

MOROCCO

9th - 27th April 2011

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I. Introduction

Our trip to Morocco was a combination of birding, searching for Barbary Macaques and visiting some beautiful cities. The birding part of the trip was focused on seeing as many species as possible for our world bird list (which is a little over 2500 species). We are **not** top birders/twitchers, never use tapes, but were able to see nearly all the Moroccan specialities. So with 179 species, including 30 new species for our world list, it was a highly successful trip for us!!! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us: alex.schouten@wolmail.nl

II. Logistics

Preparatory Work

Close analysis of 15 trip reports from the Travelling Birder database proved useful, especially when used in conjunction with Gosney's publication, Morocco: The Deserts (2009). We also used the birdwatchers guide to Morocco of Patrick and Fédore Bergier. In the deserts we used the Gosney booklet and in other places we used the Bergier Guide. The Gosney guide is pretty accurate with only minor 'mistakes'. The Bergier guide is not as detailed as the Gosney booklet and so less useful.

We used the following travel guide and map:

1. Travel guide: The Rough Guide to Morocco (9th edition, April 2010).
2. Map: Insight Travel Map Morocco, 1: 800.000. Pretty accurate, but not useful to find your way in bigger cities.

Transport, driving and finding your way

We flew with Royal Air Maroc from Amsterdam to Casablanca in less than 3,5 hour (no delays). The advantage of flying with Royal Air Maroc is the amount of luggage allowed (30 kg per person). We had 22 kg kg pp, mainly because of our camping gear (tent, sleeping bags, mattresses, cooking equipment etc.).

We had booked a hotel in Casablanca in advance (see below). From the airport we took a taxi into town for 250 Drh (22 euro). The next morning our rental car was delivered at our hotel. We rented a Renault Symbol for 16 days and the total costs were 460 euro (incl. second driver). The rental company was Pratique Maroc and we booked the car through Alliance Tours (www.alliancetours.ma). The advantage of a Renault Symbol is that it has a huge trunk so despite the camping gear we could put all our stuff in the trunk so no luggage was in sight when we had to leave the car.

Outside the cities driving is not difficult. All the connecting roads are sealed, there is not much other traffic and there are road signs to direct you. Toll highways in the north are very fast and clear of traffic, and the majority of 'N' roads throughout the country are in good condition. The smaller provincial (P) roads are of variable condition. Some parts are a bit narrow so passing other cars can be difficult.

In the bigger cities driving is more of a challenge. Not so much because of the traffic but because of lack of any road signs. And because we didn't have a TomTom or Garmin we had problems crossing some of the cities (i.e. Kenitra and Essaouria). But people are very friendly and helpful, so by asking directions, we were able to find our way. On top of that, driving in rush hours in for instance Casablanca is not for the faint-hearted. We are used to driving in other African Cities (i.e. Nairobi, Kampala) and Casablanca makes no exception. So reconsider when you want to pick up the rental car in the city centre (as we did, luckily on a quite Sunday morning) and pick it up at the airport!

Be careful to obey speed limits as the police are both efficient and incorruptible. The standard fine is pretty high (more than € 50,-). We didn't have any trouble while passing police checkpoints every now and then. The police seemed to be more interested in busses and trucks.

Accommodation

There is accommodation for everyone: from expensive hotels to cheap local guesthouses and there are even campgrounds! We only booked the first and last night in Casablanca and didn't have any difficulty in finding suitable accommodation (despite the Easter Holiday in Europe). Shopping for groceries is easy. In even the smallest villages you can buy bread, yoghurt and fruit.

