

Lawrence Gardella (per Mohamed Barghache). 2-5 April 2015

Oued Souss:

Andrea and I wanted a bird guide in Morocco, and we found one on Birding Pals, Mohamed Bargache. We arranged for him to meet us at our hotel in Agadir from which we went to Oued Souss the afternoon we arrived, Oued Massa the next day, then the semi-desert near Guelmim and finally up in the Atlas Mountains near Imlil and the Toubkag National Park. For some of the photos from the trip, go to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/132996029@N08/sets/> and select the Morocco album.

Mohamed lives in Massa, and he knows the specialty birds of Souss-Massa National Park extremely well and is very good at finding them.

In our one late afternoon at Oued Souss, we saw Barbary Partridge, Med Gull, Slender-billed Gull, the African form of Eurasian Magpie and both Sardinian and Subalpine Warbler. Unfortunately, the light was not good for photos. See the checklist for this afternoon's birding at <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22682700>

Oued Massa:

Oued Massa was even better than Oued Souss. Each of the sites we visited a Souss was great!

In the morning, we took a wonderful long walk from the parking lot to the beach. A group of Audouin's Gulls lingered on the flats of the delta near the ocean. Along the path itself, some of the highlights were the northern form of Black-crowned Tchagra, Moussier's Redstarts and more Barbary's Partridges. A bird I initially identified as a very-out-of-range Dusky Warbler also escaped my lens - but I decided I could not make a definite ID.

We went to some flooded fields where there were good numbers of Marbled Duck and Eurasian Spoonbill as well as a variety of shorebirds and herons. A stop at a stream failed to yield the expected Brown-throated Martins but did bring us better views of the Marbled Ducks, an Isabelline Wheatear and a Cirl Bunting. Later on, another larger stream also did not have any of the martins, but we did see and hear a Western Olivaceous Warbler and a number of other warblers.

Our main target at Oued Massa was the Northern Bald Ibis. Mohammed kept assuring us we would get to see them, and he was right. He spotted some ibis flying and figured out where we could see more and then figured out where we were likely to see some down on the ground. We ended up walking around right next to a group of more than 30.

Our last stop was for Eurasian Stone Curlews, and they were right where Mohammed expected them to be. See the following checklists from the sites visited during the day:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22663497>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22663396>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22662952>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22663325>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22663159>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22662871>

Semi-desert:

On our third day with Mohamed, Andrea and I rode almost four hours down the coast and then inland to Guelmim to see some semi-desert birds. We saw a great variety of larks (including Greater and Lesser Short-toed, Thekla and Crested, Temmick's and Desert Wheatear), but our favorite bird here was the beautiful Cream-colored Courser. We heard Fulvous Chatterer but could not locate it. We heard several Scrub Warblers but only had rather poor looks of them. Some other birds included Little Ringed Plover, Rock and Tree Pipit and White Wagtail. The ebird checklists:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22683337>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22682997>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22682857>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22682626>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22683916>

Toubkal:

On our fourth and last full day with bird guide Mohamed Bargache, we left from Agadir, headed past the old city walls at Taroudant and up to the high pass over the Atlas Mountains. Mist and heavy fog obscured the views all the way up to the highest point, but once we reached the Tizi n'Test pass the skies were clear and there were beautiful views in every direction. I prevailed on Mohamed to stop not too long after crossing the pass. We got out for the view, and I noticed a path and followed it. Before too long, we were hearing warbler chips. After a bit of scrambling, Andrea and I got to see a pair of Tristram's Warblers moving about in the low vegetation. From there we drove on until we reached the National Park Toubkal and started making more stops looking for birds. We saw our only Black Wheatear from the moving car but saw little on our first stops. When we reached kilometer marker 9 (which the bird finding guide recommends for Tristram's) we had a productive walk. After hearing a clock sound and tracking it down for my first-ever Common Cuckoo, I heard a woodpecker that I figured was Levillant's. It was, and we were able to track it down. After that success, we drove up to Imlil to be greeted by vistas of flowering almond trees with backdrops of snow-covered mountaintops. Another Levillant's Woodpecker and several

more birds in such a wonderful setting. I got a much better photo of a Great Spotted Woodpecker than of the Levillant's. Imlil was serene and wonderful, but we left after one night to head back to Marrakech from which we flew to Sevilla the next day. The checklists:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22719530>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22722750>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22722621>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22722691>

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22722561>