

**ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO MOROCCO**  
*Autumn Tour*

**21 – 28 October 2009**



Black-crowned Tchagra, Kasbah

© *Richard Coomber*

**Leaders: David Walsh and Richard Coomber**

## ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO MOROCCO

*Autumn Tour*  
21 – 28 October 2009

### A Personal Diary

#### Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October

Shortly after 5.30am, we met up at Gatwick to be greeted with the unwelcome news that the flight was delayed. Check-in itself was very quick and efficient so, bracing ourselves for an extended stay in the departure lounge, we settled down for a leisurely breakfast and a spot of shopping. However, the sudden replacement of 'delayed' with 'go to gate' on the board was the signal that our flight was, in fact, to take off on time after all. It transpired that the plane had needed a part which they suddenly discovered they already had at the airport!

Our Thomas Cook flight took off at 8.20am and was, surprisingly, only half full. After what for most of us was a second breakfast we relaxed, and we touched down ten minutes early at 10.35am, with Agadir at this stage an hour behind London. One of the beauties of this tour is to be in such a 'foreign' place after not much more than three hours. Hicham, our driver for the week, was there to greet us, and after obtaining our dirhams at the bureau de change, or via the ATM, we were on our way. The transfer time to our hotel was only 40 minutes driving, plus the time it took the leaders to buy copious quantities of water in the biggest supermarket I had ever seen in Morocco! En route to our hotel we noted a number of new buildings, plus three speed cameras; in general the standard of driving was impressive, in marked contrast to that I had seen on my first visit to the country many years ago. Hotel Anezi is situated at the northern end of Agadir, just a short walk from the beach. Most, if not quite all, of the rooms were prepared for us despite our early arrival; after leaving our bags in the rooms, all of which had sea views, we were soon enjoying a light lunch on the terrace. At this stage the weather was cloudy but warm.

There was time for a rest before, at 3pm, we departed for Oued Souss. This estuary is a very important stop-over for large numbers of migrating birds, and home for the winter to many others. Only 15 minutes after leaving the hotel, we were enjoying close views of 30 White Storks, a roosting group of 60 Grey Herons, 80 Black-winged Stilts and three Eurasian Spoonbills. In the trees we looked carefully at the Magpies, as they were of the local race with the ultra long tails and blue spot behind the eye.

The tide was in and, as a result, there were few waders at our first stop, so we drove to the car park near the Royal Palace. There was time to watch a Grey Wagtail and a group of European Serins drinking in the pond, as well as to note some fly-over Common Wood Pigeons, before we walked out to the water's edge and headed west towards the sea. This was an inspired move; it wasn't too muddy and our patient scanning through a group of Black-headed Gulls produced three Slender-billed and about 15 first-winter Mediterranean Gulls. The latter provided the first of the week's many interesting identification discussions. Nearby a Little Tern was unexpected amongst just three Common and 20 Sandwich Terns. Further away we spotted two Ruddy Shelducks as well as over 200 Greater Flamingos, both adults and immatures. There was also a good variety of waders, most of which were reassuringly familiar ones from home. In the scrub a Red-veined Darter was our first dragonfly tick, then we declared and returned to our base at 5.30pm, but not before I had chatted briefly to a school ecological group studying the estuary's birds.

As was to become the norm, Rashid looked after us splendidly in our first meeting in the bar, and doing the bird list we realised what a super start we had made in our first outing. At 7.30pm we moved to the restaurant where I was relieved to note that the price of a bottle of wine was the same as in 2008, after a 40% rise last year compared to 2007. On this, my seventh visit to Hotel Anezi, I was pleased to be remembered by so many familiar faces amongst the waiters, all of whom did their best to serve us well throughout the week.

## Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October

The fine weather meant that there were very few migrants in evidence in the hotel gardens, but those taking an early morning stroll found Common Bulbuls, Spotless Starlings and Sardinian Warblers; there was also some discussion as to whether the Common Blackbirds looked different from those in the UK. Breakfast consisted of omelettes, a selection of salads, cereals, various breads, jams, cheese and meat, whilst a Moroccan gentleman dressed in traditional costume was offering mint tea as an alternative to coffee.

We left at 8am, which was to become our standard departure time. Hicham took us to the top of the Kasbah, a hill to the north of Agadir overlooking the port. The road surface was top notch! We were somewhat taken aback to find several coach loads of tourists already at the top, by the sixteenth century building, presumably from the cruise ship we had spotted in the harbour. We briefly admired the view south over Agadir, noting our hotel, still the tallest building in the city, before leaving the masses behind and starting our walk down the road. The birding was very good with House Bunting, Thekla Lark, Moussier's Redstart, Black Wheatear and Blue Rock Thrush showing well to all. A little further on, a Southern Grey Shrike was discovered perching up nicely, whilst the impressive numbers of Painted Ladies were duly noted; they were to become a real feature of the week. After an hour or so, the driver picked us up and we explored an area further down. This proved to be an excellent decision. First, a covey of Barbary Partridges not only flew in, but then proceeded to walk around in the open for ages. Soon afterwards, a Black-crowned Tchagra was heard singing in front of us, so we changed position slightly to put the sun behind us, and gave the bird a little encouragement. It came straight in, and repeatedly showed right out in the open at a range of less than 10 metres! It really was an astonishing display by such an elusive species. After five minutes or so, a second bird came in, presumably a male, and it sang from the top of a bush, much to the joy of the photographers in particular!

After a comfort and coffee break back at the hotel, we set off up the coast road, passing through the 'banana village' of Aourir, continuing north past the village of Aghroud and then stopping to scan through one of many large flocks of gulls on the beaches. In fact, they were mainly Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged Gulls with only a few of the hoped-for Audouin's, but gull-watching soon stopped when, right in front of us, we saw a single Northern Bald Ibis feeding in the open. This target species was not only 'on the list', but also well-photographed – always a great relief for the leaders on the first day!