Day	Hotel/campground	costs and comments
1	Hotel Colbert in Casablanca <i>www.hotelcolbert.ma</i>	€ 11,5 for a room (shared facilities). Simple hotel, but good value for money near the market of Casablanca.
2	Hotel la Felouque in Témara <i>www.lafelouque.com</i>	€ 40,- for a room with seaview. Expensive, but the closest hotel to the site of the Francolin (Sidi Yaya Zaër). Hotel is not on the main road and therefore difficult to find.
3+4	Camping Amazigh near Azrou <i>www.campingamazigh.com</i>	camping: € 4,5 per night; also guesthouse available dinner: € 3,- pp
5	Camping Timney near Zeïda	camping: € 7,50. Dinner in restaurant € 10,- pp. A few kilometres south from the Zeïda plains. Also hotel.
6+7	Auberge Yasmina <i>www.hotelyasminamerzouga.com</i>	€ 50,- for a room (incl. breakfast and 4 course dinner!). Good value for money. Advantage: most beautiful setting of all the hotels in the area + Catalan birdringers (see report). Disadvantage: the dirt road to Yasmina is 14 km long and in bad condition (we broke a shock absorber...)
8	Camping in Goulmane <i>www.palmiersgoulmima.com</i>	camping € 4,-. The ideal base to go for the scrub warbler early in the morning!
9	Camping in Todra Gorge	camping € 4,-. About 35 km from the Tagdilt Track. The campground at Hotel Le Blue Soleil is not suited for tents.
10	Camping in Gorges des Dades	camping € 4,-. About 30 km from the Tagdilt Track.
11	Camping Tissa <i>www.campingletissa.hautetfort.com</i>	camping € 4,-. Close to the beautiful Unesco site Ait Benhaddou. We had a very nice dinner in an Auberge, 1 km west of the campground.
12	Club Alpine Francais in Oukamiden	A much cheaper alternative to the very expensive Chez Juju. Only € 5 pp for a bunkbed. Dinner was € 7 pp, breakfast € 2 pp. Very friendly people!!
13	Maison d'hotes Azeroual, 25 km south of Asni <i>www.maroc-vacances-atlas.com</i>	€ 40,- for the room, dinner and breakfast. Good value for money, great place to stay.
14	Zagmouzen Bivac Camping in Talouine	€ 7,- for camping. A very nice campground, especially for tents.
15	Hotel Le Provençal in Inezgane <i>www.leprovençalagadir.com</i>	€ 18,- for a room. Very good value for money. Swimming pool. Good situated for the Oued Sous (2 km) and Oued Massa (40 km). No restaurant, so we had our dinner in a local restaurant in Inezgane (€ 2,- pp!!!).
16	Hotel Imazighne in Tamri	€ 13,5 for a room. Beautiful view across the lagoon. Located in the area of the Bald Ibis. It saves a lot of driving to/from Agadir when you stay in this hotel.
17	Hotel Thalassa in Oualidia	€ 18,- for a room. Good value for money. Located close to the lagoons and saltpans along the coast. Good food (fish!)
18	Hotel Colbert in Casablanca	see day 1

III. Costs

The total costs for our trip were € 1800,- for the two of us (€ 900,- pp):

Flight	€ 605,-
Car Rental	€ 460,-
Hotels + diners:	€ 400,-
Petrol for the car	€ 165,- (€ 0.9/liter)
Taxi's, train, tollroads, souvenirs, groceries	€ 170,-

There are plenty of ATMs in the cities and bigger towns, which accept European bank cards.

IV Culture

The Moroccan people are in general curious, welcoming and very helpful. We didn't have any problems during our trip and were surprised that even in cities we were not bothered by market vendors etc. Speaking French helped us enormously during this trip. Most moroccans don't speak English.

V Weather

We had rain in the mountains between Azrou and Zeïda and between Talouine and Taroudant, otherwise it was mostly sunny with comfortable temperatures (between 20 °C in Casablanca and 30 °C in the Merzouga area).

However, the birding was disturbed by three things:

1. **Dense fog** on the mountain slopes. For parts of our ascent to and descent from Oukaimeden and the descent of the Tizi-n-Test pass we had very thick fog and drizzle. So no chance of seeing a Dipper in the mountain streams downstream from the reservoir in Oukaimeden.



2. **strong winds.** In the High Atlas and in the desert areas we had very strong winds every afternoon (starting around noon, but sometimes even earlier).
3. In the area around Erfoud and Rissani we had a **huge sandstorm**, which made birding impossible and driving very difficult (see picture).



