time to tick the Desert Sparrows at their nest box before dusk. We arranged through the hotel proprietor to take a guide and 4x4 into the desert at 6.00am the following morning. We paid 2000 dirham which we attempted, unsuccessfully to negotiate down.</p>
<p><b>12<sup>th</sup> April</b></p>	<p>The weather was not promising as we set off into the desert, heavy overcast skies and a distinct possibility of rain. We drove east of Erg Chebbi towards the Algerian border. The trip proved a great success and well worth the extortionate price, producing Houbara, Spotted Sandgrouse, Desert Sparrows and Desert Warblers. After some time on his mobile phone our guide set off to a small dune system where rendezvoused with a local (with apparently a mobile phone) who had two roosting Egyptian Nightjars staked out. The rain, sand and thunder storm passed through midday when we were back at the hotel but quickly cleared and we birded the track back to the road looking for Dunn's Lark in the early afternoon. We then spent some time around Rissani picking up long-billed Crested Larks and Saharan Olivaceous Warbler before heading south to bird the temporary lake at Merzouga until dusk.</p> 
<p><b>13<sup>th</sup> April</b></p>	<p>After yesterday's rain storms, we awoke to find that the temporary lake by Auberge Yasmina had filled during the night flooding some of the ringing area. We birded around the Auberge early morning and watched the ringing activity. We then drove back to Boumaine checking out a couple of Maghreb Wheatear sites along the way. We birded the Tagdilt track in the afternoon hoping to catch up with Crowned Sandgrouse. We failed on the Sandgrouse but unexpectedly picked up three Seebohm's Wheatears in the area to the east of the new Tagdilt Road. We stayed overnight at Quarzazate in the first establishment that sold alcohol.</p>
<p><b>14<sup>th</sup> April</b></p>	<p>First call of the morning was the area south of Amerzgane where we had seen probably seen Maghreb Wheatear four days earlier. Although we had no luck at the previous spot, we eventually found a breeding pair about 2Km further down the road. Flushed with success we started to drive back to Agadir stopping near Tiouine and a few other cultivated areas en route. All these areas seemed to be heaving with migrants. At our final stop we flushed a Pharaoh Eagle Owl which we were able to relocate in a nearby tree and photograph. A final stop in the Souss Valley near Taroudannt where we birded a small area of argana forest and found an amazing concentration of Woodchats. We arrived back at Agadir airport for our early evening</p>



	flight back to the UK
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<b>Ruddy Shelduck</b>	2 seen in roadside pools on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 26 Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2 in the temporary lake at Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Mallard</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Pochard</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Barbary Partridge</b>	2 south of Amerzgane 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Quail</b>	Heard near Amerzgane 10 <sup>th</sup> and Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Little Grebe</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Great-cr Grebe</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Great Cormorant</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Night Heron</b>	2 adults Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Squacco Heron</b>	One on 10 <sup>th</sup> between Taliouine and Quazazate and again in the same place on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Cattle Egret</b>	Several around Boumaine 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Little Egret</b>	Seen on at least 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Grey Heron</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>White Stork</b>	37 Tagdilt Track around Boumaine rubbish dump 11 <sup>th</sup> , c 20 at same spot on 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Greater Flamingo</b>	145 Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Egyptian Vulture</b>	Sub-adult at owl site near Rissani 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> summer near Tineghir 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Short-toed Eagle</b>	One Boumaine 11 <sup>th</sup> , one found dead in desert east of Erg Chebbi 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Booted Eagle</b>	One between Boumaine and Rissani 11 <sup>th</sup> , one Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2 along the Yasmina track 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Black Kite</b>	Seen daily including many around the Boumaine dump 13 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Montagu's Harrier</b>	Singles on 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Long-legged Buzzard</b>	3 on Tagdilt track 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2 in same are on 13 <sup>th</sup> , one seen on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,

<b>Black-winged Kite</b>	One seen between Agadir and Taroudannt on 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Common Kestrel</b>	Seen daily. Surprisingly common in desert east of Erg Chebbi 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Peregrine</b>	One Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Barbary Falcon</b>	One west of Tineghir 13 <sup>th</sup> , one between Tzenakht and Taliouine at the eagle owl site on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Lanner</b>	One at Tazounte on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 seen on 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Moorhen</b>	Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Coot</b>	c 100 Mansour Eddahbi Reservoir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Houbara Bustard</b>	 <p>2 males east of Erg Chebbi 12<sup>th</sup> including one displaying</p>
<b>Stone Curlew</b>	2 seen in roadside wadi on 11 <sup>th</sup> , one dead on the road 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Cream-coloured Courser</b>	 <p>c 27 Tagdilt Track 11<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<b>Collared Pratincole</b>	2, Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Little Ringed</b>	Singles on 10 <sup>th</sup> & 14 <sup>th</sup> ,


<b>Plover</b>	
<b>Kentish Plover</b>	One, Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Green Sandpiper</b>	One heard Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Greenshank</b>	One, Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Gull-billed Tern</b>	16 Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Black-bellied Sandgrouse</b>	 <p>6 Tagdilt Track 11<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<b>Spotted Sandgrouse</b>	 <p>c 70 east of Erg Chebbi 12<sup>th</sup> , 2 more along track to Auberge Yasmina 12<sup>th</sup></p>
<b>Rock Dove</b>	Seen daily
<b>Wood Pigeon</b>	Five near Agadir 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Collared dove</b>	Seen daily


