



Birdwatching Holidays in Spain, Morocco & more...

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BIRD HIGHLIGHTS

TOUR	DATES
Morocco	29th March to 6th April 2010

Party: Ruth Amias , David Townsend , Alan Edwards, Ena Edwards, Andy Rhodes, Alison Rhodes , Patrick Ross Galbraith , Margaret Ann G'both , Mike Smith , Dorothy Smith

Tour Leader : Josele J. Saiz

Total Number of Species : 190

Weather & Sites:

Day 1 – 29.03.10	Nice and warm Marrakesh airport – Atlas Mountains Okaimeden
Day 2 – 30.03.10	Nice, sunny Marrakesh - Oukaimeden
Day 3 – 31.03.10	Nice and warm Marrakesh – BRWP – Amerzgane – Ait Ourir- Ouarzazate Reservoir - Boumalne
Day 4 – 01.04.10	Nice and sunny Boumalne Dades- Tagdilt Track – Dades Gorge– Imitier
Day 5 – 02.04.10	Nice and hot Boumalne – Imitier- Rhis Oued – Rissani - Merzouga
Day 6 – 03.04.10	Nice clouds and sun Merzouga – Mfis – Café Yasmina
Day 7 – 04.03.10	Sand storm – not possible birding Merzouga – Oued Derkaoa – Merzouga Oasis
Day 8 – 05.04.10	Windy and some rain Merzouga – Merzouga Lake – Goulmine – Ouarzazate Reservoir
Day 9 – 06.04.10	Clouds and sun Ouarzazate Reservoir – Ouarzazate Plains – Tzin Zbeit – Aoulouz - Agadir
Day 10 – 07.04.10	Sunny and hot Souss Massa – Oued Souss - Agadir
Day 11 – 08.04.10	Sunny hot Tamri – Marrakesh airport

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		x	
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			x					x			
3	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus</i>			x						x	x	
4	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>											x
5	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					x			x	x	x	x
6	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>										3	
7	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			x					x	x	x	x
8	Squacco Heron	<i>Arderola ralloides</i>									2	x	
9	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x
10	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>										2	
11	Black Stork										2		
12	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	xx	xx	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
13	Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>											10+
14	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>									5	10+	
15	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>										25+	
16	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>										4	2
17	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>									1		
18	Common Teal										x		
19	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>								x	x		
20	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>									2		
21	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>									x		
22	Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>									28	6+	
23	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			x						1	1	
24	Black Kite	<i>Mivus Migrans</i>									x		
25	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>			x						1		
26	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus harterti</i>				3				x	x		
27	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>							x	x	x		x
28	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus punicus</i>	x		x								
29	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus cirtensis</i>	2	2	x	x	x			x	2		
30	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>									1		2
31	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	5		8					1	1		
32	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
33	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus erlangeri</i>			1		1						
34	Barbary Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinoides</i>						1			2		
35	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus minor</i>			1					1	1		
36	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara spatzi</i>											
37	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula Chloropus</i>			x								x
38	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>									x	x	x
39	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						x				x	x
40	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>										x	x
41	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus saharae</i>											10+
42	Cream-colored Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>			7	10+							
43	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>										50+	
44	Black Billed Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>										X	
45	Common Ring Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>									x	X	
46	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>								X			
47	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>								x	x	x	x
48	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>										X	
49	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>											
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>									x	x	x
51	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebulosa</i>									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								
55	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>										X	
56	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos Hypoleucos</i>										x	
57	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>									x		
58	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>										x	
59	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>										x	
60	Ruff	<i>Pilomachus punax</i>									x	x	
61	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>										x	7
62	Western Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans michahellis</i>									x	x	x
63	Slender billed Gull	<i>Larus Genei</i>										2	
64	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>										x	x
65	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>									x	x	
66	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>										x	
67	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>								x	x	x	
68	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>										2	2
69	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>										x	x
70	Wjiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>										x	
71	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>										2	
72	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>					110	8					
73	Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>					10	5					

