



Birdwatching Holidays in Spain, Morocco & more...

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BIRD HIGHLIGHTS

TOUR	DATES
Morocco	16th to 26th March 2010

Party: Rose Newsom ,Bill Newsom ,Rosemary Jackson, Dave Jackson ,Mike Lockyear ,Julie Lockyear, Keith Powrie, Ann Powrie ,Don Green ,Peter Soper, Mike Snook.

Tour Leader : Josele J. Saiz

Total Number of Species : 181

Weather & Sites:

Day 1 – 16.03.10	Cloudy and rainy Marrakesh – Setti Fatma - Marrakesh
Day 2 – 17.03.10	Nice, sunny Marrakesh - Oukaimeden
Day 3 – 18.03.10	Nice and sunny and superb weather. Marrakesh – BRWP – Toufliath – Amerzgane – Ouarzazate Reservoir - Boumalne
Day 4 – 19.03.10	Nice and Sunny Tagdilt Track – Imitier – Dades River
Day 5 – 20.03.10	Nice , sunny and chilly Boumalne – Todra Gorge – Ghris Oued - Merzouga
Day 6 – 21.03.10	Nice , sunny and warm Mfis – Rissany - Merzouga
Day 7 – 22.03.10	Nice ,sunny but some wind Erg Chebi – Derkaoua oued – Merzouga oases
Day 8 – 23.03.10	Cloudy and windy Merzouga – Igli – Boumalne Dades – Ouarzazate Reservoir
Day 9 – 24.03.10	Cloudy windy but warm Ouarzazate Reservoir – Ait Benhadou – Tazhart – Aoulouz - Agadir
Day 10 – 25.03.10	Cloudy and warm Souss Massa – Oued Souss - Agadir
Day 11 – 26.03.10	Sunny warm Tamri - Marrakesh

Money for conservation has gone to : **Desert Sparrow Project in Merzouga**

RECOMMENDED SIGNS:

Vista/Seen (X) Oida/Heard (H) Abundant (XXX) Common (XX) Rare (+) Juvenile (Juv) Immature (Inm)

0	Species	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>										x	
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			x					x			
3	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>											x
4	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus</i>			x					x	x	x	x
5	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>											x
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			x					x	x	x	x
7	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>								x	x	x	x
8	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	
9	Black Crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>						5	1				
10	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>										x	
11	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	x	x	x	x				x	xx	x	x
12	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>										1	
13	Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>											30+
14	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>									8	8	1
15	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>											x
16	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>						1		x	x		
17	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>								x	x		
18	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>									x		x
19	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>									1		
20	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>											3
21	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>										x	x
22	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>								24		3	
23	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>								2	1		
24	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		4	1						1	2	
25	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus harterti</i>				x				4	2		
26	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>									1		
27	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus punicus</i>			x					x			
28	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus cirtensis</i>		1	2	5+	1			1	2		
29	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				1							
30	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>									1		
31	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		1	9								
32	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
33	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus erlangeri</i>					1	1	1				
34	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus minor</i>					x	x					
35	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara spatzi</i>			2		4					3	2
36	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula Chloropus</i>										x	
37	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>										h	
38	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>										x	
39	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>										x	
40	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						x		x		x	
41	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>										x	
42	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus saharae</i>				7					5	x	
43	Cream-colored Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>				6							
44	Black Billed Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>										x	
45	Common Ring Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>								1	x	x	
46	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>							1	x	x		
47	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>								x	x	x	
48	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>									x	x	
49	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>										X	
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>										X	
51	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebulosa</i>								x	x	x	
52	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>										X	
53	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>										x	
54	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>						x	x		x	x	
55	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos Hypoleucos</i>										x	
56	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>										x	
57	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>									x	x	
58	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>									2	2	
59	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>										x	
60	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>											3
61	Western Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans michahellis</i>									x	x	x
62	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>										x	x
63	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>								x	x		
64	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>											x
65	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>									4		
66	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>										3	
67	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>										30	x
68	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>					85+						
69	Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>				14	30+						
70	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>				14+					4		
71	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
72	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			x								
73	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	x	x	x						1	x	

