

Birds observed in Essaouira, 2007-2011

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Introduction

The town of Essaouira is located on the Atlantic Coast of Morocco, some 170 km from Marrakech to the east, and a similar distance from Agadir to the south. It is visited regularly by birdwatchers, chiefly en route between the well-known coastal birding spots such as the estuary of the Oued Souss and the lagoons near Oualidia. Consequently there are numerous reports from short stop-overs in the town, but few longer visits (though see Dubois 2011). The species breeding on the offshore Mogador islands have also recently been surveyed (Qninba *et al.* 2011). The purpose of this paper is to collate the bird records I have accumulated in and around Essaouira during 13 visits between April 2007 and June 2011.

The town is distant from any other large centres of population, though there are nearby villages at Diabat (some 3 km from the town centre), Razoua (10 km) and Ounara (25 km inland). Most of the surrounding area is covered by uncultivated woodland and scrub, though there are planted areas of argan and olive trees on the inland side of the coastal scarp. The key features for bird-watching are the mouth of the Oued Ksob, which reaches the sea just to the south of the town, and a series of lakes to the east and north. These include a group of small lakes and temporary lagoons close to the eastern (inland) edge of the town, which vary greatly in extent according to rainfall. These are referred to below as the 'Town Lakes'. There is also a larger, permanent body of water just to the north of the town, close to a water treatment station. This lake (the 'North Lake') also varies in extent, sometimes flooding into the surrounding woodland, and there is usually several hectares of open water. The water treatment station comprises several large open ponds that are frequented by resting gulls and waterbirds. These water features attract a good diversity of waders and waterbirds at all seasons,

although generally in small numbers due to the limited area of habitat. The offshore Mogador Islands are famous as the site of a large breeding colony of Eleonora's Falcons (*Falco eleonora*), and can be observed by boat, but landing is not allowed without special permission.

In recent years, the area to the south of the town has undergone major development, including the construction of a golf course, hotels and villas on the edge of Diabat village. This has substantially altered the nature of the scrub and woodland between the Agadir road and the beach, involving extensive planting of thicker vegetation and creation of several small lakes, as well as irrigation across the golf course and villa gardens.

These changes near Diabat have also affected the area around the river estuary. Extensive patches of riverbank scrub that were good for migrant birds have been cleared, and a new bridge constructed over the Oued Ksob. New water treatment facilities built on the north bank of the estuary (called the 'Filtration Ponds' below) provide a series of shallow ponds and settling beds that are an attractive site for birds. I hope to assess the impacts of these changes, both positive and negative, during the next few years.

Dates of observations

I spent the following periods in Essaouira; a total of 108 days, of which the majority was during the winter (Nov-Jan, 43 days) or mid-summer (Jun-Aug, 23 days). Relatively little time was spent at the main migration seasons, which has affected the range of species recorded.

28 Mar – 3 Apr 2007; 18 – 28 May 2007; 10 – 20 Aug 2007; 11 – 21 Nov 2007; 1 – 9 May 2008; 13 – 22 Nov 2008; 7 – 17 May 2009; 11 – 18 Nov 2009; 26 – 31 Jul 2010; 24 Nov – 4 Dec 2010; 12 – 19 Jan 2011; 2 – 9 Mar 2011; 12 – 19 Jun 2011

Bird observations were made opportunistically during my earlier visits, but were more regular from July 2010 onwards. Much information was gathered alongside studies of breeding by Brown-throated Sand Martins (*Riparia paludicola*), and the coverage is therefore biased towards some habitats more than others. However, some observations were made at all the main birding spots on each of my visits. In June 2011, I noted all evidence of breeding activity (birds building or attending nests, carrying food, and recently-fledged juveniles), which is reported in the species list.

Habitats

In the following list, I have assigned the habitats in which I observed each bird species, according to this scheme:

