

## Rare birds in Morocco: report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (2004–2006)

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Les oiseaux rares au Maroc : rapport de la Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (2004–2006). Après les trois premières synthèses triennales parues dans le Bulletin de l'African Bird Club (Bergier *et al.* 2000, 2002, 2005a), ce nouveau rapport détaille les 129 données analysées entre 2004 et 2006, dont 118 ont été acceptées (voir Tableau 1) soit un taux d'acceptation de 91,4%. Les rapports annuels correspondants ont été publiés dans *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2005b, 2006, 2007).

Neuf espèces / sous-espèces ont été signalées pour la première fois au Maroc. Il s'agit de sept espèces apparemment d'origine sauvage (catégorie A): Puffin du Cap Vert *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii*, Fuligule à tête noire *Aythya affinis*, Faucon concolore *Falco concolor*, Chevalier criard *Tringa melanoleuca*, Locustelle de Pallas *Locustella certhiola*, Pie-grièche isabelle *Lanius isabellinus* et Pie-grièche masquée *Lanius nubicus*; et de deux espèces échappées de captivité (catégories D ou E): Cygne noir *Cygnus atratus* et Veuve dominicaine *Vidua macroura*. La mention du Fuligule à tête noire et celle de la Locustelle de Pallas sont probablement les premières documentées pour l'Afrique continentale.

Parmi les autres faits exceptionnels, il faut souligner le nombre un usuel d'espèces néarctiques qui ont atteint le Maroc à la suite de l'ouragan Wilma en novembre 2005, parmi lesquelles deux Mouettes de Franklin *Larus pipixcan* (2<sup>ème</sup> et 3<sup>ème</sup> pour le Maroc), deux Goélands à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis* et une Mouette atricille *Larus atricilla* (5<sup>ème</sup> pour le Maroc). Trois Fuligules à bec cerclé *Aythya collaris*, un Chevalier criard *Tringa melanoleuca* (1<sup>er</sup> pour le Maroc, cf. *supra*), un Bécasseau rousset *Tryngites subruficollis* (2<sup>ème</sup> pour le Maroc), un Bécassin à long bec *Limnodromus scolopaceus* et un Phalarope de Wilson *Phalaropus tricolor* (5<sup>ème</sup> pour le Maroc) ont probablement aussi été amenés par cet ouragan. Autre fait remarquable, l'arrivée de trois Pouillots à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus*, qui porte à cinq le nombre total de mentions pour le Maroc. Nous enregistrons également, au cours de cette période, la deuxième Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola*, la quatrième Sarcelle à ailes vertes *Anas carolinensis*, les quatrième et cinquième Mouettes à tête grise *Larus cirrocephalus* et les cinquième et sixième Goélands à ailes blanches *Larus glaucoideus*.

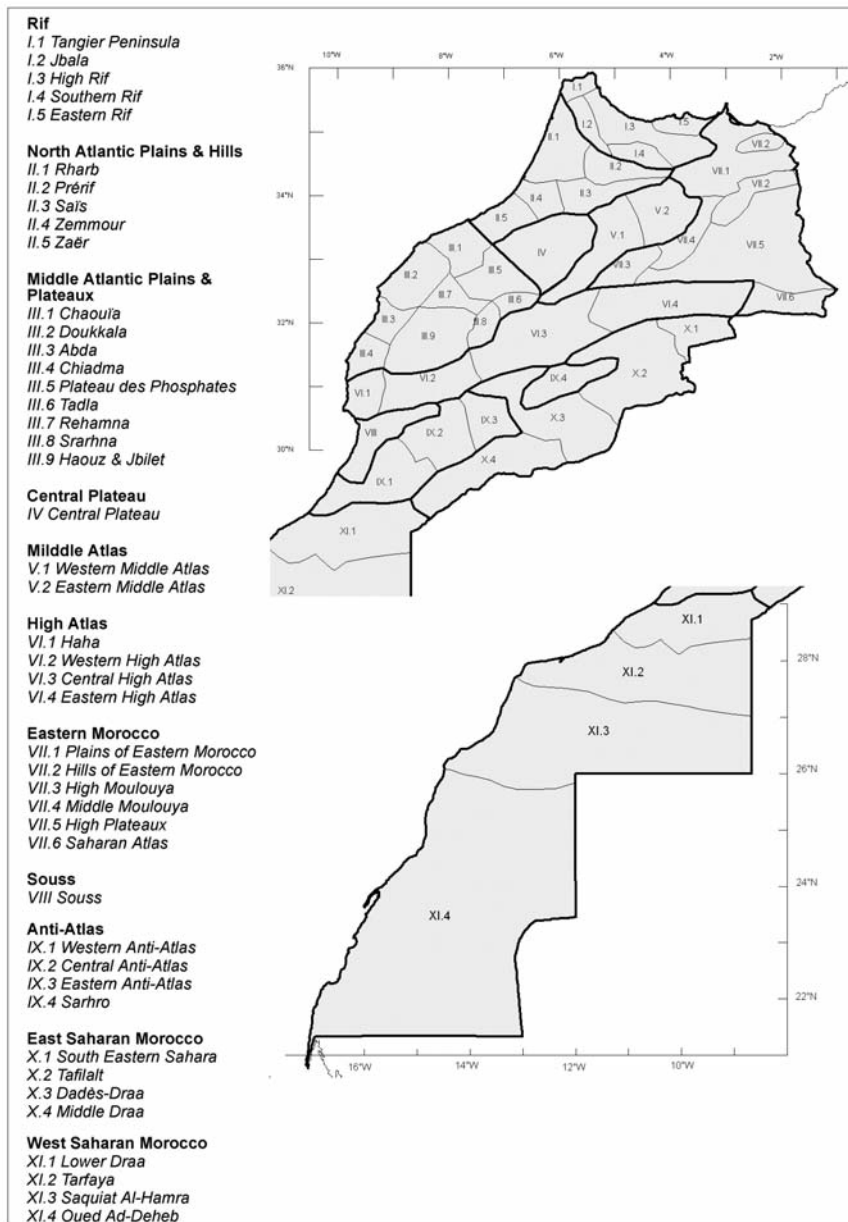
The first three triennial reports of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) appeared in *Bull. ABC* in 2000, 2002 and 2005. This fourth report includes 129 records for 2004–06 (see Table 1), of which 118 have been accepted (acceptance rate of 91.4%), including nine species/subspecies new for Morocco. Seven of these nine species were recorded in an apparently natural state (category A): Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii*, Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* and Masked Shrike *L. nubicus*. Two others are considered escapes (Categories D or E): Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* and Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*. The Lesser Scaup and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