Bird of the tour

- Rose Newsom - **Levaillant Woodpecker**
- Bill Newsom - **Serin**
- Rosemary Jackson - **Cream-coloured Courser**
- Dave Jackson - **Egyptian Nightjar**
- Mike Lockyear - **Egyptian Nightjar**
- Julie Lockyear – **Desert Sparrow**
- Ann Powrie – **Crimson Winged Finch**
- Keith Powrie – **Crimson Winged Finch**
- Don Green – **Black-Crowned Tchagra**
- Peter Soper - **Cream-coloured Courser**
- Mike Snook – **Egyptian Nightjar**
- Josele J Saiz – **Desert Sparrow**

Moroccan Specialities in 16-26 March 2011

What we saw

Bald Ibis – More than 50 flying in Tamri area and the nearby coast.

Marbled Duck – Despite this year the best site for the specie the Lake of Merzouga was dry, we were lucky to find a group of 20 birds at Ouarzazate Reservoir and 3 at Souss Massa.

Long-legged Buzzard – Common in the “hammada” plains and other parts of southern Morocco.

Lanner Falcon – Excellent views of one individual perched on a cliff near Rissani. One adult hunting Trumpeter Finches at a drinking pool. We saw the falcon hunting and eating one of the finches few yards from us.

Barbary Partridge – Unpredictable where to find this bird, we were lucky to find two at the BRWP (‘Boletas’ Raptor Watch Point) and four at Todra Gorge, for some time.

Cream Coloured Courser – During our drive through the Tagdilt Track, six individuals close to our vehicles with good chances for photography.

Spotted Sandgrouse - Near Rissani, more than 85 individuals and no more than 20 metres from the group - a unique experience.

Crowned Sandgrouse – Same place as above, a small group of more than 30 individuals and at Tagdilt Track where 14 flew over the group.

Laughing Dove – Common in the Sous-Massa area as well as in the Erg Chebi oases.

Pharoah Eagle Owl – Superb views in daylight of one bird perched near Tinerhir.

Egyptian Nightjar – Thanks to our nomad in Oued Dekoua (now used by all companies) we enjoyed early superb morning views of an individual “looking like a stone”, roosting on the ground.

Little Swift - Common in Marrakesh and Agadir.

Blue-cheeked Bee Eater – Several individuals near Ouarzazate, as well as different groups before Erfoud.

Levaillant’s Woodpecker – This quiet woodpecker can remain perched for long periods. We had close views of a pair for at least 10 minutes before another male came to dispute the female.

Bar-tailed Lark – Common bird in the sandy areas of southern Morocco, with several close encounters to study them.

Desert Lark- Common in the rocky areas south of the Atlas and quite confident. Several pairs displaying.

Greater Hoopoe Lark – One of the stars of the Moroccan avifauna. We had superb views of several pairs displaying; the male sings and jumps up in the air, diving down in “Kamikaze” fashion, but always surviving for another dive. A real natural attraction.

Thick-billed Lark – Due to the cold February and the lack of rain in winter this nomadic bird was rare this year. We took a long time before we had a pair quietly walking in front of our vehicles. They were almost too close to photograph.

Horned Lark – I’ve seen an significant decrease of this species in the Atlas. After a snowy day we visited the Okaimeden ski resort, where just a small part of the road was open for vehicles. Around 15 individuals were trying to find something to eat on the open road.

Temminck’s Lark - Common in the “hammada stoney desert”. Elegant walker through the artemisa vegetation, the small stones and between the numerous plastic bags of the dirty “Plastdilt” track.

Plain Martin – We had good views of the last individuals breeding in the Sous Massa National Park. The colony holding more than 80 pairs was destroyed two years ago by the locals in what seems to be a “political-religious” decision to keep birders out of the area.

Common Bulbul – The commonest Moroccan speciality, spread across almost all habitats, except the alpine meadows. Noisy singer early in the morning at Agadir.