74	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>					20+					15+		
75	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
76	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	x	x	x								x	x
77	Eurasian Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>											20+	3
78	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
79	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>							22	10+		5	x	x
80	Common Cuckoo		h	h	h									
81	Pharaoh Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>					1	1						
82	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua saharae</i>						1					3	
83	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>							1					
84	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymartis melba</i>												
85	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>									x			
86	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	x	x	x							x	x	x
87	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>										x	x	x
88	Common Kingfisher												2	
89	Blue-checked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>					10+	4			4			
90	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
91	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>									1			
92	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>					x	x	x			x	x	
93	Whryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>						1	2					
94	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	h				x	x						
95	Levaillant's Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis vaillantii</i>	2	1										
96	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cincturus arenicolor</i>						3	6	2	2	2		
97	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti payni</i>					4	2	2	2			2	
98	Greater Hoopoe Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>						4+	2	4	2	2		
99	Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>						1						
100	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea rubiginosa</i>					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
101	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata randonii</i>			x	x		x		x			x	x
	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata riggenbachi</i>									x			
102	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae aguirrei</i>					x	x					x	x
103	Sky Lark	<i>Alauda arvensis harterti</i>						x						
104	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	x		5+									
105	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila a bilopha</i>						xx	2					
106	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>					x	x	x				x	x
107	Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola mauretanic</i>											2	
108	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>						x					x	
109	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
110	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica rufula</i>	x	x	x	x	x						x	x
111	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	x					x			x	x	x	x
112	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>			x									x
	Moroccan wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba subersonata</i>					x					x		
113	Blue headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>						x		x			x	x
	Spanish Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flavalberiae</i>						8				x	x	
114	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			x			x						
115	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>							x	x				
116	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x
117	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	4	x										
118	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			3									
119	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1		h									
120	Rufous tailed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>											1	
121	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	6	10	1	2						1		
122	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula mauretanic</i>	x	x	x	x	x			x			x	x
123	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus bonapartei</i>	1	x										
124	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	h										1	x
125	Streaked Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta saharae</i>											1	x
126	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	h			h	h	h						1
127	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>												x
128	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>								1		1		1
129	Isabeline Warbler	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>						1	1					2
130	Desert Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida reiseri</i>					1						2	
131	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1			1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
132	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			h	1	x	x	x	x	x			
133	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita brehmii</i>											1	
134	W Bonellis Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonellii</i>					1	x	x	x	x	x		
135	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	x	x										
136	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia nana deserti</i>									2			
137	Greater Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>						x		x				
138	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis hortensis</i>					1							
139	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>					3		x	x	x	x		
140	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	1					x	x				x	x
141	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>							2					3
142	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola moroccana</i>						2						
143	European Pied Flightcatcher	<i>Ficedula hipoleuca</i>									x			
144	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1											
145	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	x	x	h	x	x				x		x	x

Bird of the tour

- Ruth Amias – **Bald Ibis**
- David Townsend , **Mousiers Redstart**
- Alan Edwards, **Pharoah Eagle Owl**
- Ena Edwards, **Hoopoe Lark**
- Andy Rhodes, **Crimson Winged Finch**
- Alison Rhodes , **Egyptian Nlghtjar**
- Patrick Ross Galbraith , - **Crimson-winged Finch**
- Margaret Ann G'bth , - **Roller**
- Mike Smith , **Egyptian Nightjar**
- Dorothy Smith – **Cream-coloured Courser**
- Josele J Saiz - **Thick -billed Lark**

Moroccan Specialities from 29 March to April 8 2011

What we saw

Bald Ibis – More than 10 birds walking and feeding in Tamri area and nearby along the coast.

Marbled Duck – Despite this year the best site for the species - the Lake of Merzouga - being dry, we were lucky to find a group of 28 birds in the Ouarzazate Reservoir and at least 6 more at Oued Souss

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

Lanner Falcon – Excellent views of one individual perch on the ground in Mfis area. A sub adult early morning hunting at The Tagdilt Track.

Barbary Falcon – One bird sitting on the ground near the Erg Chebi dunes - waiting for hunting.

Cream Coloured Courser – During the drive to Boumalne, 5 individuals were located not far from Ouarzazate. 2 individuals by the road after Ouarzazate with the best possible views.

Spotted Sandgrouse - Near Rissani more than 20 individuals walking no more than 20 metres from the group, and more than 100 others flew overhead singing, just before dusk - birdwatching poetry. By Erg Chebi 8 birds feeding on a oued.