- **Town (T):** Includes all the built-up areas within Essaouira itself, and the village of Diabat.
 - **Beach (B):** This covers the sandy beach that extends to the north and south of the town, as well as the rocky shore and small islands close to the port, and the Mogador islands (observed from a boat in Nov 2008) and any birds seen flying over the sea.
 - **Estuary and River (E):** The mouth of the river, from the inland edge of the beach to the limit of tidal flow east of Diabat, and the riverbed further inland, up to about 4 km from the sea.
 - **Lakes and Ponds (L):** All areas of open water, including the Town Ponds, the North Lake, small lakes in the golf course area, the water treatment station to the north of the town, and the filtration ponds on the north bank of the river estuary.
 - **Scrub (S):** Includes a wide variety of habitats with low bushes, river-bank thickets, grassland with scattered trees, and areas of largely bare ground between patches of woodland.
 - **Forest and woodland (F):** Areas dominated by trees, including native species such as Juniper, Argan (*Argania spinosa*) and Thuja (*Tetraclinis articulata*), as well as introduced species such as Eucalyptus. Most woodland is sparse, and the trees quite small (under 6 m), though there are some dense groves of mature Thuja (harbouring relatively few birds), and elsewhere clusters of Eucalyptus grow to a good height. There is not a clear distinction between the sparser areas of 'Forest' and the most wooded 'Scrub' categories.
- species seen by other observers during the same period (April 2007 to June 2011), chiefly from trip reports on www.go-south.org. This adds a further 24 species. It is unlikely that many regular resident species have been missed, but given the relative scarcity of observations at the peak migration seasons, there are probably many more migrants to be added to the full list. My experience, and that of Dubois (2011) shows that within a week's visit it is generally possible to record 70 or more species in and around Essaouira.
- **Little Grebe - Grèbe castagneux** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). Habitats: L. Abundant on all areas of non-river freshwater, present at all times of year, many pairs with chicks in June 2011.
 - **Cory's Shearwater - Puffin cendré** (*Calonectris diomedea*) Habitats: B. Observed from the town harbour, flying several hundred metres offshore, in windy conditions (June 2011).
 - **Cormorant - Grand Cormoran** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) Habitats: B,E,L. Resident, regularly on the river estuary and up to 1 km upstream (singly or in foraging groups of up to 8), at the port and on the offshore islands (many dozen birds), and occasionally small numbers on the Town Ponds and North Lake.
 - **Cattle Egret - Héron garde-boeufs** (*Bubulcus ibis*) Habitats: T,E,L,S. Present all year, usually small numbers (up to 10) in open areas within the town, at the Town Lakes, and in scrub woodland, often associated with cattle or camels. Breeding colony in dead trees at the North Lake in July 2010 (over 20 nests), but not breeding at that location in June 2011, after partial clearance of trees for firewood.
 - **Western Reef Heron - Aigrette des récifs** (*Egretta gularis*) Habitats: E. Single bird present on the river estuary on all my visits since May 2009, and seen by others from July 2007 (U. Berger in Bergier *et al* 2011). Consistently seen in a limited area near to the new Diabat road bridge, though moving up to three hundred metres up or downstream according to tide conditions. Though sometimes feeding close to Little Egrets and Spoonbills, the bird frequently defended its feeding area, by chasing Little Egrets.
 - **Little Egret - Aigrette garzette** (*Egretta garzetta*) Habitats: B,E,L. Resident, regularly present at all freshwater locations, and seen flying long distances over the town and forest, between lakes and river, in groups up to 30. Occurs in small numbers on the beach and harbour, foraging in the shallows.
 - **Grey Heron - Héron cendré** (*Ardea cinerea*) Habitats: B,E,L. Resident. Regular in small

Species List

In addition to my own records, totalling 120 species, I have assembled a list of additional