VI Birding sites

Lac (Merja) de Sidi Bourhaba (page 37 Bergier)

The site is easy to find and it took about 1,5 hours of driving from our hotel in Témara. Unfortunately it was Sunday afternoon and the site was full of Moroccan people having a picnic. From the causeway we were able to find about 8 Marbled Ducks, the target species for this site.

Sidi Yaya Zaër

With the help of the Bergier-book and the trip report of Richard Bonser (2nd-10 th April 2005) the site for the Francolin is easy to find. However, one thing has changed: the first T-junction in Témara (B=2,3 km on the map at page 40 in the Bergier guide) is not a T-junction anymore, but a 4-street crossing.

We arrived at the Francolin-site just before dawn, but were unlucky with the weather: dense fog!! We think this happens more often. There was no sign of life from neither the Double-spurred Francolin or the Barbary Partridge. Not a good start of the trip. Because of the fog, we didn't see any interesting birds. After 9 am we drove a few hundred meters back in the direction of Sidi Yaya and turned left at a small, white building (mosque). This track seems to be very promising for birdwatching. We walk for about a km and saw our only Western Black-eared Wheatear and Black-winged Kite of the trip along this track.

Azrou/Ifrana forest

On the open plains around Ifrane it is easy to see the Lesser Kestrels hunting above the fields. We saw more than 20 of these birds. The target species of the Middle Atlas however is the **Levaillant's Woodpecker**. We heard a few in the forest between Azrou and Ifrane and had good views of 1 bird. When you drive from Azrou in the direction of Ifrane, we found the bird just before you leave the first forest. There is an obvious track to the right (eastern) side of the road and space to park your car. I think it is the same site as described in the report of Richard Bonser (May 2007), but the kilometre-posts along the road are not correct any more. We couldn't find any Atlas Flycatchers in the area, but maybe it was a bit early in spring to see them (they migrate to lower altitude in winter).



Do you want to see Barbary Macaques? Go to a picnic-site around town and they are there..... We saw them at three different places around town. It's strange to see the monkeys amongst people, but unfortunately that's the current situation....

Dayet Aoua and surrounding

Nesting Crested Coots (about 20) were obvious on the lake. More surprising were the high numbers of Black-necked Grebes on the lake. We counted more than 500!!! In his trip report of a Birdquest tour (19th April-2nd May) Nigel Redman wrote that 20 birds in breeding plumage was a good count of this uncommon species..... We also noted a few Ruddy Shelducks on the eastern end of the lake.

From Dayet Aoua we took a minor road to the east which eventually ends in Ifrane (see page 55 in Bergier). There is not much traffic on this type of road, so you can make numerous stops. Along this road we noted our first Seebohms Wheatear, a big flock of Rock Sparrows and a Hawfinch (the only one of the trip).



Zeïda Plains

The birdspecies change when you leave the Middle Atlas and drive into the stony deserts of Eastern Morocco. On the way between Azrou and the Zeïda Plains we made a stop at a gorge 15 km south of Timahdite. Here we saw our first Red-billed Crows, Blue Rock-thrush and Black Wheatears. After pitching our tent at the campsite Timney we drove to the Zeïda Plains in the late afternoon to have a first look. We drove to number 3 on the map in the Gosney Guide and stopped the car. After a few minutes Angeline saw a large Lark running from bush to bush and it turned out to be a Dupont Lark!!! What a luck! After this incredible sighting we had a good sleep on the campground and returned before dawn the next morning. Several Dupont Larks were singing, but we couldn't get any sighting in our binoculars. We added Desert Wheatear, Black-bellied Sandgrouse,

Cream-coloured Courser. Lesser Sort-toed Lark and Red-rumped Wheatear to our fast growing birdlist (now at 80 species). Then we saw a big bird walking in the far distance. In the telescope it was clear: **a HOUBARA**

BUSTARD!!!! It must have been ages ago that someone has seen this species on this spot as the desert around Merzouga is the only place where you have a chance of seeing this bird!!! Later on James Lidster, a guide from Sunbirds Tours, told us that near Merzouga the Houbara Bustard is bred and released so the Saudi's have something to hunt for..... What a sad story. So when you see a bustard in the Merzouga Area, it could have been a released bird.....I can't exclude



the captive origin of our bird, but neither do we have any evidence that our bird has been bred in captivity. It had no visible rings and was alert. After this stunning and unexpected sighting, we drove to the Merzouga Area with a stop en route for the Tristrams Warbler.