<b>Turtle Dove</b>	Up to 4 daily from 11 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Laughing Dove</b>	A few seen daily from 11 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> , ,
<b>Pharaoh Eagle Owl</b>	 <p>One at the classic site near Rissani (as per Gosney) on 11<sup>th</sup>. Seen on cliff face between the two piles of sand described in Gosney. One flushed from a wadi one between Tzenakht and Taliouine near small cultivated area south of road, about half km west of the Taroudant Km 195 post. Relocated and seen well in trees surrounding cultivated area.</p>
<b>Little Owl</b>	One heard Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup> ,

<p><b>Scop's Owl</b></p>	 <p>One seen in the hand Auberge Yasmina 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Egyptian Nightjar</b></p>	 <p>2 seen roosting in dunes east of Erg Chebbi 12<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Common Swift</b></p>	<p>Seen on at least three dates including c 400 moving north across the desert near Auberge Yasmina 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Pallid Swift</b></p>	<p>1+ seen on 10<sup>th</sup> &amp; 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Little Swift</b></p>	<p>Seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Hoopoe</b></p>	<p>2 on 10<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>European Bee-eater</b></p>	<p>Common seen daily from 11<sup>th</sup>,</p>


<p><b>Blue-cheeked Bee-eater</b></p>	 <p>First seen on the 11<sup>th</sup> at Igli, about 15Km east of Tinejda and thereafter quiet common as we travelled further east with about 40 during the afternoon. one near Rissani 12<sup>th</sup>, at least 2 on return journey to Quarzazate on 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Crested Lark</b></p>	 <p>Several long-billed <i>macrorhyncha</i> race on the circuit touristique at Rissani 12<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Thekla Lark</b></p>	<p>Common seen on all dates except 12<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Short-toed Lark</b></p>	<p>Several Tagdilt Track 11<sup>th</sup>, 10 west of Auberge Yasmina (km9.5) 12<sup>th</sup>, 50 on Auberge Yasmina track 13<sup>th</sup>, also seen on Tagdilt Track 13<sup>th</sup>, south of Amerzgane on 14<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Desert Lark</b></p>	<p>8 on 10<sup>th</sup>, 4 on 13<sup>th</sup>, several 14<sup>th</sup>, A bird of rocky escapements rather than stony desert.</p>
<p><b>Bar-tailed Desert Lark</b></p>	<p>One Tagdilt Track 11<sup>th</sup>, 2 east of Erg Chebbi 12<sup>th</sup>, 5 on Auberge Yasmina track 13<sup>th</sup>,</p>
<p><b>Thick-billed Lark</b></p>	<p>3 Tagdilt Track 11<sup>th</sup>, 6 east of Erg Chebbi 12<sup>th</sup></p>



<b>Temminck's Lark</b>	Fairly common, Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Hoopoe Lark</b>	Several heard and 4+ seen, Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> , 3 + east of Erg Chebbi 12 <sup>th</sup> , 3 along Auberge Yasmina track 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Sand Martin</b>	Seen on 10 <sup>th</sup> , and 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Crag Martin</b>	Seen at Boumaine and Rissani 11 <sup>th</sup> , several at roadside stop on 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Barn Swallow</b>	Seen daily
<b>Red-rumped Swallow</b>	Seen on at least 10 <sup>th</sup> & 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>House Martin</b>	A few around Auberge Yasmina 11 <sup>th</sup> , one on 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2/3 13 <sup>th</sup> , seen on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Tawny Pipit</b>	One seen between Quarzazate and Taliouine 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>White Wagtail</b>	One <i>subpersonata</i> with nesting material at Iqli, west of Tinejdad 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Iberian Flava Wagtail</b>	One Iberian 10 <sup>th</sup> , one on pools at Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> , several ( not racially identified) Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Nightingale</b>	2+ 11 <sup>th</sup> , six Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , a few at various sights on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Rufous Bush Robin</b>	One Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> , one between Tazenakht and Taliouine ( at the Pharaoh Eagle Owl site) on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Redstart</b>	2 on 10 <sup>th</sup> , one 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2 Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> , Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , one at road side stop on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Northern Wheatear</b>	2 on Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2 seen on on 12 <sup>th</sup> , one on 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Seebohm's Wheatear</b>	 <p>3 males, east of the new Tagdilt track 13<sup>th</sup>, one seen between Quarzazate and Tazenakht on 14<sup>th</sup>. We had assume that these would have passed through by now and speculated that they were altitudinal migrants pushed down by recent snow in the High Atlas mountains</p>