- numbers (up to 5) on the river and estuary. Seen occasionally at the North Lake, up to 10 birds. Present on the Mogador Islands in Nov 2008.
- **Spoonbill - Spatule blanche** (*Platalea leucorodia*) Habitats: E,L. Present in all months, frequently on the river estuary (up to 8 birds), and regularly on the North Lake (max 30 birds in June 2011) and Town Ponds.
 - **Greater Flamingo - Flamant rose** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) Habitats: L. A flock of 13 adults and one juvenile on the North Lake, June 2011.
 - **Glossy Ibis - Ibis falcinelle** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Habitats: L : Seen regularly in small numbers (max 17 birds, July 2010) on the Town Ponds, and in flooded woodland near to North Lake.
 - **Shelduck - Tadorne de Belon** (*Tadorna tadorna*) Habitats: L. Seen on North Lake in Nov 2010 (50 birds) and Jan 2011 (25 birds).
 - **Ruddy Shelduck - Tadorne casarca** (*Tadorna ferruginea*) Habitats: L. Single birds on the North Lake (Nov 2010) and Town Ponds (March 2011)
 - **Mallard - Canard colvert** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Habitats:L. Present on North Lake (up to ca 50 birds), and less regularly on the Town Ponds
 - **Gadwall - Canard chipeau** (*Anas strepera*) Habitats: L. ca 5 birds on North Lake, Jan 2011.
 - **Shoveler - Canard souchet** (*Anas clypeata*) Habitats: L. Large numbers on North Lake (up to 100 pairs, Jan 2011), and a single record on the Town Ponds (June 2011).
 - **Teal - Sarcelle d'hiver** (*Anas crecca*) Habitats : E,L. Present in small numbers during the winter months, on Town Ponds and North Lake (up to 10 birds), and occasional on Ksob river.
 - **White-Headed Duck - Erismature à tête blanche** (*Oxyura leucocephala*) Habitats: L. 5 birds on North Lake in Jan 2011, and one pair in Mar 2011.
 - **Marbled Duck - Sarcelle marbrée** (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) Habitats: L. Regular on Town Ponds, and in larger numbers on North Lake (max 40 birds, Mar 2011). Several pairs with chicks, June 2011.
 - **Pochard - Fuligule milouin** (*Aythya farina*) Habitats: L. 4 birds on North Lake, Mar 2011.
 - **Ferruginous Duck - Fuligule nyroca** (*Aythya nyroca*) Habitats: L. Small groups (up to 4) on North Lake and Town Ponds, June 2011.
 - **Sparrowhawk - Epervier d'Europe** (*Accipiter nisus*) Habitats:L,S,F. Single birds recorded occasionally in forest, wooded scrub and on the margins of the Town Ponds.
 - **Long-Legged Buzzard - Buse féroce** (*Buteo rufinus*) Habitats: L. One sighting, beside Town Ponds, Dec 2010.
 - **Osprey - Balbuzard pêcheur** (*Pandion haliaetus*) Habitats: E. Single bird foraging on estuary, Nov 2009.
 - **Kestrel - Faucon crécerelle** (*Falco tinnunculus*) Habitats: T,S,F. Regular in all months, in woodland and at the edge of the town. Nests and roosts consistently on the lighthouse and other buildings to the South of the town.
 - **Eleonora's Falcon - Faucon d'Éléonore** (*Falco eleonora*) Habitats: T,B,E,S,F. Abundant migrant, seen in all months between May and August. Breeds on the Mogador Islands, seen regularly flying above the town and in all surrounding habitats. Many birds return to roost on the islands at night, but a few roost along the river bank at Diabat, near an area where up to 20 birds regularly congregate during the middle of the day.
 - **Peregrine - Faucon pèlerin** (*Falco peregrinus*) Habitats: S,F. Adult bird seen in forest, Jan 2011. Further sightings of large falcons in more open woodland could not be definitely identified as *F. peregrinus*, *F. pelegrioides* or *F. biarmicus*.
 - **Lanner - Faucon lanier** (*Falco biarmicus*) Habitats: S. Single adult female flying above sand-dunes to the north of the town, July 2010.
 - **Barbary Partridge - Perdrix gabra** (*Alectoris barbara*) Habitats: S,F. Regular in all types of woodland, in groups up to 15 after breeding.
 - **Moorhen - Poule d'eau** (*Gallinula chloropus*) Habitats: L. Common on all areas of standing freshwater, many pairs with chicks in June 2011.
 - **Coot - Foulque macroule** (*Fulica atra*) Habitats: L. Common and abundant on all areas of standing freshwater, sometimes aggregating in large groups (up to 100 or more). Many with chicks in June 2011.
 - **Oystercatcher - Huitrier pie** (*Haematopus ostralegus*) Habitats: B. Observed on the Mogador Islands, Nov 2008.
 - **Stone curlew - Oedicnème criard** (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) Habitats: B,E,L,S. Single birds or pairs encountered in summer and winter in a