records are probably the first documented for continental Africa. There was also a memorable arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus*, bringing the Moroccan total from two to five records. In addition, following Hurricane Wilma in early November 2005, unusual numbers of Nearctic vagrants reached Morocco; these included two Franklin's Gulls *Larus pipixcan* (second and third for Morocco), two Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* and a Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* (fifth for Morocco). This hurricane brought huge numbers of seabirds towards the east Atlantic seaboard, with most reported from European Atlantic coasts, e.g. in the UK, France, Spain and Portugal, but also further east and inland, e.g. in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland (see Ahmad 2005, Fraser & Rogers 2007, Maumary & Posse 2006, or news in *Dutch Birding* or *Birding World*). Three

**Table 1.** Number of records analysed by the MRBC in 2004–06.

**Tableau 1.** Nombre de données examinées par la CHM en 2004–06.

	1942-52	1976	1986	1988	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total	Accepted	Rejected
Tenth report (2004)			1		1	1	11	29			43	32	11
Eleventh report (2005)	1	1						10	20		32	28	4
Twelfth report (2006)				1			2	5	30	27	65	58	7



**Figure 1.** Map showing the regions of Morocco used in this report.  
 Carte délimitant les régions du Maroc utilisées dans ce rapport.

Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*, a Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (first record; see above), a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (second for Morocco), a Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and a Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (fifth for Morocco) were perhaps also associated with this weather system. Also noteworthy are the following records: the second Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, the fourth Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*, the fourth and fifth Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus* and the fifth and sixth Iceland Gulls *Larus glaucooides*. Annual reports for the period were published in the *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2005b, 2006, 2007).

The updated list of species considered by MRBC is available at <http://www.go-south.org> and includes true vagrants (i.e. species with fewer than 30 records) and rare or little-known species whose current status is inadequately known. We strongly urge visiting birdwatchers to submit descriptions of relevant species to the MRBC Secretary: Prof. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas Lemaadi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknès V.N., Morocco.

### Presentation of data

The presentation of data follows the pattern of MRBC reports for 1995–97, 1998–2000 and 2001–03 (Bergier *et al.* 2000, 2002, 2005a). For all species, the following sequence has been used:

- English and scientific names
- Status according to the following codes:
 

RB	Resident
MB	Migrant breeder
OB	Occasional breeder
FB	Former breeder
PM	Passage migrant
WV	Winter visitor
OW	Occasional winter visitor, otherwise migrant (MB, PM)
AV	Accidental visitor (fewer than 30 records)
F(AV)	Former accidental visitor (not recorded since 1899)
?	Indicates doubt concerning relevant status
- Details of: year, MRBC file number, region (see Fig. 1), site, number of birds (one unless otherwise stated), age, sex, other data if applicable, date(s) of observation, and recorder(s) name(s)
- Comments

For accidentals, six numbers in brackets follow the status code. The first two indicate the number of records in the files of the Centrale Ornithologique Marocaine prior to the formation of MRBC, and the number of birds involved (except for those records subsequently examined by the MRBC). The second pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC and published in the previous triennial reports, and the number of birds involved. The last pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC in 2004–06, and the number of birds involved. For rare or little-known species, only the two last pairs are presented. The systematic list follows the sequence of species for which details are required by MRBC ([www.go-south.org/lists/liste\\_oiseaux\\_maroc\\_annexe4.pdf](http://www.go-south.org/lists/liste_oiseaux_maroc_annexe4.pdf)). Systematic order and nomenclature follow those adopted as standard by the MRBC, rather than the African Bird Club list.

### List of accepted records

#### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/05) Rharb, Sidi Bou Rhaba, adult, 12 March (I. Cherkaoui & H. Nouiri)

This bird had escaped from a private collection near Rabat.