We arrived at Tamri in time for a pre-lunch walk. On the lagoon we found six Eurasian Spoonbills, seven Ruddy Shelducks, small numbers of Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler and several hundred Eurasian Coots. We were also delighted to find a Moroccan White Wagtail along the shoreline right in front of us, allowing us to note the distinctive head markings. Lesser Emperors and Broad Scarlets along the water's edge were the pick of the dragonflies, but we were unable to specifically identify the various lizards basking in the sunshine. Then it was time for the first of our picnics prepared by the driver: fresh bread, tuna, cheese, olives, tomatoes, bananas and pink grapefruits.

We took a second stroll towards the lagoon after lunch, with a Common Raven (our only one of the trip) flying across the valley, and a Sahara Bluetail damselfly seen at close range. The water level was higher than usual, so it was difficult to observe the inland part of the lagoon; in addition, the bushes were surprisingly quiet. So we declared fairly quickly and headed a little further along the road into Tamri village and the welcome shade of a rather up-market café overlooking the valley. Given the heat, cold drinks were more popular than coffee or mint tea. Our first Laughing Dove was spotted from our vantage point, before I learnt that my tactics for dishing out bios to local children needed some refinement!

Returning south, we stopped at a vantage point just beyond the lagoon and found that the wind had really picked up. This meant that, on the debit side, holding telescopes still was difficult, but on the credit side the number of Cory's Shearwaters and Northern Gannets offshore was impressive, with some birds at very close range. It was great to seawatch somewhere where the birds weren't just dots (unlike in Suffolk). We paused again a little further south, near Taghazout; having passed Cap Rhir we were now sheltered from the north-westerly and so conditions were easier. Common Scoter and Arctic Skua were added to the 'seabird' list and we had a view of a flying Northern Bald Ibis, but of most interest were two Lesser Crested Terns passing by at close range: a real bonus! We continued to enjoy the marvellous coastal scenery before arriving at the

hotel just in time to see a truly wonderful 6pm sunset to round off a magnificent first full day. Rowan gave us an insight into *Moussier* at the end of our evening meeting; *Audouin* and *Tristram* would follow later.

### **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October**

Some used scopes from the room balconies to ensure that Cory's Shearwater and Northern Gannet were on the day list, before we gathered for breakfast (with pancakes on offer today). We then headed south, Hicham taking us on the longer, but easier, inland route bypassing several busy towns. Soon we were back on the main road, now dualled in many places, and we stopped in the centre of the town of Sidi Bibi to buy bread, the rest of the lunch being already on board. At the far edge of the same town, we parked up at the open-fronted garage where I had found a Little Swift colony on previous visits. We enjoyed seeing the numerous nests and discussing how they were made. The birds themselves were very high in the sky, given the perfect weather, but some gave reasonable views, and the number (20+) was the most I'd ever counted. The garage owners were, as always, very proud of their birds, and we gave them a small reward for looking after them. Just down the road, our only Eurasian Hoopoe of the trip (on roadside wires) was the cause of an unscheduled stop, and we noted a small southerly movement of Barn Swallows; in general hirundines were in surprisingly short supply during the week.

We eventually turned west off the main road and, after a couple of minutes, the Massa valley hove into view – it really is an 'oasis' of green in an otherwise barren landscape. Exiting the north end of Massa town, a Little Owl appeared on a roadside wall as I had predicted, before we continued to a picturesque spot overlooking the river, with Arizona style cacti covering the semi-desert behind us, and small fields on the opposite side of the valley. We noted our first Marbled Ducks downriver and enjoyed a super fly-past of Glossy Ibises. Plain Martins looked as if they were going in and out of a nearby rocky cave, whilst a Swallowtail butterfly flew past at some speed. Cetti's Warblers and a Black-crowned Tchagra were heard singing across the valley, whilst a Common Kingfisher sped past along the river itself.

Having parked up at the reserve entrance, we donned sunhats and applied sun cream before walking along the sandy track towards the sea. The 'river' (which doesn't actually flow into the sea due to the sand bar across the mouth) was, at first, somewhat devoid of birds, but I was confident things would change and so they did, just a little further on. We counted over 100 Marbled Duck, and careful scanning in the water and along the far shore produced counts of 50 Mallard, 20 Northern Pintail, 10 Common Pochard and smaller numbers of Tufted Duck, Northern Shoveler and Common Teal. We were also delighted to locate four Ferruginous Ducks: this species is now becoming regular at Massa. Large numbers of Greater Flamingos and six Ruddy Shelducks added some colour, whilst the count of Eurasian Spoonbills rose to 15. Most of the waders were at the far end, near a shelter which we used as a hide. The pick of the smaller shorebirds were Green Sandpiper, Kentish Plover and Sanderling; a group of Ruff alongside both species of godwit were more distant, as were the Moroccan race Great Cormorants on a series of posts in the water. All the birds, however, were trumped by a family group of Egyptian Mongoose which ventured out of the far reeds and onto the mud; we had super views of a species I had never previously seen at this site. In the bushes by the track small birds were few and far between, but we noted 20 Linnets, our first Great Tit and numerous Chiffchaffs, as well as some flushed Barbary Partridges and a Peregrine Falcon overhead.

Although it was hot, the breeze meant that the walk back for lunch was pleasant enough. The only bird to stop us in our tracks was a real surprise – a subadult Tawny Eagle, identified by Richard with supporting evidence from the rest of us. It reminded us that raptor identification can be really difficult at times, even when the bird is relatively close.

We lunched in the welcome shade of some eucalyptus trees, and had the luxury of some picnic tables! Some of the group then chose to take a siesta, whilst others birded in the trees, enjoying excellent views of the North African race of Chaffinch in particular. Raptors continued to appear, with both Long-legged Buzzard and a juvenile Bonelli's Eagle seen. The butterfly watchers were also in luck, with Desert Babul Blue – identified post-tour from photos – a surprise amongst the expected Lang's Short-tailed Blue and African Grass Blue. We then drove a short way, before stopping for a better view of the Bonelli's Eagle and noting Blackcap and Greenfinch in the hedges.