Site Tristram's Warbler

Around noon we had a stop a few km's before the Tiz-n-Tairhemt pass (see trip report Richard Bonser 2nd - 10th April 2005) to find the Tristram's Warbler. In early April this species has returned to its middle altitude breeding areas. It was hot, windy and in the middle of the day, so we thought it was an impossible mission to find the warbler. But after about 15 minutes we had great views of 2 birds in some trees in the small valley!

Auberge Yasmina and surroundings

There are more than 10 auberges/kasbahs in this part of the Merzouga area but we decided to stay in Auberge Yasmina because it is next to the temporary lakes (although dry during our visit) and has the most beautiful view of the sand dunes right beside the auberge. The road to Auberge Yasmina is in bad condition and we broke one of the shock-absorbers. A couple of days later it was repaired in Erzou (for only € 55,-!). The next morning we drove about 8 km's back from Yasmina to the main



road to a wadi north of the track (see Gosneys booklet). We found 3 Desert Warblers, more than 5 Hoopoe-Larks and more than 10 bar-tailed Larks in this wadi within 2 hours! After this success, we drove back to the Auberge to have a look in the big tamarisk trees surrounding the dry temporary lakes. Some water (a small drinking pool) is available near one of the buildings, which attracts many birds. So it is not surprising that this is a good spot to see migrants. From mid February until mid May birdringers from a Catalan University (Spain) are busy with catching birds in their mist nets. It's a great opportunity to observe the differences between the Western and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers and see nice migrants like a Wryneck, a Scops Owl, Spotted Flycatchers or a Redstart at close distance!

The owner told us that the birdringers had put nestboxes for the desert sparrow on the tamarisks and that the desert sparrows have started breeding in one! The sparrows don't breed any more at the shed near Auberge Caravanne as described in the Gosney booklet. Around the kasbahs we also saw 10+ Brown-necked Ravens from close distance.

We also birded the area around the dry lake near Merzouga (not many interesting birds except hundreds of Trumpeter Finches in a nearby village) and visited the area around Auberge Sahara in search for the Fulvous Babblers. But no luck with the babblers. The only interesting bird was a large, dark pipit which could not be identified by us.

Rissani and surroundings

We planned to stay at the Auberge Trésor for a chance of seeing the Egyptian Nightjar, but the place looked pretty deserted. On top of that, we were bothered by strong winds and sandstorms every afternoon and evening which reduced our chance of seeing any bird. Therefore we decided to skip the Nightjar and also not to attempt for the Eagle Owl. After our visit to Auberge Yasmina, we drove part of the 'circuit Touristique' near Rissani (see Gosney booklet) and saw a few nice Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. We couldn't find Fulvous Babblers, although the habitat seemed OK for the birds.

Some birders find the Fulvous Babblers near Auberge Derkaoua, but because of the broken shock-absorber we didn't want to drive any extra kilometre on unsealed roads.....

43 km west of Errachidia

This is a well-known site for the scrub warbler. We think the scale of the map in the Gosney booklet is incorrect. It's not a 2 km walk to the 'far' bushes, but less than 1 km. In the early morning the scrub warblers are easy to find. We had 2 near the first lonely bush and 2 near the 'far' bushes. Other new birds for us were the Temminck's Horned Lark and the Desert Lark, which we didn't find in the wadi, but on the bare grounds around the wadi.