- variety of habitats, including riverbed, lake margins, shingle beach and light woodland.
- **Black-Winged Stilt - Echasse blanche** (*Himantopus himantopus*) Habitats: E,L. Present at all times of year, many dozen pairs territorial and breeding May to August on Town Ponds and North Lake. Occasionally observed feeding on the river estuary.
 - **Avocet - Avocette** (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) Habitats: E,L. Single birds on the river estuary (Mar 2007) and North Lake (Mar 2011). 4 birds on North Lake June, 2011.
 - **Ringed Plover - Grand Gravelot** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) Habitats: E,L. Periodically seen on the river estuary and dry margins of the Town Ponds, mostly in the summer months, though also seen in Jan and Mar 2011. Usually singly or small groups, often associating with larger groups of *Ch. dubius*.
 - **Little Ringed Plover - Petit Gravelot** (*Charadrius dubius*) Habitats: B,E,L. Common in many habitats in all months, including the beach, estuary, river bed several km inland, Town Ponds and North Lake. Often gather in large feeding groups (up to 100 birds on the Filtration Ponds by the river, Mar 2011). Breeding territories in June 2011. A single partial albino was seen consistently on the river near Diabat, on most visits from July 2010 to June 2011.
 - **Kentish Plover - Gravelot à collier interrompu** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) Habitats: L. A single bird among many *Ch. dubius* and *Ch. hiaticula* on the Filtration Ponds, Mar 2011.
 - **Grey Plover - Pluvier argenté** (*Pluvialis squatarola*). Habitats: L. Single record of a bird on the North Lake in June 2011, in non-breeding or juvenile plumage, with clear black axillaries.
 - **Turnstone - Tourneepierre à collier** (*Arenaria interpres*) Habitats: B,L. Regularly present in small groups (less than 10) on rocky shore beside the harbour. Observed on the Mogador Islands, Nov 2008. Also 6 birds on North Lake, June 2011.
 - **Sanderling - Bécasseau sanderling** (*Calidris alba*) Habitats: E,L. Present in small numbers in most years in May and Nov, at the river estuary and the Town Ponds. Often foraging in mixed groups with other small waders.
 - **Knot - Bécasseau maubèche** (*Calidris canuta*) Habitats: E. Recorded in Nov 2007 and Jan 2011.
 - **Curlew Sandpiper - Bécasseau cocorli** (*Calidris ferruginea*) Habitats: L. Single record of a bird at the Town Ponds (July 2010).
 - **Dunlin - Bécasseau variable** (*Calidris alpina*) Habitats: B,E,L. Present in small numbers on the estuary and lakes in all years, between Nov and May. One adult in breeding plumage at the Town Lakes, June 2011.
 - **Little stint - Bécasseau minute** (*Calidris minuta*) Habitats: E,L. Observed on the estuary and Town Lakes in Nov - Dec 2010, Mar 2011 and June 2011. Often feeding with Dunlin and Little Ringed Plover.
 - **Curlew - Courlis cendré** (*Numenius arquata*) Habitats: B. Recorded on the Mogador Islands (Nov 2008) and the river estuary (May 2009).
 - **Whimbrel - Courlis corlieu** (*Numenius phaeopus*) Habitats: B. On the Mogador Islands, Nov 2008.
 - **Black-Tailed Godwit - Barge à queue noire** (*Limosa limosa*) Habitats: E,L. 2 birds at the Town Ponds (Dec 2010), 5 at the North Lake (Mar 2011), and a single male in breeding plumage in June 2011.
 - **Redshank - Chevalier gambette** (*Tringa totanus*) Habitats: B,E,L. Recorded at all times of year, on the estuary, Town Ponds and North Lake. Usually singly or in very small groups, though several dozen present on the North Lake in June 2011.
 - **Greenshank - Chevalier aboyeur** (*Tringa nebularia*) Habitats: E,L. Recorded each winter, between Nov and Mar. Usually single or paired, on estuary, Town Ponds and the river, occurring further upstream than most waders.
 - **Common Sandpiper - Chevalier guignette** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) Habitats: E,L. Observed in all months, foraging singly along the river and estuary, and occasionally at the Town Ponds.
 - **Green Sandpiper - Chevalier culblanc** (*Tringa ochropus*) Habitats: E,L. Recorded on all visits since July 2010, singly or in pairs at the Town Ponds, North Lake and on the river, where they were seen further inland than other waders except Little Ringed Plover.
 - **Snipe - Bécassine des marais** (*Gallinago gallinago*) Habitats: L. Single birds occasionally flushed from the margins of the Town Ponds and North Lake.
 - **Little Gull - Mouette pygmée** (*Larus minutus*) Habitats: L. Single bird foraging at the Town Ponds, Jan 2011.