We continued into the town and spent time in shade enjoying a drink with the locals; we noted that only men frequented the cafés now we were well away from the more touristy areas. Then we finished our birding at

the 'bridge' by the river. Its renovation into a causeway had increased the vehicle traffic considerably which, in turn, meant the area was less birdy than in recent years. Nevertheless, there were further ibis fly-pasts and we found two Laughing Doves. Spanish Terrapins were good value, another Sahara Bluetail the pick of the dragonflies and Speckled Wood a distinctively different colour from the UK race. Then it was back to base for another relatively early finish. At dinner we really enjoyed the various tagines on offer.

### **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October**

Today we headed south again, passports safely in hand, this time packed for a one-night stay away from Agadir. We noted the Little Swifts near their nests in Sidi Bibi en route, before pausing in Tiznit for a comfort stop and morning coffee (with biscuits). A false alarm for possible roadside ibises produced only Turkeys! Then we drove up from the plains into the Anti-atlas Mountains. A photo stop on the plateau, with a panoramic view of the cacti, red soil and rock formations was pleasant if birdless. We continued south, soon descending through the hairpins for our planned stop in a convenient pull-in for lunch. Immediately on arrival two Desert Larks were spotted right by the bus, and we were able to get spectacular views at close range. This was the first time I'd seen this species in the mountains, and it saved us having to search for them in the desert hills later in the day. I then listened intently and was delighted to locate a female Rock Bunting. It was incredibly difficult to spot but eventually we got our scopes on it and enjoyed prolonged views. Black Wheatears were common in this general area, but we were perhaps more interested in our first Barbary Ground Squirrels. We picnicked in any areas of shade we could find as it was, even though we were 'at altitude', still very hot.

We were overtaken on our descent by a driver clearly in a hurry and were somewhat amused to find him stopped by the police a little further on! Then we passed quickly through the police checkpoints and were soon in Guelmim, the 'Gateway to the Sahara'. I decided the best plan would be to find our hotel and check-in. Hotel Les Hommes Bleus was a new venue for me, and the hotel staff were very helpful. There was time for a rest before we met up again at 3pm ready to start our desert birding. We headed south-east of Guelmim for about five kilometres and turned off the main road onto a quieter one. Time for some specific tactics based on past experience. I asked Hicham to slow down, and asked the group to shout 'stop' if they spotted anything. This worked perfectly. Soon we were enjoying magnificent views of 15 Cream-coloured Coursers right by the road, in perfect light: what a start! The first of several Red-rumped and Desert Wheatears and Southern Grey Shrikes were also well-watched, before we headed on towards the village of Asrir, where a couple of White-crowned Wheatears were well-behaved once they had stopped hiding on the wrong side of walls or chimneys!

It was cooling down; nevertheless, I abandoned the idea of doing our usual walk along a wadi and, instead, we carried on scanning from the road. This proved another very wise decision. Two Lanner Falcons disappeared all too quickly, but parties of Black-bellied Sandgrouse were spotted in flight, and we followed one group until it landed, before moving the bus a little closer. Not only did this ensure that we got great views of them on the ground, it also put us nearer some other birds we had seen from a distance. First, two diminutive Bar-tailed Larks were found running along in typical fashion, then a dozen Thick-billed Larks were found on a ploughed area. We had magnificent views of both species for as long as we wanted. A group of over 20 Trumpeter Finches came in to drink along an irrigation channel, whilst the parties of Corn Buntings flying over calling were clearly heading to roost. Nearby, a Eurasian Sparrowhawk caused a real commotion amongst the Spanish Sparrows. Finally we decided to do a quick walk amongst some small bushes – more as practice for the following day than anything else, as it turned out.

As the sun set, it didn't take long to drive back to a bustling Guelmim for a shower, and we were soon enjoying the local brew or some red wine, having ordered a crate of the former and a couple of bottles of the latter from the local supermarket. The locals watched Real Madrid play out a goalless draw inside the bar whilst we tucked into our camel kebabs on the terrace. On the birding front we had, incredibly, already seen 10 of our 15 target species in the desert, and we retired expectantly to bed wondering if we would find all the others in the morning.

### **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October**

We decided to have breakfast earlier than originally planned today, in order to give ourselves at least a couple of hours in the desert before it really heated up. This meant we were away from the hotel soon after 7.30am. Our first proper stop was Oued Boukila, a new site for me, a dried out river bed about 12 km south-

west of Guelmim, with some relatively big bushes in the bottom of the wadi and smaller shrubs on either side. Scrub Warbler was our main target here; I had failed more often than not with this species in the past, but extensive research prior to this trip suggested that this place would be the best site: and so it proved. After a few minutes, I heard two call just in front of us, and over the next 15 minutes or so we were treated to several good if brief views, sometimes of birds perched up. This was a real triumph! Several Sand Rats were seen too (this species is a member of the gerbil family), whilst back by the road we located a Spectacled Warbler in a typically tiny bush and a Common Redstart in the wadi itself.

Next, we headed down the main Tan-Tan road to km 33 which was usually a safe bet for some of the sandy desert species, and we were in luck again. Two Greater Hoopoe Larks gave super views, we watched a group of Greater Short-toed Larks, another Thick-billed Lark was noted, but what proved to be our only Temminck's Lark of the trip was disappointingly flushed by a herd of goats before we'd all seen it. Given the heat we went back to the bus and drifted slowly down into an agricultural plain. Only a couple of kilometres down the road we stopped again with a plethora of birds on either side of us: we counted a total of 17 Cream-coloured Coursers and two more Greater Hoopoe Larks, whilst five Lesser Short-toed Larks contrasted with the numerous Greater Short-toeds; we tallied over 100 of the latter, most of which were predictably and sensibly in the shade of even the most minute bush. We turned round at km 38, and gave km 33 one more try: we had no luck with Temminck's, but the views of Bar-tailed and Greater Hoopoe Larks were simply stunning this time. In the general vicinity we noted four Long-legged Buzzards and three Lanner Falcons, the former often perched on the conveniently placed pylons, and increased the day-count of Red-rumped and Desert Wheatears to 10 and five respectively.