Todra Gorge

We visited the Todra Gorge mainly because of the stunning scenery. We were there on a Sunday afternoon and the gorge was packed with locals! In or near the gorge we saw our first Hoopoe, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, House Martin, Common Swift and Crag Martin. We checked all the Rock Martin very thoroughly and were pretty sure that some African Rock Martin were amongst them (smaller, paler birds without the dark underwing coverts). On page 142 of the Bergier guide it says that the African Rock Martin is very similar to the Moroccan race of Crag Martin and thus confusion is frequent. There is no Moroccan race of the Crag Martin in our bird book, so we are not able to compare these two species. We didn't count the 'small, pale martins' in the Todra Gorge, but it would be wise if more experienced birders visit the Todra Gorge.....

Tagdilt Track

The first part of the Tagdilt Track is not nice: a bad smell, it's full of plastic and some nasty dogs defend the garbage dump. The birds don't care about these things and as soon as we started birdwatching, we had good birds. After 10 minutes Angeline saw a Thick-billed lark, our main target bird for the Tagdilt Track.

Between the main wadi and the wheatear wall we saw at least 50 Cream-coloured Coursers and also 4 Crowned Sandgrouse. We couldn't find the Mourning Wheatear at the Wheatear Wall, neither did Gosney himself in March 2011 or the Sunbirds Tour. The Wall is inhabited by Trumpeter Finches and House Sparrows. Farmers were busy building a fence around the area of the Wheatear Wall, so it will be more difficult in the future to get close to it.

Although the area was full of birds, we didn't have many new species on our trip list, because we had seen many desert species in the areas we had already visited.



Oukaimeden

At Aït-Ouri we took a shortcut from the Ouarzazate-Marrakech Road to Oukaimeden, so there was no need to drive all the way to Marrakech. The scenery at Oukaimeden is a welcome change of scenery. Along the way to Oukaimeden we had thick fog, so not many birds were seen. Just before Oukaimeden we rose above the clouds and had clear skies. We stopped the car and looked at a big group of Alpine Crows mobbing a big raptor. We are pretty sure the big raptor was a juvenile Tawny Eagle. although we can't exclude a juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle for 100 %.....Anyway, both birds are pretty rare in Morocco. Because of the big size compared to the Alpine Crows, it was not a Booted Eagle.

We stayed in the Club Alpine Français, which is much cheaper than Chez Juju. On the meadow in front of our accommodation, were plenty of Alpine Crows and Red-billed Coughs. We took a walk around town in the afternoon and were very surprised to find a Levallants Woodpecker in one of the trees in town (the next morning we even saw 2 birds!). Some other nice

birds were Black Redstarts, Moussiers Redstarts and plenty of Rock Sparrows. The next morning we went to the parking area at the base of the ski lifts before dawn and waited.....and waited.....and waited.....and waited. Suddenly, about 1,5 hour after dawn, about 10 Crimson-winged Fiches gave a nice show around the low stone wall between the parking area and the ski lift. After 5 minutes they flew away. There were also some Horned Larks in the area. To our surprise the



Finches appeared much later than reported by other birders in their trip reports.

To enjoy the scenery, we decided to make a walk to a saddle. We followed the track along the ski lift and the chair lift all the way to the saddle (where the road ends). It took us about 1,5 hours to get to the saddle. Along the way we had some more Crimson-winged Finches and Horned Larks. After the saddle we followed the footpath for a few hundred meters until we had a great view across the valley on the other side. Suddenly we flushed a Barbary Partridge (the first one of the trip). While we were enjoying the scenery, some Alpine Accentors were hopping around!

Asni

When we were discussing where to sleep, we found a Melodious Warbler right next to the car. From our accommodation (25 km south of Asni) we made a walk along the road to Amizmiz and were surprised to find nice birds like Levallants Woodpecker and Barbary Partridge! We could add Rock Bunting, Short-toed Eagle and Red-rumped Swallow to our bird list.