- **Black Headed Gull - Mouette rieuse** (*Larus ridibundus*) Habitats: T,B,E,L. Common at all times of year, around the harbour, on the beach and estuary, and on the inland lakes. Observed on the Mogador Islands, Nov 2008.
- **Yellow-Legged Gull - Goéland leucophée** (*Larus cachinnans*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S. One of the commonest birds of the area, ubiquitous in all habitats, often gathering to roost in very large flocks (several hundred birds) on the beach, estuary and riverbed.
- **Lesser Black-Backed Gull - Goéland brun** (*Larus fuscus*) Habitats: B,E. Occasionally seen in flocks of *L. cachinnans*, on the beach and estuary.
- **Gull-Billed Tern - Sterne hansel** (*Sterna nilotica*) Habitats: L. A group of 12 birds at the North Lake, June 2011.
- **Sandwich Tern - Sterne caugek** (*Sterna sandvicensis*) Habitats: B. Recorded foraging offshore, Nov 2007 and May 2008.
- **Common Tern - Sterne pierregarin** (*Sterna hirundo*) Habitats: B. Foraging near the harbour, Nov 2009.
- **Little Tern - Sterne naine** (*Sternula albifrons*) Habitats: B Foraging in the harbour, May 2008.
- **Black Tern - Guifette noire** (*Chlidonias niger*) Habitats: B,E. Foraging in the harbour, and the river estuary (May 2008).
- **Whiskered Tern - Guifette moustac** (*Chlidonias hybridus*) Habitats: B. Foraging in the harbour, May 2008.
- **Woodpigeon - Pigeon ramier** (*Columba palumbus*) Habitats: S,F. Infrequent records of single birds flying above forest, Apr 2007 and Mar 2011.
- **Rock Dove - Pigeon biset** (*Columbia livia*) Habitats: B,F. Sightings of single birds flying above the forest, and on the Mogador Islands, are probably *C. livia*, though there are also large flocks (up to 50 birds) of feral pigeons regularly seen in the town.
- **Collared Dove - Tourterelle turque** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) Habitats: T,B,E,S,F. Very common resident, recorded on all visits, in most habitats, including all parts of the town.
- **Turtle Dove - Tourterelle des bois** (*Streptopelia turtur*) Habitats: T,S,F. Recorded in the summer months (May to Aug), generally pairs in woodland, though also occurring in the town. Noticeably more abundant in some years (e.g. 2011) than others.
- **Little Owl - Chouette chevêche** (*Athene noctua*) Habitats: S. Single birds seen occasionally, in open scrub areas. Probable nest, June 2011.
- **Pallid Swift - Martinet pâle** (*Apus pallidus*) Habitats: T,L. Large flocks of swifts are very common in the town between Mar and Aug, where they nest on buildings. Most birds observed at close range showed clear features of *A. pallidus* rather than *A. apus*. Smaller flocks of swifts were also seen flying high above the town in Jan 2011, but could not be firmly identified. Observed foraging with swallows above dry lagoons at the Town Ponds, June 2011.
- **Swift - Martinet noir** (*Apus apus*) Habitats: T. A few dark individuals appeared to be more like *A. apus* than *A. pallidus*.
- **Kingfisher - Martin-pêcheur d'Europe** (*Alcedo atthis*) Habitats: E. Single birds seen on the river at Diabat, on 4 occasions.
- **Bee-eater - Guêpier d'Europe** (*Merops apiaster*) Habitats: E,S. A breeding colony in a riverside sand-bank near Diabat was occupied by up to 20 birds in May 2008. This site was not used in June 2011, when scattered nests were found several km further upstream. The birds foraged over open scrubland in groups up to 15 birds.
- **European Roller - Rollier d'Europe** (*Coracias garrulus*) Habitats: F. Single bird flying above forest by the Agadir road, some distance to the south, May 2008.
- **Hoopoe - Huppe fasciée** (*Upupa epops*) Habitats: S. Single record among bushes by the river estuary in Aug 2007.
- **Wryneck - Torcol fourmilier** (*Jynx torquilla*) Habitats: S. One bird in sparse scrub near the river, Nov 2008.
- **Crested Lark - Cochevis huppé** (*Galerida cristata*) Habitats: B,E,S,F. Regular in small numbers in most open habitats, and occasionally in woodland. Most birds observed closely showed characteristics of *G. cristata* rather than *G. theklae*. Several seen carrying food, June 2011.
- **Thekla Lark - Cochevis de Thékla** (*Galerida theklae*) Habitats: S. Several birds seen in riverine woodland in June 2011 had plumage and behaviour more like *G. theklae* than *G. cristata*.
- **Brown-Throated Sand Martin - Hirondelle paludicole** (*Riparia paludicola*) Habitats: B,E,L,S,F. Present in all months; uncommon