We declared for an early lunch, and drove to km 18 where there is a wonderful oasis by the name of Aouzeroualt. Hicham carefully parked in the shade, and we decided to look for birds before having our picnic. Before we'd gone anywhere, a small passerine appeared on the nearest palm tree: it was a Red-breasted Flycatcher, a real rarity (perhaps only the ninth for Morocco). They are often flighty and stick to the middle of a tree, but not this showy individual; it chose to follow us around! As elsewhere, passerine migrants were few and far between but we did find a European Pied Flycatcher amongst the numerous Chiffchaffs, and some of us finally managed to actually see, rather than just hear, a European Robin! Our first Orange-winged Dropwing was well-studied, and we also found yet another Sahara Bluetail. Painted Ladies were, again, absolutely everywhere!

After finishing our picnic and having a short break, we decided to try the remaining possible sites for Fulvous Babbler, but this was to prove our bogey bird for the desert and, as it turned out, we probably spent too long in our ultimately futile attempt to find it. At Oued Sayad, however, we did manage several more Laughing Doves as well as a Bath White and a superb reptile which, from photos, we later identified as Western Sahara Fringe-toed Lizard.

We decided to go back to our Guelmim hotel for a comfort break and an essential cold drink before heading north towards Agadir. The babbler disappointment couldn't mask our spectacular success in finding all but one of the desert goodies in such a short time. We had done extremely well, especially given the temperatures. The return journey was uneventful: we stopped in Tiznit as planned, and returned to Hotel Anezi shortly after 7pm to be greeted by Rashid in the bar and the usual crew in the restaurant.

### **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October**

As is traditional on this tour the day after the late return from the desert, we delayed our main departure this morning until 8.30am. Yet again there was wall-to-wall sunshine as we headed up via Aourir into the western fringes of the Atlas Mountains. We marvelled at the superb scenery, but decided to save our photo stops for later, instead heading straight for the furthest point and pausing only to place our lunch orders.

Tristram's Warbler was our main target species today. It is a widespread breeder in the hills above 1,000m, but I chose as always to look for it at my favoured spot with juniper bushes adjacent to the pines. Here it is easy to park the bus off the road and viewing conditions are relatively favourable. I explained that we might have to be patient, but in fact one called instantly the moment we arrived in position A. With a little encouragement, a female was coaxed in and we had stunning views at point blank range. After a minute or two, it flew up the slope, only to return with the more richly coloured male bird. We were able to enjoy them for ages, in good light, and I was really thrilled that the pair was so co-operative. Other birds were in short

supply here, although we did find a family group of Black Redstarts; disappointingly, our only views of Crossbill were of birds flying over calling.

With time on our side, we drifted down the road and soon made our first request photo stop. Here we jammed in on a passerine flock in the trees and found it contained another Tristram's Warbler as well as Great Tit, European Greenfinch and Common Chaffinch. We then headed down from the highest area for our tasty tagine lunch at a restaurant with a panoramic view over the mountains; we had a choice of chicken or lamb, and it made a welcome change from our picnics. The shop next door sold a fine selection of plates and tagine pots, whilst the magnificent flowers across the road were host to an array of butterflies including Long-tailed Blue, Red Admiral, Brimstone and Desert Orange Tip; the latter was a first for me. Laughing Dove was also noteworthy; this species continues to expand its range.

We dropped down into the aptly-named Paradise Valley, with its amazing rock formations, pools along the river bed and palm trees, providing stark contrast to the surrounding hills. We stopped in an area with welcome shade, and were delighted to be able to scope a selection of fine birds, with a male Cirl Bunting alongside a European Serin, and Blue Rock Thrush, Grey Wagtail and Black Wheatear also on offer. A small group of Eurasian Crag Martins were distant but distinctive. Down by the water the dragonflies were magnificent as always, with Epaulet Skimmer and three colourful species of dropwing: Red-veined, Violet and Orange-winged. Amazingly we found yet another Tristram's Warbler before enjoying a Barbary Ground Squirrel as it scurried along the cliffs.

Round the corner we did an emergency stop, but my alleged snake proved to be a stick! Then we ascended again, via more hairpins, to a beautifully positioned roadside stall selling a variety of gifts including ammonites. Some successful transactions were carried out whilst others made the most of the grandstand view back into the valley. Four House Buntings lined up by the shop entrance provided yet another point blank photo opportunity.

After an extended break at the hotel, with some of the group making use of the pool and others paddling in the sea itself, we headed back to Oued Sous. Yellow Wagtail and Meadow Pipit were spotted on the golf course over the wall to the right, before we set up our scopes on the first section of river which runs parallel to the road. This proved to be very productive. A European Golden Plover was unexpected, whilst Little Stint and Eurasian Curlew were also trip ticks, and we duly noted the colour-rings on two Black-tailed Godwits. Looking towards the sea we enjoyed the sight of a flock of Greater Flamingos flying as dusk fell.

With darkness approaching we headed back to the Royal Palace. The guards didn't seem too keen to let us past the barrier, but perseverance paid off and soon we were in position by the floodlights. The dusk sights and sounds included Stone-curlew, Green Sandpiper and Common Snipe. A Short-eared Owl flew in and landed low down in a nearby tree, silhouetted nicely for us before, out of nowhere, a Red-necked Nightjar appeared; it gave two flight views in the spotlight, allowing all of us to see the white markings. We quickly retreated to escape the mossies, but our return to the hotel was delayed for a few minutes whilst the local guards were reprimanded by a senior soldier for having let us past the barrier. Hicham assured us there was nothing to worry about, and it wasn't long before we were back at base, doing the bird list and enjoying our dinner. Our day had provided a splendid contrast to the desert of the two days before.

## **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October**

We headed south at the usual time, driving for about an hour before turning inland for about 10 minutes to a desert area with an irrigation channel flowing through it. Just before arriving at our destination we stopped to study a Southern Grey Shrike, and talked through the possibilities about its subspecific race; on the last day of any trip there is often more time for this sort of discussion as most 'targets' have already been met! At the channel itself a distant perched raptor started – and (correctly) finished! – as a Long-legged Buzzard, whilst two migrating Marsh Harriers seemed a little out of place in the desert. A male Desert Wheatear was well-watched, but we were surprised by the paucity of Black-bellied Sandgrouse, with just four seen in flight.