Argan Steppe and L'Arganier d'Or

We made a quick stop in the Argan Steppe near the village of Tafinegoult (see Gosney Booklet). We added Spanish Sparrows and a western Orphean Warbler to our trip list. Although the area behind the village is a good example of the Argan Steppe we think it is not necessary to make the detour to the village and the birding can be done along the main roads in the area.

Our last chance for the Fulvous Babblers was near the Hotel L'Arganier d'Or (see Sous Valley in Gosney). Don't be afraid of the first 100 meters when you leave the main road: it doesn't look like an entrance road to an expensive hotel, but yes it is and the signs at the turnoff are at the right place. After parking the car near the small wadi described in Gosney, we walked to the left and after 200 meters it was bingo: a group of SILENT Fulvous Babblers foraging on the ground!

Oued Sous

According to James Lidster, a guide from Sunbirds Tours which we met on the Tagdilt Track and again at Oued Sous, severe flooding washed away the major sandbanks in the Oued Sous river. Since then, there are less birds in the estuary than before the flooding. Although we saw a Royal Tern, there was nothing of interest and we were a bit disappointed in the site.

Afterwards we heard that, after you have passed the barrier, you have to walk along the wall of the palace to get to the best area for the waders, gulls and terns. We stayed on the path, which became impassable due to water on the track during high tide.

Oued Massa

Finding the Oued Massa is not so easy because the road signs along the N1 directing you to the park were not there anymore. So we took 1 exit further south which was indicated as 'Massa'. When you enter the village of Massa, you must turn right and drive a few kilometres north before you are in the right area.

When visiting the Oued Massa, there was a rally race going on and there were motorbikes and 4WD cars everywhere. Despite this, a Common Kingfisher was sitting on a small branch at the main bridge over the river near the park entrance. Here, we had a very unpleasant experience with the park guides. At the official entrance (a bit north of Massa, national park sign) we were told that it is not allowed to enter the park without a guide. We didn't believe that, but they didn't let us through without taking a guide. So we drove a few hundreds meter back towards the village and took the unsealed road up the hill (the track where you can see Coursers and Stone Curlews). Follow the power lines up the hill and turn left where there are some hotel signs pointing to the right. Follow the track along power lines down the hill until you reach a small village (Sidi Binzaren). On the west side of the village is a shaded parking area (be careful, entry road is very sandy). From there you can also enter the park and the guard over there was very friendly and let us through without any trouble! We only spent a couple of hours in the Oued Massa because we want to go further north that afternoon to spend as much time as possible to find the Northern Bald Ibis near Tamri. During our 4 hour visit in the Oued Massa we saw the Brown-throated Martin and the Black-crowned Tchagra. There were not many waders in the river or the river mouth. Because of the rally, the unfriendly guide and the absence of waders we were not impressed by the site.

Northern Bald Ibis

How to find the Northern Bald Ibis? We decided to stay in the hotel in Tamri to have more time to search for the Bald Ibis. In the afternoon there was a very strong wind and no Ibis were present in the lagoon at the river mouth. So we decided to search for the birds along the road north of Tamri. We stopped every now and then to scan the fields. Because of the other traffic on the road it is not possible to stop wherever you would like to. After 10 km we decided to turn the car and slowly drove back towards Tamri. Near the sign Agadir 56 you can park your car beside a stone wall in a left bend in the road (coming from the



north). We parked the car, got out of the car and 7 ibises were feeding in the fields below us, only 50 meter from the road. Later on, they flew to the other side of the road and started feeding even closer to us! We think that the ibises breed on the cliffs north of Tamri, so probably you have the biggest chance of seeing them in that area or in the lagoon.

Cape Rhir and Essaouira

In the morning we drove back from our hotel to Cape Rhir to do some seawatching. There we saw big numbers of Gannets (we estimated 300-400 birds in 1 hour) and few Cory's Shearwater migrating north.

After the seawatching we drove north towards Essaouira to try for the Eleonora's Falcon and parked the car near the river mouth (see map page 50 Bergier), at the base of a new bridge over the river. We got out of the car for lunch when a rather big falcon flew over the dunes: an Eleonora's Falcon! In the river bed there were some Moroccan Wagtails and a Western Reef Egret (dark form). It must be the same bird as described in the trip report of Nigel Redman (April 2009).