- except in the breeding season (Nov to Apr), when flocks are seen near to breeding colonies in river cliffs and other sandy banks. Flocks forage over open water (Town Ponds, Filtration Ponds, and lakes in the golf course area).
- **Red-Rumped Swallow - Hirondelette rousseline** (*Hirundo daurica*) Habitats: E,F. Pairs seen in two locations along the river and on the scarp to the east of the town (June 2011). One nest under construction.
 - **Barn Swallow - Hirondelette rustique** (*Hirundo rustica*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S,F. Recorded on all visits, and seen in all types of habitat. Usually small numbers, though larger flocks (several dozen birds) often gather to forage over open water, particularly at the Town Ponds.
 - **Rock Pipit - Pipit spioncelle** (*Anthus petrosus*) or **Water Pipit - Pipit maritime** (*Anthus spinoletta*) Habitats: E. Single birds present on the river at Diabat, Nov 2007, Nov 2010 and at the Filtration Ponds in Jan 2011.
 - **Meadow Pipit - Pipit farlouse** (*Anthus pratensis*) Habitats: S. A flock of about 10 birds in open grassy area on the top of the scarp to the south-east of the town, Jan 2011.
 - **White Wagtail - Bergeronette grise** (*Motacilla alba*) Habitats: T,B,E,L. Present at all times of year, sometimes gathering into feeding groups of up to 20 birds in winter, on the Filtration Ponds and river edge, but more usually singly or paired. In winter months, some individuals of the European race *M.a.alba* present alongside the Moroccan birds *M.a. subpersonata*. Though Dubois (2011) observed territorial behaviour by *M. a. alba* in Mar 2011, all the adults seen in June 2011 (some with juveniles) were *subpersonata*.
 - **Grey Wagtail - Bergeronette des ruisseaux** (*Motacilla cinerea*) Habitats: E,L. Observed regularly, though infrequently, along the river and at the Town Ponds, in each winter, and in May 2008.
 - **Robin - Rouge-gorge familier** (*Erithacus rubecula*) Habitats: T,S,F. Scarce but regular in each winter (Nov – Jan) and in Mar 2011. Single birds were observed in forest patches, and occasionally in roadside bushes at the edge of town.
 - **Black Redstart - Rougequeue noir** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) Habitats: T,E,S. Observed in each winter, usually single birds on buildings in the town, and along the river. One possible sighting of a female in June 2011.
 - **Moussier's Redstart - Rougequeue de Moussier** (*Phoenicurus moussieri*) Habitats: T,S,F. Recorded on all visits, in most types of scrub and forest, and in gardens on the edge of the town. Breeding in June 2011.
 - **Stonechat - Traquet pâtre** (*Saxicola torquata*) Habitats: T,E,S. Present in all visits between Nov and Mar. In some years among the most common winter birds in scrub near to the river; in other years scarce.
 - **Northern Wheatear - Traquet motteux** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) Habitats: S. Seen in Nov 2007 and Nov 2009 in scrub near to the river estuary.
 - **Black-Eared Wheatear - Traquet oreillard** (*Oenanthe hispanica*) Habitats: E,S. Regular in each summer (between May and Aug); pairs dispersed in scrub habitats and along the river. Recently fledged broods in Jun 2011.
 - **Blue Rock Thrush - Monticole bleu** (*Monticola solitarius*) Habitats: S. One record, on a cliff by the river, Nov 2009.
 - **Blackbird - Merle noir** (*Turdus merula*) Habitats: T,E,S,F. Present on all visits. Fairly common in most wooded situations, including low scrub, and in gardens.
 - **Song Thrush - Grive musicienne** (*Turdus philomelos*) Habitats: F. Seen once, in dense forest, Nov 2007.
 - **Fan-Tailed Warbler - Cisticole des joncs** (*Cisticola juncidis*) Habitats: S. Occasional records in mixed scrub, Jul 2010 and Jun 2011.
 - **Cetti's Warbler - Bouscarle de Cetti** (*Cettia cetti*) Habitats: E,S. Common in low scrub near to the river in Nov 2009 and Jul 2010, less abundant in Jun 2011.
 - **Western Olivaceous Warbler - Hypolais obscure** (*Hippolais opaca*) Habitats: E,S,F. Recorded occasionally in May 2008 and May 2009, and very common in thickets along the river in Jun 2011. Breeding in June 2011.
 - **Spectacled Warbler - Fauvette à lunettes** (*Sylvia conspicillata*) Habitats: E,S. Seen in bushes at the mouth of the estuary, and nearby scrub, May 2008 and Nov 2009.
 - **Blackcap - Fauvette à tête noire** (*Sylvia atricapilla*) Habitats: S,F. Locally common in patches of thick bushes along the river bank, Jan and Mar 2011.
 - **Sardinian Warbler - Fauvette mélanocéphale** (*Sylvia melanocephala*) Habitats: T,E,L,S,F. Very common in all seasons, in every type of habitat except the densest forest patches. Breeding in June 2011.