We then drove onwards to a viewpoint overlooking a reservoir. The vista was excellent, and we enjoyed the mint tea produced by an elderly Moroccan gentleman as we surveyed the scene; we were even offered unsweetened tea as an alternative, a first for me! The birds here were predictable at first, with large numbers of Great Cormorants and a perched Osprey on an island, and a close Blue Rock Thrush, but three Little

Swifts were a surprise, before a magnificent juvenile Bonelli's Eagle stole the show with a close fly-past. It was the first of an amazing four sightings of this species during the day. Eurasian Crag Martins were seen as we departed in the bus to make the short journey to the southern end of Massa. Up till now it had been mercifully cloudy and only 'warm', but it was beginning to hot up a little.

We turned off by a football pitch along a fine new road and stopped in shade by the 'river'; it doesn't actually flow here for most of the time, and our aim was to find places with remaining water. A 200 metre stretch here had muddy fringes by the reeds and proved very birdy. In the water itself we found a Common Teal, whilst on the mud we had a close view of a male Yellow Wagtail of the Spanish race. Two resplendent Plain Tiger butterflies were a bonus, as was a perched Black-crowned Tchagra; the ones on the Kasbah seemed a long time ago! We persevered by the water and were thrilled to find a Bluethroat skulking on the reed edge; eventually it (or another) showed well to all. Four Little Ringed Plovers were the pick of a small selection of waders. Richard was delighted when a small boy stopped throwing stones at the birds when he was asked to, and I had to translate this into French and relay the message to the boy's mother, who was very proud!

We had lunch in the shade of some eucalyptus trees about two kilometres further downstream, although to get there we had to go back up to the town, along the road and down a bumpy track with unexpected roadworks. We walked the last couple of hundred metres through the fields which were filled with wagtails, pipits, Corn Buntings, Zitting Cisticolas and several Northern Wheatears, but irritatingly all the larks were Thekla. After lunch we paused to observe a party of Alpine Swifts – incredibly high up, but the white bellies were clearly visible – before trying the fields again. This time our main quarry appeared: Crested Lark, our ninth member of this family. The race here is long-billed, and this structural difference (from Thekla) was obvious, but plumage differences weren't so easy to tell. As I wrote in last year's report, "it is intriguing why Crested Lark appears to be restricted to certain habitats in southern Morocco when Thekla is so catholic in its tastes."

We then drove a short way to the next river crossing point, the bridge we had been to earlier in the week, but this time we carried on across it along a fine new road and went as far as a village named Sidi Ouassay by the sea. I was hoping we might bump into Northern Bald Ibises here as it is a fairly reliable site, but we weren't in luck. However, a short seawatch was worthwhile as we saw one Royal and two Lesser Crested Terns fairly close inshore as well as yet more Northern Gannets and Cory's Shearwaters. On the beach itself were six Sanderling and two Kentish Plovers. We returned across the seemingly birdless desert area and decided to give the bridge one last look. We had good looks at a number of Plain Martins as well as more Glossy Ibises, a Marsh Harrier, a Laughing Dove and (for some) a Kingfisher.

Declaring early, we headed back, hoping to return to the hotel in time for a swim, but the road near the airport was closed without warning, so we had to brave the back streets of Ait Melloul. A flock of 60 Cattle Egrets going to roost was nice but little compensation for those dipping out on the swim. We weren't actually much later back than expected, and after doing the list we washed down our final dinner in the restaurant with some more of the President's red wine courtesy of *Ornitholidays*, and duly tipped the waiter who had looked after us all week.

### **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October**

We were very fortunate today that the timing of our mid-afternoon flight allowed us to do some last morning birding, return to our hotel to finish packing and have lunch, and still get home in the UK at a reasonable hour. Perfect! So at 8am we returned to Oued Souss and, on this occasion, walked the whole stretch from the road towards the sea. We didn't make much progress at first, because there were so many birds on the first piece of river. These included large numbers of common waders amongst which we located a Northern Lapwing, which was most unexpected. In addition there was an astonishing selection of colour-ringed and number-ringed birds: Slender-billed and Mediterranean Gulls, Black-tailed Godwits and Eurasian Spoonbills. We did our best to note down the letters and/or colour combinations.

Further down the estuary we found the statutory two Ospreys as well as a Common Shelduck: my second Moroccan tick of the day! We had our last look at the grunting Greater Flamingos but, again, we noted the paucity of plovers and terns. Some of the group decided to turn back, and they were rewarded with their second Peregrine Falcon of the day (following one at breakfast). The rest of us carried on for a short while

before heading back towards the main track. By the drainage ditch we managed to actually see both Cetti's and European Reed Warblers as well as our final Moussier's Redstart. We had one more target, African Blue Tit, and two along the road performed splendidly in the treetops, bang on cue. Then we returned towards the bus, followed on a buggy by the same chief guard as on our previous visit; he clearly wanted to ensure that, literally, we kept on the straight and narrow.

We left Souss at 10.15am and returned to the hotel, which gave us an hour's packing time before an early lunch. Some lucky members of the group were thrilled to see five Northern Bald Ibises flying north from their balconies! Then it was time to bid farewell to the waiters, porters and other staff with whom we'd spent the week and head for the airport. Just before we left, I publicly thanked Hicham for his splendid driving and help with lunch and gave him a well-deserved tip. As planned, we arrived at check-in before the main package holidaymakers and judiciously chose the queue where the airport official wasn't bothering to check the weight of our hand luggage. Then we made for the departure lounge, where the new layout was much improved, allowing us to dispose of our dirhams on drinks whilst spending hard currency in the other shops.

The flight itself took off and landed early. Baggage collection at Gatwick was painless, and we bade each other farewell at the end of a thoroughly enjoyable week in which, despite the unexpectedly high temperatures, we had seen a wide variety of birds and other wildlife and witnessed local Moroccans go about their daily business. As always, I am looking forward to returning!