#### American Wigeon *Anas americana* AV (3/7, 2/2, 3/3)

2005 (05/02) Souss, Massa estuary, female, 26 January (S. Werner *et al.*)

2005 (05/44) Souss, Massa estuary, adult male, 12 December (F. Wicker), and 18 January 2006 (W. Price, W. van der Schot)

2006 (06/02) Haouz, Marrakech golf course, adult male, 21 January (B. Maire)

All Moroccan records have been in winter, in December (4), January (3) and February (1), unlike in Western Europe, where most appear in autumn, between mid September and mid November (Dubois *et al.* 2000, Votier *et al.* 2003). In Morocco, as in Britain and Ireland, the great majority of American Wigeons have been males (ten out of 12 birds), mostly adults (Votier *et al.* 2003). Five of the eight records are from the Massa estuary.

#### Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* AV (2/2, 1/1, 1/1)

(05/08) Doukkala, Oualidia, adult male, 5 February (S. Werner *et al.*)

Fourth record for Morocco, but the first at Oualidia lagoons. All previous records also involved males and were between late February and April (Bergier *et al.* 2002, Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* AV (14/22+, 5/5, 2/2)

- 2005 (05/03) **Doukkala**, Oualidia, male, 5 February (S. Werner *et al.*; Fig. 2)  
 2006 (06/13) **Doukkala**, Khemis Zemamra, adult male, 24 March (M. Gerber *et al.*)

Blue-winged Teal is the most frequently recorded Nearctic duck in Morocco (Bergier & Thévenot 2004). Most records are from the Atlantic coast (with two from the Mediterranean coast and one inland). Dates of the present sightings are consistent with the species' pattern of occurrence in Morocco: 15 records are in December–March, three in September–October and two in April–May.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* AV (9/13, 5/5, 5/8)

- 2003 (03/36) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, female, 2 February (C. Dumortier & J. P. Jordan)  
 2003 (03/37) **Souss**, Massa estuary, female, 6 February (C. Dumortier, F. Le Gouis & J. P. Jordan), also on 10 April (Demey 2003)  
 2004 (04/16) **Western Middle Atlas**, Dayet Affenourir, adult male, 5 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)  
 2005 (05/34) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, adult male in breeding plumage, 3 April (R. Bonser, L. G. R. Evans), present since 4 March (A. Binns)  
 2005 (05/35) **Saquiati Al Hamra**, Barrage of Layoune, adults, one male and three females, 10 December, perhaps an additional bird, 11 December (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

The record at Dayet Affenourir is only the fourth inland. Other Moroccan records are all from the Atlantic coast. The record at Layoune is the second for Atlantic Sahara and the southernmost to date; these birds had probably reached the area following the violent hurricane that swept the Canary Islands in late November. The 19 Moroccan records are dated 19 October to 11 April and involve 14 males and ten females.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/17) **Western Middle Atlas**, Dayet Affenourir, adult female, 5 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)

First Moroccan record and also probably the first for mainland Africa, but seven are known from the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001) and one from the Cape Verdes (Hazevoet 1999).

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* WV (-/-, 1/2, 4/8)

- 2003 (03/32) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult female, 21 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult male, 25 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult female, 8 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/06) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adults, one male and four females, 30 January (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Red-breasted Merganser is a rare but regular winter visitor to Sebkhia bou Areg, in the eastern part of the Moroccan Mediterranean coast, between November and early March (Charco *et al.* 1995), but there were no previous records from the Moulouya estuary, further east along the Mediterranean coast.

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* WV, OB, PM? (-/-, 8/17, 2/2)

- 2004 (04/38) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult female, 28 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/41) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, female, 16 April (C. Monnerat *et al.*)

White-headed Duck is very rare in Morocco, except at the Royal Lake of Douyiet, near Fès, from where observations are not required by MRBC. At this protected area, the species bred successfully in 2003 and subsequently record numbers were counted in 2004, including 187 birds on 24 February, 30 on 13 April and 124 on 29 November (J. Franchimont *et al.*).

**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* AV (2/2, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/19) **Souss**, Massa estuary, one in winter plumage, 26 January (S. Werner)

Third Moroccan record, the lowest in latitude and the bird was heading south, but there is at least one record even further south, in the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001).

**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* AV (3/3, 2/2, 2/2)

- 2004 (04/09) **Haha**, Cape Rhir, first-winter, 11 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)  
 2004 (04/25) **Haha**, Aghroud, 2 April (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Third and fourth records in the Agadir area, possibly involving the same bird, as the two sites are just c.11 km apart. In the same region, two first-winters were at the Souss estuary, in November–December 1986 (Bergier *et al.* 2002), and in Agadir harbour, in December 1989 (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Cape Verde Shearwater** *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii* AV or PM/OW? (0/0, 0/0, 1/2)

- 2001 (01/24) **Souss**, Souss estuary, two, 19 March (N. Haass *et al.*)

This record, rejected in 2001 (Bergier *et al.* 2005a), has been re-analysed due to the availability of fresh documentation (see www.magikbirds.com). This is the first record in Moroccan waters of this taxon endemic as a breeder to the Cape Verde Islands. Cape Verde Shearwater is regular at sea near these islands and in the upwelling area off Senegal, mostly in October (Hazevoet 1997). The three Canarian records are also from October (Martín & Lorenzo 2001). It is probable that Cape Verde Shearwater also frequents, at least occasionally, the upwelling area off Western Sahara and southern Morocco, where the subspecies *diomedea* and *borealis* of Cory's Shearwater are regular and particular attention should be paid when seawatching.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2003 (03/27) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult, 1 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Sooty Shearwater is a scarce passage migrant and an occasional winter visitor to the Atlantic coast of Morocco, but it is rare in the Strait of Gibraltar and this is the first record from the Moroccan Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). In future, MRBC will only consider records of this species from the Mediterranean coast. Further east, there are no recent records in Algeria (Isenmann & Moali 2000), singles in Tunisia and Malta, and two in Sicily (Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

**Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* PM, WV, RB/BM? (-/-, 1/1, 3/3)

- 2003 (03/30) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 21 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2005 (05/10) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, adult, 4 April (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)  
 2006 (06/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 28 February (I. Cherkaoui)

Great Bittern is apparently recovering in Morocco. Breeding was earlier suspected in the Lower Loukkos marshes (Thévenot *et al.* 2003) and has been proved there during the present decade, whilst even more recently, breeding has also been noted at the Moulouya estuary (M. A. El Agbani & A. Qninba).

**Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* AV (18/19, 1/1, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/04) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 7 February (S. Werner *et al.*)

The second record accepted by MRBC.

**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba* WV, PM (-/-, 16/19, 15/36)

- 2003 (03/28) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, adult, 2 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2003 (03/29) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, immature, 19 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2003 (03/35) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, Ouarzazate, two adults, 8 February (H. Dufourny *et al.*)  
 2004 (04/07) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, two adults, 1 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/08) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, Ouarzazate, two adults, 6 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)  
 2004 (04/34) **Rharb**, Larache, Loukos saltpans, two adults, 7 November (O. Fontaine & N. Orhant)  
 2004 (04/37) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 31 October (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2005 (05/01) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, seven adults, 6 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2005 (05/12) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 14 April (A. B. van den Berg, P. Kennerley *et al.*)  
 2005 (05/26a) **Rharb**, Larache, Loukos saltpans, 12 November (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

- 2005 (05/26b) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, two, 13 November (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)
- 2005 (05/46) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult 17–30 December 2005 and 12 January 2006 (I. Cherkaoui)
- 2006 (06/06) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, 4–6, 18 March (J. Franchimont *et al.*)
- 2006 (06/20a) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, two, 26 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)
- 2006 (06/20b) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, five including an adult in breeding plumage, 28 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)

All records refer to Palearctic *A. a. alba*, and the increasing number of records submitted to MRBC reflects the expansion of the species' range in Europe. Breeding populations in Central Europe have increased dramatically since the late 1970s, and as a consequence Great White Egret has colonised Western Europe since the early 1990s. This species is also now regular in winter in north-east Algeria (Samraoui & Houhamdi 2002), as well as being increasingly recorded in Morocco.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* RB (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/32) **Eastern High Atlas**, Tachet, Jbel Ayachi, second-calendar year, 25 December (I. Cherkaoui)

Now apparently restricted to the High Atlas, this record is the only recent one outside the Toubkal and Mgoun massifs. It was described in detail by Cherkaoui *et al.* (2006).

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* AV (24/30+, 2/2, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/07) **Saïs**, Meknès, adult male, 13 March (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Third spring record since the MRBC was created. Moroccan records are from the period late September to mid May, with a peak in spring, in March–April, mirroring the pattern of this species further east in the Mediterranean, e.g. in Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005). In Morocco, and elsewhere in the western Mediterranean, autumn records are scarce as the species moves much further to the east at this season.

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* RB (-/-, 7/8, 3/3)

- 2004 (04/26) **Lower Draa**, Ouaaroun, 10 km south of Goulimine, second-year, 13 January (P. Laaksonen)
- 2005 (05/05) **Souss**, 15 km west of Aoulouz, immature, 29 January (S. Werner)

- 2006 (06/16) **Haha**, north-east of Cap Tafelney, adult, 29 March (P. Yésou)

The 2005 sighting is from the species' main breeding area in Morocco, i.e. the Souss plain and adjacent foothills of the High and Anti-Atlas covered by Argan parkland. Further south in Lower Draa, records are fewer and probably most concern immatures on post-breeding dispersal; the 2004 sighting is the first from this area to be submitted to MRBC, but there are seven previous records from this region dated August–November and February–April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Further north, the hills and mountains with Argan trees in the Haha region represent an apparently suitable area for the species, though it has rarely been seen there, probably due to a lack of observer activity; the 2006 record is the only recent record in this area.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* AV (18/c.29, 3/4, 1/1)

- 2003 (03/34) **Hills of Eastern Morocco**, Debdou, adult, 2 May (G. Hilgerloh & G. Nikolaus)

The date is typical of a spring migrant. Eighteen records are from spring and only four in autumn (Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Bergier *et al.* 2005a).

**Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/31) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, adult, 19 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

First record of this species, which breeds from Arabia to Libya. Sooty Falcon is an accidental visitor to the western Mediterranean, where it has been recorded in Malta (Snow & Perrins 1998), Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005) and the Algerian Sahara (Isenmann & Moali 2000).