<b>Black-eared Wheatear</b>	One on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 on 14 <sup>th</sup> in the area south of Amerzgane and one other between Quarzazate and Tazenakht later that morning on 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Maghreb Wheatear</b>	 <p>A pair of wheatears very briefly seen south of Amerzgane on the 10<sup>th</sup> were almost certainly this species, although only the female was seen reasonably well but briefly and at some distance. We looked at various other sites mentioned in Gosney but drew blanks. We returned to the original spot on the 14<sup>th</sup> and found a pair nesting about 2 Km further south (at 8.1km from the road junction at Amerzgane). During the time we watched this pair they covered a lot of ground and we eventually located the nest hole in a bank by the side of the road.</p>
<b>White-crowned Black Wheatear</b>	Seen daily and fairly common in the east. One on 10 <sup>th</sup> , many on the afternoon of the 11 <sup>th</sup> , widespread on 12 <sup>th</sup> , several on 13 <sup>th</sup> , two or three on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Black Wheatear</b>	10 on 10 <sup>th</sup> in the higher and rockier areas south of Amerzgane, two on 13 <sup>th</sup> four on 14 <sup>th</sup> in the area south of Amerzgane.
<b>Desert Wheatear</b>	Seen every day. Reasonably common in dry stony desert areas e.g. Tagdilt track
<b>Red-rumped Wheatear</b>	Common on Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> , also seen between Boumaine and Rissani
<b>Whinchat</b>	One Auberge Yasmina track 13 <sup>th</sup> , one seen at roadside stop on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Blackbird</b>	One Auberge Yasmina 12 <sup>th</sup> & 13 <sup>th</sup> , also seen near near Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup> , seen at several sites on 14 <sup>th</sup> , including a courting pair at the hotel in Quarzazate. The female was almost as back as the male.
<b>Blue Rock Thrush</b>	Male seen in roadside wadi on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	3 Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2 seen on 14 <sup>th</sup> , near Tiouine

<b>Blackcap</b>	One seen on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Whitethroat</b>	Singles seen, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> , Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , roadside on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Western Orphean Warbler</b>	One near Tiouine 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Sardinian Warbler</b>	A few seen on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> & 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Spectacled Warbler</b>	One on 10 <sup>th</sup> was the only sighting
<b>Subalpine Warbler</b>	Common and widespread,
<b>African Desert Warbler</b>	3 seen east of Erg Chebbi on the morning of 12 <sup>th</sup> , another seen in the afternoon 9 km along the track from Auberge Yasmina, 2 in same area 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Reed Warbler</b>	3+ Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Grasshopper Warb</b>	2 Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Melodious Warbler</b>	One in nets at Auberge Yasmina on 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2 Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2 along track to Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Oliveaceous Warbler</b>	Two near Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup> and one in the hand Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> assigned to Saharan race, 2 Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	One along Yasmina track 13 <sup>th</sup> & 14 <sup>th</sup> , one in roadside migrant spot near Tiouine on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Western Bonelli's Warbler</b>	Seen daily from 11 <sup>th</sup> , common especially around Auberge Yasmina and near Tiouine on 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	One seen on 10 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Pied Flycatcher</b>	Male in hand, Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , female in cultivated area near Tiouine 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Great Tit</b>	A few seen on 10 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>African Blue Tit</b>	2 near Agadir Airport 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Great Grey Shrike</b>	5 on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 3-4 on 11 <sup>th</sup> , 3 on 12 <sup>th</sup> , also seen on 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Woodchat Shrike</b>	15 on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 6 on 11 <sup>th</sup> , 3 on 12 <sup>th</sup> , 4 on 13 <sup>th</sup> , very common in argana forest on Souss valley 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Common Bulbul</b>	Small numbers seen every day except 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Fulvous Babbler</b>	2 on 10 <sup>th</sup> , 3 Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Magpie</b>	2 or 3 seen near Agadir 10 <sup>th</sup> ,

<b>Brown-necked Raven</b>	3 near Rissani on 11 <sup>th</sup> , one east of Erg Chebbi 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Spotless Starling</b>	Seen in around Agadir and the Souss Valley on 10 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Golden Oriole</b>	Male seen in the hand Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> , the bird was held for an unduly long time and struggled to fly away when released
<b>House Sparrow</b>	Seen daily including large numbers around Auberge Yasmina
<b>Desert Sparrow</b>	
	Pair Auberge Yasmina at nest box in tamarisk 11 <sup>th</sup> , 3 in desert east of Erg Chebbi 12 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Chaffinch</b>	A few "African " race birds seen at roadside stop on 10 <sup>th</sup> , and on the 14 <sup>th</sup> at one the road side cultivated areas near Tiouine and in the Souss Valley.
<b>Goldfinch</b>	Seen on 10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Greenfinch</b>	Seen in the airport car park on 10 <sup>th</sup> , several in the Souss Valley 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Serin</b>	Recorded daily
<b>Trumpeter Finch</b>	Several Tagdilt Track 11 <sup>th</sup> , 10 in desert east of Erg Chebbi and one Dayet Srji, Merzouga 12 <sup>th</sup> , c 30 south of Amerzgane 14 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Ortolan Bunting</b>	One in the hand Auberge Yasmina 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>House Bunting</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> , 2+ Boumaine 11 <sup>th</sup> , one Rissani 12 <sup>th</sup> , seen on 13 <sup>th</sup> ,
<b>Corn Bunting</b>	Recorded on 10 <sup>th</sup>