Crowned Sandgrouse – Same place near Rissani - a small group of 10 individuals at close distance for half an hour in our scopes and at Mfis 5 more birds walked in front our vehicles.

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. Another majestic sandy bird in a hole along the same road.

Egyptian Nightjar – Thanks to our nomad in Oued Dekaooua (now used by all companies) we enjoyed superb early morning views of an individual walking in a Oued. These birds do not normally walk, so seeing them walking in this “handicapped” way is quite an experience.

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 – Before Oukaïmeden a couple perched on a tree for a while and feeding on the ground. One single bird was perched near a bridge in the Atlas.

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 to do it again. A real natural attraction.

Thick-Billed Lark – After a long search a bird flew away from near our vehicles. We were determined to relocate it and by a “miracle” we got it, a female was feeding on the ground and after we all had good scope views she disappeared in the distance.- As I said a miracle.

Horned Lark – I’ve seen and significant decrease of this species in the Atlas. After a snowy day we visited the Oukaïmeden ski resort, where just 15 individuals were trying to find something to eat on a snow free section of 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 “Plasdilt” track.

Plain Martin – We had good, but brief views of one of the last individuals breeding in the Sous Massa National Park. Also distant views of two birds feeding on the fields.

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

Streaked-Scrub Warbler – We found our bird in the Grhis Oued, but the two brief views were poor and he found shelter in the scrub and did not move while we were waiting. A second try near Goulmine, in strong wind, produce a bird seen well by three people, but the wind took him far away when he flew, to ...???? maybe next big twitch in UK.

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

Desert Olivaceous Warbler – This recently described species is easy to identify in the field as it is slightly paler than the Isabelline warbler. We found one bird near Amerzgane and another in the Ouarzazate Plains.

African Desert Warbler - We started the day with a sand storm but decided to explore the Oued Derkaoua. A good area for this warbler and we were lucky the wind dropped as we arrived and then saw two birds interacting - excellent views of both. Suddenly the wind started again and we had to return to the hotel and stay there all day.

Tristram's Warbler – At Dades Gorge we had 2 individuals displaying really close.

Moussier's Redstart – This jewel of Morocco is common from Oukaimeden at 2,600 metres above sea level right through 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 return with good photographs of this species.

Seebohm's Wheatear- Recently split from the Northern Wheatear. We had three individuals at Oukaimeden, one more at Ouarzazate Plains and one more at the Tagdilt Track.

Magreb Wheatear- Formally part of the Mourning Wheatear species. A scarce bird, but we have never failed to see it. One very curious bird at Amerzgane came to see the people disturbing the tranquillity of his territory. Before Tinerhir we found another pair in a nesting area.

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

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

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 was singing at Sous Massa and performed for us his sweet song from a palm tree, we left the area and he was still singing.

Brown-necked Raven – Confined to the desert, we had excellent views early in the morning and late in the day, of several individuals. We were able to appreciate that the "chocolate brown" colour is spread throughout the body, apart from the wings and not confined only to the neck. A big flock of more than 70 individuals flying at Erg Chebi

Desert Sparrow - Very scarce in recent years. Boletas, along with other associations is promoting a project to help the species in Merzouga. The project has started testing the viability of nest boxes for the species. The pair we found in the previous tour were not in the hole we thought to be a possible nesting spot (perhaps the female did not like the "HOUSE" despite it had a satellite dish). We went to see the pair trying to nest in an experimental nest box by Jazmina Auberge and we had excellent views.

Trumpeter Finch – Nomadic bird well spread in southern Morocco. Good numbers of birds drinking in the oases and feeding in the oueds.

Crimson-winged Finch – Two birds in our first visit to Oukaimeden and probably same two birds in our second visit. We were really lucky as we walked more than one hour in the best habitat and we did not find any more.

What we missed

Barbary Partridge – Seems to be impossible you can fail with this bird, but as it is unpredictable and very shy due to the overhunting, I was lucky to be the only one seeing three birds crossing the motorway near Agadir. Following the check list rules, it was not ticked.

Fulvous Babbler - Due to the sand storm we couldn't get to the favoured area for this species. A real shame, because Andy had big expectations to see it.

Houbara Bustard – Since our first year visiting Morocco, in 2003, we have sought the opinions of 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, I recommend you do not 'tick' it as a proper species.

Pictures by Mike Smith and Josele Saiz