- **Willow Warbler - Pouillot fitis** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) Habitats: S,F. Recorded in May 2008, and a single bird in Jan 2011 at the margin of the Town Lakes.
 - **Chiffchaff - Pouillot véloce** (*Phylloscopus collybita*) Habitats: T,E,L,S,F. Present in all winter months (between Nov and Mar), often the most abundant bird in scrub and woodland habitats.
 - **Spotted Flycatcher - Gobemouches gris** (*Muscicapa striata*) Habitats: E,S,F. Regular in forest, and occasionally along river banks, in May 2008, Jul 2010 and June 2011.
 - **African Blue Tit - Mésange maghrébine** (*Cyanistes teneriffae*) Habitats: T,E,S,F. Regularly seen on most visits, locally common in patches of woodland, and in gardens at the edge of the town. Nesting in June 2011.
 - **Great Tit - Mésange charbonnière** (*Parus major*) Habitats: T,S,F. Common in woodland and gardens in all seasons. Recently-fledged juveniles in June 2011.
 - **Common Bulbul - Bulbul des jardins** (*Pycnonotus barbatus*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S,F. Ubiquitous and very common in all habitats. Often seen in small groups, up to 6 birds. Feeding young in June 2011.
 - **Black-Crowned Tchagra - Tchagra à tête noire** (*Tchagra senegala*) Habitats: S,F. Occasional records (usually calls) in thickets and woodland near to the river bank.
 - **Red-Backed Shrike - Pie-grièche écorcheur** (*Lanius collurio*) Habitats: S. Recorded once (May 2008) in scrub near river.
 - **Southern Grey Shrike - Pie-grièche méridionale** (*Lanius meridionalis*) Habitats: E,L,S,F. Widespread in scrub and all types of woodland, dispersed singly or in pairs. Feeding young in June 2011.
 - **Woodchat Shrike - Pie-grièche à tête rousse** (*Lanius senator*) Habitats: S. Recorded in all summer visits (Aug 2007, July 2010 and June 2011), in scrub on slopes above the river, including many pairs in an area of grassy scrub on the scarp to the south-east of Diabat, where birds were feeding young in June 2011.
 - **Spotless Starling - Etourneau unicolore** (*Sturnus unicolor*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S,F. Common in all habitats at all times of year. Gather in large numbers to roost in trees in the centre of the town, and flocks up to 50 seen in woodland and scrub.
 - **Common Raven - Grand Corbeau** (*Corvus corax*) Habitats: E. Four birds flying above Diabat, Nov 2009.
 - **House Sparrow - Moineau domestique** (*Passer domesticus*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S,F. Very common in the town and in all other habitats, often in flocks of several dozen birds. Nesting in June 2011.
 - **Spanish Sparrow - Moineau espagnol** (*Passer hispaniolensis*) Habitats: S,F. Recorded in small numbers in Nov 2009, Nov 2010 and Jan 2011, and in large noisy flocks along the river during Mar 2011.
 - **Chaffinch - Pinson des arbres** (*Fringilla coelebs*) Habitats: T,B,E,L,S,F. One of the commonest birds in all wooded habitats.
 - **Serin - Serin cini** (*Serinus serinus*) Habitats: T,E,L,S,F. Very common in woodland and scrub. Territorial behaviour evident from Jan, recently-fledged juveniles, June 2011.
 - **Greenfinch - Verdier** (*Carduelis chloris*) Habitats: E,S,F. Present on all visits, though much more abundant in some years than others. Widespread in most wooded habitats. Recently-fledged juveniles in June 2011.
 - **Goldfinch - Chardonneret** (*Carduelis carduelis*) Habitats: S,F. Sporadic occurrence in each winter (Nov 2007, 2009 and from Nov 2010 to Jan 2011), also present in June 2011.
 - **Linnet - Linotte mélodieuse** (*Carduelis cannabina*) Habitats: T,E,S. Seen regularly from Jan 2011 in open habitats and in flight over woodland. Evidence of breeding, June 2011.
 - **Corn Bunting - Bruant proyer** (*Miliaria calandra*) Habitats: S,F. Seen in two locations, river woodland in Mar 2011, and in an area of open grassy scrub on the scarp to the south-east of the town, where males were singing in June 2011.
 - **Cirl Bunting - Bruant zizi** (*Emberiza cirlus*) Habitats: S,F. Occasional records in woodland on either side of the river, Nov 2007, Dec 2010, Mar 2011 and June 2011.
 - **House Bunting - Bruant du Sahara** (*Emberiza sahari*) Habitats: T,B. Ubiquitous in the town at all seasons, rarely seen away from buildings.
- Additional Species, recorded by other observers between April 2007 and June 2011**
- **Black-necked Grebe - Grèbe à cou noir** (*Podiceps nigricollis*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)