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* RB poorly known (-/-, 44/51, 16/19+)

- 2004 (04/15) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 12 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/23) **Saharan Atlas**, Tamlelt Plain, Bouarfa, adult, 18 May (O. Fontaine, V. Liéron *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/24) **Eastern Anti-Atlas**, between Agdz and Tazenakht, juvenile, 25 April (D. Philippe, J. M. Guilpain *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/27) **Souss**, Souss Valley, two adults and one young, 14 January (H. Huhtinen & P. Laaksonen)
- 2004 (04/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, immature, 25 November (U. Unger)

- 2004 (04/43) **Dadès-Draa**, between Rissani and Ouarzazate, adult, 23 December (B. van den Broek)
- 2004 (04/44) **Saharan Atlas**, Tamlelt plain, adult and pair with two young at nest, 9–10 June (O. Fontaine & N. Orhant)
- 2005 (05/14) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult male, 24 March (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)
- 2005 (05/17) **Eastern Middle Atlas**, Boulemane, adult, 10 May (J. Franchimont)
- 2005 (05/36a) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, adult, 29 March (D. Suddaby *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/36b) **Sarhro**, Alnif, adult, 30 March (D. Suddaby *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/43) **Souss**, Souss Valley, 14 February (M. Jonker)
- 2005 (05/47) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult 17, 18, 21 and 30 December 2005, and 12 January 2006 (I. Cherkaoui & M. Boumaza)
- 2006 (06/14) **Haha**, north of Tamri, 26 March (P. Yésou & N. Demuth)
- 2006 (06/15) **Haha**, north of Cape Tafelney, 30 March (P. Yésou)
- 2006 (06/23) **Souss**, Massa estuary, adult, 12 February (B. Portier)

Most records are from regions where the species is regularly observed, but those from Plains of Eastern Morocco are the first for the Mediterranean coast, where breeding has yet to be confirmed. Barbary Falcon is not rare in Morocco but its separation from the various forms of Peregrines *F. peregrinus* recorded in Morocco is still poorly known: birds along the Atlantic coast south of Essaouira are sometimes very different from 'classic' Peregrines / Barbary Falcons, making their identification a real challenge. Some birds are probably hybrids as they exhibit features intermediate between the two species. A dedicated webpage has been created on [www.go-south.org](http://www.go-south.org), to share detailed information that may solve this issue.

**Andalusian Hemipode** (Kurrichane Buttonquail)  
*Turnix sylvaticus* RB (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/02) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, 10 January (H. Huhtinen & P. Laaksonen)

Nowadays, Andalusian Hemipode is a very rare breeder in Morocco, though it is probably under-recorded due to the species' secretive habits. This is the 13th record in the Doukkala region but the

first submitted to the MRBC. The most recently published observations date from 1988 (Thévenot *et al.* 2003), but we are aware of several unpublished records from Doukkala, which is probably the only part of the country where the species still breeds. Unfortunately, none has been submitted to the MRBC.

**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana* PM, OW (-/-, 5/11+, 3/5)

- 2004 (04/01) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 1 January (J. Franchimont)
- 2005 (05/15) **Souss**, Aoulouz, three, 13 April (A. B. van den Berg, P. Kennerley *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/37) **Souss**, Oued Massa, adult, 2 April (D. Suddaby *et al.*)

Spotted Crane is a locally common spring migrant, but rare during autumn passage and only occasional in winter. There have been only nine previous winter records, dated late November to mid February (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The 2004 record is the tenth and the second for the Tafilalt area; the first was at Errachidia on 4 February 1981 (Thévenot *et al.* 1982).

**Little Crane** *Porzana parva* PM (-/-, 2/15+, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/18) **Souss**, Oued Massa estuary, female, 7 February (S. Werner)

The first record received by the MRBC since 1998! Little Crane is definitely rare in Morocco where it is known only as a spring migrant. The 2005 record was rather early, as the main passage is from early March to late April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Corncrake** *Crex crex* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2006 (06/08) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 1 January (I. Cherkaoui)

First record received by the MRBC. Corncrake is a rare migrant and an accidental winter visitor to Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). This is only the third winter record since the early 20th century.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima* AV (8/12, 2/3, 1/1)

- 2006 (06/07) **Rharb**, Mehdiya, adult, 18 March (J. Franchimont *et al.*)

Eleventh record, and the second at Mehdiya, of this accidental winter visitor to Morocco.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis*

AV (0/0, 1/1, 1/1)

2006 (06/09) **Dadès-Draa**, Ouarzazate, 24 April (J. Piette & H. Dufourny; Fig. 3)

Second Moroccan record, following the first in September 1998 (Bergier *et al.* 2002). This sandpiper was found in the desert near Ouarzazate, where it had probably paused due to the poor weather conditions—cold and snow in the Atlas—responsible for delaying the migration of many common waders.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

AV (4/5, 3/3, 1/1)

2005 (05/29) **Souss**, Oued Souss estuary, 28 November–2 December (T. Kolaas; Fig. 4)

Eighth Moroccan record and the fifth at the Souss estuary, which is proving a good spot for this Nearctic species.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* AV (0/0,

0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/25) **Souss**, Massa estuary, first-year, 16 November (J. Adamson)

First record in Morocco. Its arrival was presumably linked to the hurricane that swept the Canary Islands in late November.

**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* AV (4/4,

0/0, 1/1)

1988 (88/01) **Souss**, Massa estuary, first-summer, 25 March (A. H. Qvale)

This record was already mentioned by Thévenot *et al.* (2003). There are only five records for Morocco, two in autumn (September–October) and three in spring (March–May), all but one (at Merzouga Lake, Tafilalt) in coastal Atlantic wetlands or estuaries.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* AV

(13+/17+, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/05) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, first-winter, 25 January–8 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

The first record to be considered by the MRBC, but the second from the Mediterranean coast. The first involved a bird off the Mediterranean coast, near the Chaffarines Islands, on 17 August (Täning 1933). Most records are from the Atlantic coast between Oualidia and Massa, with just one from the Strait of Gibraltar.