### **Acknowledgements**

My first visit to Morocco (in 1995) seems a long time ago now. Gone are the days of wondering whether the driver would turn up on time, if at all, proceeding through endless checkpoints in the desert, and travelling on poor surfaces. The ground arrangements went without a hitch. Hicham, our driver, was punctual and courteous; he drove safely, sorted out our lunches and answered all our questions. Last but not least, thanks to everyone in the group for your perseverance in the heat, for finding so many good birds, for being interested in the wildlife in general, and for your great company. Special thanks to Steve Chastell and Jane Storey for allowing us to include some of their photos in this report.

David Walsh  
Ornitholidays  
29 Straight Mile  
Romsey  
Hants  
SO51 9BB  
Tel: 01794 519445  
Email: [info@ornitholidays.co.uk](mailto:info@ornitholidays.co.uk)

December 2009

## Itinerary and Weather

- 21<sup>st</sup> October    am flight from London Gatwick to Agadir;  
Lunch at Hotel Anezi;  
pm Oued Souss.  
Cloudy am, sunny pm, max 23°C.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> October    am Agadir Kasbah, then north to Aghroud (beach);  
pm Tamri lagoon (lunch); tea in village to north, then seawatches from cliffs to south and  
from Taghazout.  
Hot and sunny am, windy pm, max 26°C.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> October    am Sidi Bibi, Oued Massa reserve (lunch);  
pm hamlet outside reserve, tea in village, Massa 'bridge'.  
Hot and sunny, max 27°C.
- 24<sup>th</sup> October    am Agadir (via coffee in Tiznit) to Anti-Atlas mountains (lunch);  
pm desert south-east of Guelmim near Asrir;  
overnight Hotel Les Hommes Bleus in Guelmim.  
Very hot and sunny, max 36°C.
- 25<sup>th</sup> October    am desert south-west of Guelmim along Tan-Tan road; significant stops at Oued Boukila  
(km 12) and km 33, driving as far as km 38;  
pm Aouzeroualt oasis (lunch); tea stops in Guelmim and Tiznit; return to Agadir.  
Very hot and sunny, max 35°C.
- 26<sup>th</sup> October    am road to Imouzzer in Atlas mountains (restaurant lunch);  
pm Paradise Valley; Oued Souss (dusk).  
Very hot and sunny, max 35°C.
- 27<sup>th</sup> October    am irrigation canal; Barrage Youssef-ben-Tachfine viewpoint;  
pm three 'bridges' in Massa including Café de la Poste bridge (lunch), plus visit across  
desert to Sidi Ouassay on the sea.  
Sunny periods, max 27°C.
- 28<sup>th</sup> October    am Oued Souss; lunch at Hotel Anezi;  
pm transfer to airport for flight from Agadir to London Gatwick.

**CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE TOUR**

<b>No of days recorded</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Abundance scale</b>
1 2h means seen on 1day and heard on 2 other days	A = Agadir (north to Tamri) I = Imouzzar road S = Oued Souss M = Oued Massa & Barrage G = Guelmim & Anti-Atlas	Maximum seen (on one day) 1 = 1-4 2 = 5-9 3 = 10-99 4 = 100-999 5 = 1,000+

<b>Species</b>	<b>No of days recorded</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Abundance scale</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
Little Grebe	3	A, M	3	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Cory's Shearwater	6	A, M	4	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>
Northern Gannet	6	A, S, M	3	<i>Sula bassana</i>
Great Cormorant <sup>1</sup>	7	A, S, M	3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Grey Heron	6	A, S, M	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Little Egret	6	A, S, M	3	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Cattle Egret	3	M, G	3	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
White Stork	2	S	3	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Northern Bald Ibis	2	A	2	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>
Glossy Ibis	2	M	3	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	5	A, S, M	3	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Greater Flamingo	4	S, M	4	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
Common Shelduck	1	S	1	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	3	A, S, M	2	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Common Teal	2	M	1	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Mallard	2	A, M	3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Pintail	2	A, M	3	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Northern Shoveler	2	A, M	3	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Marbled Duck	1	M	4	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>
Common Pochard	1	M	3	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	1	M	1	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	1	M	2	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Common Scoter	1	A	1	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Osprey	5	A, S, M	1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Marsh Harrier	2	A, M	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1	G	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	3	M, G	1	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Tawny Eagle	1	M	1	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	2	M	1	<i>Aquila fasciatus</i>
Common Kestrel	8	A, S, M, G	2	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lanner Falcon <sup>2</sup>	2	G	1	<i>Falco biarmicus erlangeri</i>
Peregrine Falcon <sup>3</sup>	2	A, S, M	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Barbary Partridge	2	A, M	3	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>
Common Moorhen	4	A, S, M	2	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	3	A, M	4	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	2	S	3	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	4	S, M	3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Stone-curlew	1	S	1	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Cream-coloured Courser	2	G	3	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
Northern Lapwing	1	S	1	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
European Golden Plover	1	S	1	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Grey Plover	3	S	3	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Common Ringed Plover	3	S, M	3	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	1	M	1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	2	M	1	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Common Snipe	1	S	1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	3	S, M	3	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	4	S, M	3	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>