- **Gannet - Fou de Bassan** (*Sula bassana*): Jul 2010 (H. Dufourny & V. Buchet, unpublished)
- **White Stork - Cigogne blanche** (*Ciconia ciconia*): Apr 2011 (D. Limpenny, unpublished)
- **Purple Heron - Heron pourpré** (*Ardea purpurea*): Apr 2008 (Gabb & Thomas 2008)
- **Black Kite - Milan noir** (*Milvus migrans*): Jul 2010 (H. Dufourny & V. Buchet, unpublished)
- **Lesser Kestrel - Faucon crécellerette** (*Falco naumanni*): Nov 2007 (Jones 2007), Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Collared Pratincole - Glaréole à collier** (*Glareola pratincola*): Apr 2008 (Gabb & Thomas 2008)
- **Purple Sandpiper – Bécasseau violet** (*Calidris maritima*): March 2008 (H. van Diek in Bergier et al. 2009)
- **American Golden Plover - Pluvier bronzé** (*Pluvialis dominica*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Ruff - Combattant varié** (*Philomachus pugnax*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Arctic skua - Labbe parasite** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Mediterranean Gull - Mouette mélanocéphale** (*Larus melanocephalus*): Apr 2008 (Gabb & Thomas 2008), Nov 2008 (Miller 2008), Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Iceland Gull - Goéland à ailes blanches** (*Larus glaucooides*): Mar 2008 (M. Hornman, P. Lampila et al. in Bergier et al. 2010)
- **Audouin's Gull - Goéland d'Audouin** (*Larus audouinii*): Nov 2007 (Jones 2007), Jul 2010 (R. Bonser, unpublished), Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Lesser Crested Tern - Sterne voyageuse** (*Sterna bengalensis*): Jul 2010 (R. Bonser, unpublished)
- **Cuckoo - Coucou gris** (*Cuculus canorus*): Apr 2011 (D. Limpenny, unpublished)
- **Great Spotted Cuckoo - Coucou-geai** (*Clamator glandarius*): Jul 2010 (H. Dufourny & V. Buchet, unpublished)
- **Tawny Owl - Chouette hulotte** (*Strix aluco*): Dec 2009 (Remirez 2009)
- **Rose-ringed Parakeet - Perruche à collier** (*Psittacula krameri*): Dec 2009 (J. Alvarez Remirez in Bergier et al. 2011)
- **Sand Martin - Hirondelle de rivage** (*Riparia riparia*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **House Martin - Hirondelle de fenêtre** (*Delichon urbica*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Yellow Wagtail - Bergeronette printanière** (*Motacilla flava*): Apr 2008 (Gabb & Thomas 2008), Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Bluethroat - Gorge bleue** (*Luscinia svecica*): Nov 2007 (Jones 2007)
- **Subalpine Warbler - Fauvette passerinette** (*Sylvia cantillans*): Mar 2011 (Dubois 2011)
- **Rose-coloured Starling - Martin roselin** (*Sturnus roseus*): Feb 2007 (P. Ferreira et al. in Bergier et al. 2008) and Apr 2010 (S. Havet & P.J. Vanmarcke)



House Bunting, Essaouira, 9 Mar 2011 (photo P.J. Dubois)

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