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* AV (1/1, 3/3, 1/1)

2006 (06/24) **Tarfaya**, Tarfaya harbour / Cape Jubly, first-winter, 10 March (A. Lees & R. Moores)

This Nearctic species was the most frequently recorded in Europe following Hurricane Wilma (e.g. more than 50 sightings in the UK: Fraser & Rogers 2007). In Morocco, this record is the first for ten years. Furthermore, a sighting listed in Thévenot *et al.* (2003), a first-winter / first-summer at the Yquem estuary on 10 April 1985 (P. J. Dubois *et al.*), is in error and should be deleted (Bergier & Thévenot 2004).

**Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* AV (0/0, 1/1, 2/2)

2005 (05/33) **Souss**, Massa estuary, first-winter, 3 November (A. B. van den Berg)

2006 (06/04) **Souss**, Souss estuary, first-winter, 17 February (D. Walker & G. Hollamby), to 6 April (A. B. van den Berg)

Only the second and third Moroccan records of this Nearctic gull. Another adult was recorded at the Souss estuary, on 4 November 2005 (J. Lidster *in* www.go-south.org; M. Ullman *fide* A. B. van den Berg *in litt.* December 2005), but this record has not (yet) been submitted to the MRBC.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* AV (22/22, 12/16, 2/2)

2005 (05/27a) **Rharb**, Larache coastline, adult, 13 November (J. Franchimont & GOMAC)

2005 (05/27b) **Rharb**, Larache, Loukos salt pans, immature/subadult, 13 November (J. Franchimont & GOMAC)

Ring-billed Gull is the most frequently recorded Nearctic larid in Morocco, with 36 sightings, all along the Atlantic coast. The salt pans and marshes of the Lower Loukkos near Larache are the best site (nine records), following Agadir and the Souss estuary (eight records).

**Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* AV (3/3, 0/0, 2/2)

2004 (04/11) **Souss**, Massa estuary, adult, 20 February (V. & S. Vitzthum)

2005 (05/09) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia lagoons, adult in breeding plumage, 4 April (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Three of the five Moroccan records are from the Agadir region; the 2005 record at Sidi Moussa–Oualidia lagoons is the northernmost to date.



**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* AV, WV ? (-/-, 0/0, 2/3)

- 2006 (06/19a) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 7 January (I. Cherkaoui)  
 2006 (06/19b) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, two adults, 5 February (I. Cherkaoui)

Herring Gull is a rare winter visitor to the Atlantic coast and accidental on the Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). These two records, the first to be examined by MRBC, are thus very welcome.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* AV (3/3, 1/1, 2/1)

- 2003 (03/26) **Souss**, Souss estuary, (sub?)adult, 30 May (C. Koller)  
 2004 (04/10) **Haha**, Aghroud, north of Agadir, third-winter, 11 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

The bird at the Souss estuary stayed two months at least and had been previously seen in early April to early May 2003 (Bergier *et al.* 2005a, record 03/14). It is also possible that the bird seen at Aghroud on 11 January 2004 was the same, as the two sites are only c.33 km apart.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* WV (-/-, 4/5, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/33) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Kert estuary, adult, 17 October (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Great Black-backed Gull is a rare winter visitor to the Atlantic coast and Strait of Gibraltar and had not been reported previously from the Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* AV/RB? (3+/5+, 1/1, 2/5)

- 2004 (04/29) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, pair, 14 May (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)  
 2004 (04/32) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, two males and a female, 12 August (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

These birds were in a public garden, in suitable breeding habitat but there is no proof that they bred. Their origin is unknown: they might have been escapes, though local cagebird dealers could not confirm this, or they might originate from the feral populations in Spain or Algeria. In the latter country, Ring-necked Parakeet (which originally escaped from captivity in the late 1980s) has established a feral population that is increasing in Algiers as well as spreading to other areas on the Mediterranean coast (Bendjoudi *et al.* 2005, Fellous *et al.* 2005).

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* WV, PM (-/-, 5/7, 1/3)

- 2005 (05/20) **South Eastern Sahara**, Tamlelt plain east of Bou Arfa, three adults, 1 February (O. Fontaine; Fig. 5)

Short-eared Owl is a rare passage migrant and winter visitor, with most previous records from coastal Atlantic regions between the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mauritanian border. There are still few records along the Mediterranean coast and even fewer inland, especially in desert areas. This record is thus remarkable.

**White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* BM, PM (-/-, 3/10+, 2/3)

- 2005 (05/23) **Haouz**, Marrakech, Hotel Ayoub, 3 June (A. Miller)  
 2005 (05/41) **Haouz**, Marrakech, Ménara Gardens, two, 7 June (S. D. Heath)

White-rumped Swift breeds in the Western High Atlas valleys above the village of Asni, but had never been observed previously in Marrakech city.