Streaked Scrub Warbler – Extremely shy and restless bird who likes run and jump on a sandy terrain covered by spiny vegetation. At the Grhis Oued and after a long, long time and perseverance, all of the group had good views of an individual who seemed to play ‘hide and seek’ with us.

Isabelline Warbler – Recently split from Western Olivaceous Warbler. We had a good number of them singing and displaying in the Sous Massa National Park.

Desert Olivaceous Warbler – This recently described species is slightly paler than the Isabelline warbler. We found three individuals in an oasis near the dunes at Erg Chebi.

African Desert Warbler - At Oued Derkaoua we had a good view of an individual circling and singing around the party.

Tristram's Warbler – At Todra Gorge we found 5 individuals within 100 metres with really close views, we thought they were moving to their breeding areas.

Moussier's Redstart – This 'jewel' of Morocco is common from Oukaimeden, at 2,600 mts above sea level, across to the Sous Massa, near Agadir, at just a few metres above sea level. Many enjoyable stops to study this beautiful creature.

White-crowned Wheatear – The commonest wheatear in the desert and stony desert areas of Morocco associated with urbanisation. Many chances to photograph this species well.

Seebohm's Wheatear- Recently split from the Northern Wheatear. We had an individual at Oukaimeden, surviving in just a small patch of land, free from snow, and sheltered by a wall.

Magreb Wheatear- Formally part of the Mourning Wheatear species. Before Tinerhir, we found an individual interacting with a Desert Wheatear.

Red-rumped Wheatear – Very common along the Tagdilt Track and hammada desert from Ouarzazate to Tinerhir. We recorded countless individuals on our visits to the proper habitats.

Desert Wheatear- Beautiful wheatear although not numerous is well spread in the desert areas. Several pairs in the Tagdilt Track, Ouarzazate Plains and Oued Derkaoua.

Fulvous Babbler . Shy bird and gregarious, you always see more than one bird. We had two groups in different oases near Erg Chebi first of 6 and the second of 5 difficult to scope them for a long time but we all had scope views.

African Blue Tit – Common in the Atlas and the river beds to the south of the High Atlas.

Black-crowned Tchagra – Scarce and localised along the Atlantic coast and the Sous Valley influence. One individual came to visit the group, stopping literally 1 metre away. We could not believe our eyes.

Brown-necked Raven – Confined to the desert, we had excellent views of several individuals, in the early morning and late in the day. We could appreciate that the "chocolate brown" colour is spread throughout the body, apart from the wings and not confined only to the neck.

Desert Sparrow - Very scarce in recent years . Boletas, with other associations, is promoting a project to help this species in Merzouga. The project has started testing the viability of nest boxes. We had a lovely pair in one of the local "auberges" trying to build a nest in a metallic pipe, a memorable moment for the party.

Trompeter Finch – Nomadic bird well spread in south Morocco good numbers of birds drinking in the oases and feeding in the oueds.

Crimson-winged Finch – A bunch of 50 individuals trying to find food along a few metres of 'snow free' road.

House Bunting – First and last speciality to see when you arrive/leave Morocco as is always in the Marrakesh airport. Very common in most habitats.

What we missed

Barbary Falcon – I could not find this species in the places I've been visiting for the last 5 years. One individual perched near Rissani, was mentioned as a Barbary Falcon by other groups. After a much study we found it had the loral features of *Falco peregrinus*, not of *Falco peregrinoides*, so we noted it as a Peregrine.

Houbara Bustard – Since our first year visiting Morocco, in 2003, we have spread the importance for birdwatchers to the local nomads and drivers. We are now sure that the wild specimens had disappeared in the area by the beginning of the 1990's.

The individuals you can see today in Merzouga in February/March are those realised from captivity in December to be hunted with falcons by the Arabian Kingdom's falconers. These Houbara Bustards never survive until the summer, being predated by foxes and other predators. If any of them try to breed, the net of local wardens working for the Arabians are paid 20€ for each Houbara Bustard egg. Although we will devote some time to searching for the Houbaras, just in case, We recommend you do not 'tick' it as a proper species.

Pictures by Josele J Saiz