Whimbrel	1	S	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	2	S	3	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Common Redshank	4	S, M	3	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	3	S, M	2	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Green Sandpiper	3	1h S, M	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Common Sandpiper	6	A, S, M	1	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
Red Knot	4	S, M	3	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Sanderling	2	M	2	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Little Stint	1	S	1	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Dunlin	3	S, M	3	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Ruff	1	M	1	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Arctic Skua	1	A	1	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Audouin's Gull	3	A, S, M	4	<i>Larus audouinii</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	7	A, S, M	4	<i>Larus cachinnans michahellis</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	7	A, S, M	5	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Black-headed Gull	5	S, M	4	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Slender-billed Gull	2	S	1	<i>Larus genei</i>
Mediterranean Gull	3	S	3	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
Royal Tern	1	M	1	<i>Sterna maxima</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	2	A, M	1	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
Sandwich Tern	4	A, S, M	3	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Common Tern	1	S	1	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Little Tern	1	S	1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	2	M, G	3	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
Rock Dove	2	A, G	2	<i>Columba livia</i>
Feral Pigeon	8	A, S, M, G	4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	2	S	2	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	7	A, S, M, G, I	4	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Laughing Dove	5	A, M, G, I	2	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Little Owl	2	M	1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Short-eared Owl	1	S	1	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Red-necked Nightjar	1	S	1	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>
Alpine Swift	1	M	3	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Little Swift	3	M	3	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Common Kingfisher	3	S, M	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	1	M	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Greater Hoopoe Lark	1	G	1	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>
Bar-tailed Lark	2	G	1	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>
Desert Lark	1	G	1	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>
Thick-billed Lark	2	G	3	<i>Rhamphocoris clotbey</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	1	G	4	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Lesser Short-toed Lark	1	G	2	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
Temminck's Lark	1	G	1	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>
Crested Lark	1	M	1	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Thekla Lark	8	A, S, M, G, I	3	<i>Galerida theklae</i>
Plain Martin	2	M	3	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
Barn Swallow	5	M, S, G	3	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Eurasian Crag Martin	2	M, I	3	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Meadow Pipit	3	S, G	1	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
White Wagtail <sup>4</sup>	8	A, S, M, G, I	4	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>
Moroccan White Wagtail	1	A	1	<i>Motacilla alba subpersonata</i>
Yellow Wagtail <sup>5</sup>	3	M, G	1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Grey Wagtail	4	A, S, M, I	1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Common Bulbul	8	A, S, M, G, I	4	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Common Blackbird <sup>6</sup>	8	A, M, G, I	3	<i>Turdus merula mauritanicus</i>
Blue Rock Thrush	4	A, M, I	1	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Bluethroat	1	M	1	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
European Robin	2	3h A, S, M, G, I	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Black Redstart	1	I	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>
Common Redstart	1	G	1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Moussier's Redstart	7	A, S, M, G, I	3	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>
Common Stonechat	8	A, S, M, G, I	3	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
White-crowned Wheatear	1	G	1	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>

Black Wheatear	4	A, G, I	2	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>
Northern Wheatear	4	A, M, G	2	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Red-rumped Wheatear	2	G	3	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>
Desert Wheatear	3	M, G	2	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	G	1	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
European Pied Flycatcher	2	M, G	1	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Zitting Cisticola	4	A, S, M	2	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Scrub Warbler	1	G	1	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>
Cetti's Warbler	1	3h A, S, M, G	1	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
European Reed Warbler	3	1h A, S, M	1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Chiffchaff	7	A, S, M, G, I	3	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Blackcap	4	M, G, I	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Tristram's Warbler	1	I	2	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>
Spectacled Warbler	1	G	1	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
Sardinian Warbler	7	A, S, M, G, I	3	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Great Tit	3	M, I	1	<i>Parus major</i>
*African Blue Tit <sup>7</sup>	2	S, M	1	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>
Southern Grey Shrike* <sup>8</sup>	5	A, M, G	3	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	2	1h A, M	1	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>
Common Magpie <sup>9</sup>	6	A, S, M	3	<i>Pica pica mauritanica</i>
Common Raven	1	A	1	<i>Corvus corax tingitanus</i>
Spotless Starling	8	A, S, M, G	3	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
House Sparrow	8	A, S, M, G	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	2	G	3	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Common Chaffinch <sup>10</sup>	3	M, I	2	<i>Fringilla coelebs africana</i>
Common Crossbill <sup>11</sup>	1	I	1	<i>Loxia curvirostra poliogyna</i>
European Greenfinch	2	M, I	2	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
European Goldfinch	7	S, M, G, I	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Common Linnet	1	M	3	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Serin	3	S	3	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Trumpeter Finch	1	G	3	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>
Cirl Bunting	1	I	1	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>
Rock Bunting	1	G	1	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
House Bunting <sup>12</sup>	5	A, M, G, I	3	<i>Emberiza striolata sahari</i>
Corn Bunting	3	M, G	4	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

### Notes on the bird list

The bird list uses the scientific nomenclature and taxonomy of the Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW); however, the English names are generally those from the Collins Guide since those were the ones used during the trip, but with two exceptions (marked \*) where there have been recognised recent splits.

There was much discussion of subspecies during the week. The following notes are mostly restricted to those species where we could clearly see or hear differences in the races we saw or involving species where there have been recent 'splits'.

1. Great Cormorant  
The birds with white breasts and dark bellies seen (for example) at Massa and the Barrage were adults of the breeding race *P.c.maroccanus*. We also saw all dark adults which were winter visitors from mainland Europe *P.c.sinensis*.
2. Lanner Falcon  
The local race is *F.b.erlangeri* with its golden-buff crown, bluish-grey upperparts, lightly streaked underparts, etc, but since our views were all of distant flying birds we were unable to note many of these.
3. Peregrine Falcon  
The taxonomy of this species is inadequately known, partly due to the close relationship with Barbary Falcon. It is most likely that the birds we saw at Massa, Souss and Agadir were of the race *F.p.brookei*, although the *Birds of Morocco* also talks about an undescribed race named the 'Atlantic Form'. It is clear that, whatever the race involved, the birds were different from the ones seen in the UK, for example being paler above and having brown markings on the head. See <http://www.go-south.org/> and click on the yellow note about a 'special inquiry into Peregrines / Barbary Falcons' for some great photos and to see how complex the issue is!
4. White Wagtail  
Most of the birds we saw were winter visitors from Europe of the nominate race *M.a.alba*, but at Tamri we had great views of an adult of the uncommon breeding race *M.a.subpersonata* known as Moroccan White Wagtail.