**African Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* RB/BM (-/-, 5/73+, 4/10+)

- 2004 (04/36a) **Saharan Atlas**, Bou Arfa, 5 May (A. Qninba, M. Thévenot, P. Bergier & P. Geniez)  
 2004 (04/36b) **Saharan Atlas**, between Bou Arfa and Figuig, pair with three fledged young and nest, 9 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)  
 2005 (05/21) **Saharan Atlas**, Bou Arfa, 18 August (O. Fontaine)  
 2006 (06/01) **Lower Draa**, Aouinet Tozkoz, at least three, 10 January (F. Verdonckt)

The above breeding record is the first in the region of Figuig since its discovery in 1928 by Heim de Balsac! The records of 5 May 2004 and 18 August 2005 were at the 'Hotel Climat du Maroc' in downtown Bou Arfa, whilst the record at Aouinet Torkoz is one of the northernmost in West Saharan Morocco. The species' status in Morocco was synthesised by Bergier (2007).

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* WV (-/-, 6/21, 1/3)

- 2005 (05/38) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, up to three, 8 December 2005–17 February 2006 (I. Cherkaoui)

Fourth record in the lower Moulouya Valley, and in exactly the same place where this rare winter

visitor was first recorded in Morocco (Brosset 1960).

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* AV (1?/1?, 1/1, 1/1)

2006 (06/25) Souss, Massa estuary, 17 April (C. Knox *et al.*)

Second confirmed sighting, after that in the Lower Loukos marshes on 3–5 January 1995 (Bergier *et al.* 2000). A third, probable record, at Merja Zerga in January 1989, was listed by Thévenot *et al.* (2003).

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* PM (-/-, 36/41+, 3/3)

2004 (04/12a) Tafilalt, Oued Ziz, Tamellaht salt pans, 27 March (P. Yésou)

2004 (04/12b) Tafilalt, Oued Ziz, Tamellaht salt pans, 28 March (P. Yésou)

2005 (05/39) South Eastern Sahara, Mengoub, adult, 9 March (O. Fontaine)

Previously considered only accidental in Morocco, the number of records has increased since the 1990s and it is now regarded as an uncommon but regular spring visitor, especially in the south-east, between late January and late April.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* AV/WV? (15/20+, 4/5, 1/1)

2004 (04/30) Western High Atlas, Tizi-n-Tichka, 28 February (J. de la Cruz *et al.*)

Second record in the High Atlas of this occasional winter visitor. The vast majority of records have been in northern Morocco with only three south of the Atlas.

**Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

1976 (76/01) High Moulouya, Midelt, 5 April (B. Bland *et al.*)

The first documented record of this Asian species in Morocco. Another, near El-Jadida on 22 September 1984, was not accepted due to the lack of details (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* MB (-/-, 0/0, 4/7+)

2004 (04/18) Tafilalt, Kasbah Derkaoua, 22 April (J. P. Delapré *et al.*)

2004 (04/35a) South Eastern Sahara, Mengoub, 6 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)

2004 (04/35b) South Eastern Sahara, Figuig, 3+, 8 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)

2006 (06/12) Tafilalt, gardens of Auberge 'Camping L'Oasis', Hassi Labied, Merzouga, 2–3 singing, 13 April (C. G. Knox *et al.*; Fig. 6)

MRBC has decided to consider records of Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida reiseri* as it has been split from Western Olivaceous Warbler *H. opaca*. In Morocco, *H. p. reiseri* appears to be a regular breeder in the south-east of the country, where it occurs in oases and *Tamarix*. The western limit of its breeding range is unknown, as well as any possible overlap with Western Olivaceous Warbler (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Breeding at Kasbah Derkaoua, near Merzouga, has already been reported (3–4 pairs late April 2000: Dally 2003), and other sightings have been reported there (one on 26 March 2004: A. Binns). Useful characters for identification (voice, behaviour, plumage and structure) were listed by Svensson (2001) and Ottosson *et al.* (2005).

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* AV/PM?

(13/33+, 0/0, 2/2)

2005 (05/16) Saharan Atlas, Bou Arfa, 4 May (O. Fontaine; Fig. 7)

2006 (06/22) Rharb, Larache, Lower Loukos marshes, 27 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)

First accepted records since the MRBC was created. The first one was on a date and at a site typical for this rare, but possibly regular, eastern migrant (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The second was far west of its normal migration route and had probably been driven off-course by strong easterly winds (Amezian *et al.* 2006); it is also interesting to note that five Icterine Warblers were seen at Gibraltar, Spain, on 14 May 2006.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* AV (1/1, 1/1, 3/3)

2005 (05/28) Haha, Tamrakht, Vallée du Paradis, 5 November (A. V. Harding *et al.*)

2005 (05/30) Souss, Souss estuary, 19 November (T. Kolaas; Fig. 8)

2005 (05/31) Tafilalt, Kasbah Derkaoua, 23 November (T. Kolaas)

An incredible series of three records in the same month, given that there were only two previous records (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The 5 November record comes from the same area as hosted one of

the previous records (Vallée du Paradis near Immouzer Ida Ou Tanane)! This influx is consistent with a large arrival observed in Europe during the same period, during which unprecedented numbers occurred (see, e.g., van den Berg & Haas 2005).

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* AV (7/7, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/22) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, second-summer male, 23 August (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Eighth record for Morocco, and the earliest. Previous sightings of this accidental autumn migrant were dated 10 October to 12 December (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

**Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/14) Tafilalt, Merzouga, female or first-winter, 30 March (P. Yésou)

First record of this shrike which breeds from south-east Europe to south-west Iran, and winters to south-west Arabia and sub-Saharan East Africa, west as far as Mali. There are very few records in North Africa: 2–3 in Libya, none in Tunisia and two Algeria, in the 19th century and April 1958 (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962, Isenmann *et al.* 2005, Isenmann & Moali 2000).

**Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/39) Souss, Massa estuary, 2 November (B. Bland *et al.*)

Another first record for Morocco. Isabelline Shrike breeds in Central Asia and winters mainly from north-west India to East Africa. In West Africa, it has been recorded in Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon, with a few sightings in Niger, Mali, Mauritania, northern Senegal, The Gambia and Gabon (Fry *et al.* 2000, Borrow & Demey 2001, Christensen *et al.* 2005). There is one record from the Canary Islands, on the unusual date of 12 July (Martín & Lorenzo 2001). It is accidental in Western Europe and even rarer in the Mediterranean region, with only three records in south-east France and Corsica (1981–2005), five in Spain (1994–2006) and nine in Italy (1988–2006) (Lefranc 2007). There are no previous records from any of the other Maghreb countries.

**Balearic Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator badius*

PM (-/-, 1/3, 2/2)

2006 (06/10) Tafilalt, Kasbah Derkaoua, adult, 3 April (A. B. van den Berg & B. Small)

2006 (06/11) Souss, Aoulouz, adult, 5 April (A. B. van den Berg)

The passage of this subspecies, which breeds in the Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia, is probably regular but under-recorded. It is not uncommon during spring migration in Algeria and Tunisia (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/24) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, male, 19 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

This bird was almost certainly an escapee from captivity.

**Records not accepted**

**Scaup** *Aythya marila* 2003 (03/31) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Oued Moulouya estuary, female, 21 December. **Goldeneye** 2004 *Bucephala clangula* (04/40) Tarfaya, Oued Chebeika, female, 11 April. **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* 2002 (02/39) Haouz, canal de rocade, 15 km south of Marrakech, two adults, 23 February. **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* 1942–52 (42-52/01) Saïs, Meknès area, several on various dates. **Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* 1989 (89/02) Souss, Inchaden, Oued Massa, adult, 27 April. **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* 2005 (05/06) Souss, 5 km north of Freiya, immature, 29 January. **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* 2003 (03/33) Lower Draa, between Goulimine and Tantan, 26–31 October. **Barbary Falcon** *Falco peregrinoides* 2004 (04/13) Tafilalt, Merzouga, adult, 29 March; 2004 (04/19) Western High Atlas, Tizi-n-Tichka, adult, 9 March; 2004 (04/20) Dadès-Draa, Oulad Driss, adult, 10 March; 2004 (04/21) Dadès-Draa, Barrage Tidri, adult, 14 March; 2004 (04/22) Haha, Tamri, adult, 27 April; 2005 (05/42) Souss, Oued Souss, two adults and one young, 29 November. **Andalusian Hemipode** *Turnix sylvaticus* 2005 (05/40) Doukkala, Jorf Lasfar, 16 March. **Baltic Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus* 2003 (03/25) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Beni Anzar, Nador, six adults, 11 January. **Arctic Tern** *Sterna*



*paradisaea* 2004 (04/28) Souss, Oued Souss estuary, adult and juvenile, 28 April. **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 2006 (06/18) Middle Draa, 20 km west of Akka, adult, 17 May. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor* 2006 (06/17) Haha, Atlantic coast between Tabayat and Cape Sim, 15+, 27 March–3 April; 2006 (06/21) Rharb, Larache, 3+, 27 May. **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* 2005 (05/11) Central Anti-Atlas, Tata, first-year female, 5 February. **Black-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla (flava) feldegg* 2005 (05/13) Tafilalt, Derkaoua, 11 April. **Balearic Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator badius* 2005 (05/45) Central Anti-Atlas, Taliouine, 19 March.

#### Captions to photos on opposite page

**Figure 2.** Male Blue-winged Teal / Sarcelle à ailes bleues *Anas discors*, Oualidia, 5 February 2005 (S. Werner)

**Figure 3.** Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau roussset *Tryngites subruficollis*, Ouarzazate, 24 April 2006 (J. Piette)

**Figure 4.** Long-billed Dowitcher / Bécassin à long bec *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Souss estuary, 2 December 2005 (T. Kolaas)

**Figure 5.** Short-eared Owl / Hibou des marais *Asio flammeus*, Tamlelt Plain, 1 February 2005 (O. Fontaine)

**Figure 6.** Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler / Hypolaïs pâle *Hypolaïs pallida*, Merzouga, 13 April 2006 (C. G. Knox)

**Figure 7.** Icterine Warbler / Hypolaïs icterine *Hypolaïs icterina*, Bouarfa, 4 May 2005 (O. Fontaine)

**Figure 8.** Yellow-browed Warbler / Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus*, 23 November 2005, Kasbah Derkaoua (T. Kolaas)

**Figure 9.** Typical landscape of south-east Morocco where Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* can be seen from mid February through April (P. Bergier)

Paysage typique du sud-est marocain (P. Bergier). Le Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina* y est observé en fin d'hiver – début de printemps.

**Figure 10.** Jbel Grouz, Saharan Atlas (P. Bergier). African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* was found nesting here in 2004.

Jbel Grouz, Atlas saharien (P. Bergier). L'Hirondelle isabelline *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* y a été trouvée nicheuse au printemps 2004.

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