5. Yellow Wagtail  
The only adult males we identified at Oued Massa (in the 'Bluethroat channel') were Spanish Wagtail *M.f.iberiae*.
6. Common Blackbird  
Compared to UK birds, the female of the race we saw (*T.m.mauritanicus*) is said to be greyer and has a yellow bill.
7. African Blue Tit  
HBW splits African Blue Tit *C.teneriffae* from Blue Tit *C.caeruleus* to include the Canary Island races in the former. Other authorities split it further into at least four species. We had good views at Oued Souss on the last morning which allowed us to discuss the differences.
8. Southern Grey Shrike  
On past trips we have always considered that the birds seen near the Agadir coast with dingy underparts were of the race *L.m.algeriensis* whereas the birds seen in the desert areas with a bigger white wing patch and whiter underparts were *L.m.elegans*. However, the *Birds of Morocco* suggests that they may all be an intermediate race *L.m.dodsoni*, with pure *algeriensis* birds only occurring further north and pure *elegans* birds only occurring further south and east.
9. Common Magpie  
The north-west African race *P.p.mauritanica* is clearly identifiable by the blue spot behind the eye and the very long tail.
10. Common Chaffinch  
At Oued Massa, under the trees near our picnic tables, we could clearly see the features of the distinctive north African race *F.c.africana*, with the male having crown/nape blue-grey, mantle bright green, breast/belly pale pink, etc.
11. Common Crossbill  
The birds seen in flight at Imouzzer were of the race *L.c.poliogyna* colloquially known as *Atlas Crossbill*; the plumage is greyer and the song and call are, to the trained ear, different from those of UK birds, but on this occasion we didn't see/hear the birds well enough to pass judgement.
12. House Bunting  
The North African race *E.s.sahari* is very different from the one seen in the Middle East.

#### Notes on ringed birds

One of the colour-ringed **Black-tailed Godwits** we noted at Oued Souss on October 28<sup>th</sup> was of the nominate race *limosa*. It was ringed at Zalk in the Netherlands on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006, and has previously been seen in Morocco (including Oued Souss) in both the 2006-7 and 2007-8 winters as well as in Portugal and back in Holland. So Morocco is clearly its favoured winter destination.

On October 28<sup>th</sup> we also noted a juvenile colour-ringed **Eurasian Spoonbill**, which was ringed as a nestling at Den Oever in the Netherlands on 17<sup>th</sup> June this year. It was last seen in the Netherlands on 26<sup>th</sup> September, and over the next 32 days it managed to travel unnoticed for the 2768 km to Oued Souss.

The **Glossy Ibis** at Oued Massa on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, with NJJ on its left leg, was ringed at Coto Donana in Spain but, as yet, I have no details regarding the date.

I have yet to receive a reply to my requests for information regarding the darvic ringed **Slender-billed Gulls**, but it seems likely that our birds came either from Tunisia (250 birds ringed in 2009) or Spain.

What I have discovered is that we needed to have been even more careful than we were with noting colours, and also noting not just the letters on the darvic rings and which leg the ring was on, but also whether the numbers are white on a black background, or black on white, for example.

#### Birds of the Trip (voted by the group)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Greater Hoopoe Lark
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Black-crowned Tchagra
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Northern Bald Ibis
- 4<sup>th</sup> Cream-coloured Courser
- 5<sup>th</sup> Moussier's Redstart
- 6<sup>th</sup> Desert Wheatear
- =7<sup>th</sup> Tristram's Warbler
- =7<sup>th</sup> House Bunting
- =9<sup>th</sup> Scrub Warbler
- =9<sup>th</sup> Red-breasted Flycatcher

**BUTTERFLIES**

Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>
Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Desert Orange Tip	<i>Colotis evagore</i>
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>
Lang's Short-tailed Blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>
Desert Babul Blue	<i>Azanus ubaldus</i>
African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>
Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>

**DRAGONFLIES**

Sahara Bluetail	<i>Ischnura saharensis</i>
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>
Epaulet Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>
Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>
Broad Scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>
Violet Dropwing	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>
Red-veined Dropwing	<i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>
Orange-winged Dropwing	<i>Trithemis kirbyi ardens</i>

**MAMMALS**

Barbary Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i>
Sand Rat	<i>Psammomys obesus</i>
Egyptian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>

**REPTILES**

Western Sahara Fringe-toed Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus aureus</i>
Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>

(Other lizards etc remained unidentified)

These lists represent the birds, butterflies, dragonflies and other species seen by the group members on this tour.



© Richard Coomber

Barbary Partridge



© Richard Coomber

Northern Bald Ibis



© Jane Storey

Donkey rider



© Jane Storey

Tagines



© Richard Coomber

Glossy Ibis  
(Note ring on right hand bird)



© Richard Coomber

Red-veined Darter at rest



Desert Herdsman

© Jane Storey



Greater Hoopoe-Lark

© Steve Chastell



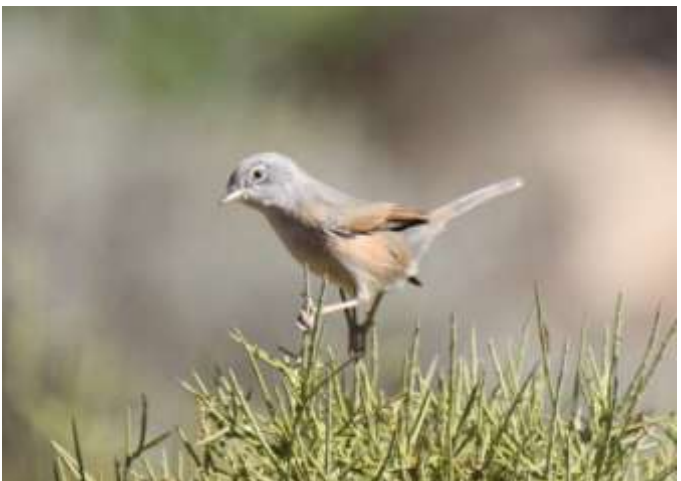
Red-breasted Flycatcher

© Richard Coomber



Painted Lady feeding on rotting dates

© Richard Coomber



Tristram's Warbler

© Steve Chastell



Zitting Cisticola

© Richard Coomber