Lagoons along the coast north of Oualidia

After Essaouira we drove north along the coast and near the km post 'Safi 72' we saw some nice salt pans which were full of birds. We counted 25 flamingo's and added 5 species of waders to our list. After a good night in Oualidia, the last morning of our birding trip was spent at the lagoons north of Oualida. It's a bit of searching for access (it sometimes involves walking down the hill towards the lagoons), but it is worth a long stop. The lagoons and especially the salt pans were teeming with birds. Plenty of flamingo's, gulls (i.e. Audouin's, Slender-billed), terns (i.e. little terns), waders (i.e. Red Knots, Dunlins, Pied Avocets, Kentish Plovers, Curlew Sandpipers, etc etc). There were thousands and thousands of birds in the lagoons. The last bird of the trip was a Collared Pratincole, which flew over our head when having lunch at the most northern salt pans.



Summary

We had a great trip with 179 species of birds, of which 30 were new for our world list. We didn't encounter any serious problems with driving, we have only met friendly people and didn't have any medical problems. The only minor problems was finding the way in some cities and the strong winds nearly every afternoon.

Off course we didn't see all birds who were on our wish-list:

- ◆ We couldn't find the Double-spurred Francolin, mainly because of dense fog.
- ◆ We didn't see Barbary Falcon.
- ◆ We stopped a lot of times around Ourzazate for the Mourning Wheatear, but every time we saw a black wheatear or a white-crowned wheatear.....
- ◆ Because of the very strong winds, we didn't try for the Egyptian Nightjar and the Eagle Owl and because we didn't want to get in trouble with the palace guards, we also skipped the Red-necked Nightjar at Oued Sous.

Records of interesting and target species

Black-necked Grebe.	More than 500 were counted on Dayet Aoua (north of Ifrane). Because the lake is pretty big and we didn't scope the whole lake, it could have been close to a 1000!
Western Reef Egret	A vagrant species in Morocco, but the individual near the river Mouth just south of Essaouira have been seen there for at least 3 years.
Northern Bald Ibis	About 10 were seen about 5 km north of Tamri (see description in text).
Marbled Teal	A few north of the causeway at Lac (Merja) de Sidi Bourhaba and 8 in the lagoons north of Oualidia.
Ruddy Shelduck	Only 4 were noted on Dayet Aoua (north of Ifrane).
Black-winged Kite	2 Were seen in the area of Zaër Forest.
Lesser Kestrel	Easy to see on the fields around Ifrane. We saw at least 3 groups (in total more than 20 birds).
Eleonora's Falcon	1 Seen at the river mouth just south of Essaouira.
Barbary Partridge	Seen on our walk at Oukaimeden, near our Hotel south of Asni and along the road (Tizi-n-Test pass)
Red-knobbed Coot	About 50 were seen on Dayet Aoua (north of Ifrane)
Houbara Bustard	A remarkable sighting of 1 bird on the Zeïda Plains on the 14th of April.
Cream-coloured Courser	A few were seen on the Zeïda Plains and more then 50 were seen on the Tagdilt Track.
Collared Pratincole	A few above the salt pans north of Oualidia.
Crowned Sandgrouse	7 Were seen near the drinking pools near the Tagdilt Track (see Gosney book) and 4 more were seen near the big Wadi along the Tagdilt Track.
European Scops Owl	Campground at Goulmane (heard and seen).
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	1 Was seen near Rissani, about 10 were seen at the reservoir east of Ouarzazate.
Levaillants Woodpecker	1 Seen well near Azrou (several heard), 2 seen in Oukaimeden and 1 seen near our hotel south of Asni.
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Common on the Zeïda Plains.
Greater Short-toed Lark	A few at the Tagdilt Track.
Bar-tailed Lark	Seen in the wadi on the track to Auberge Yasmina and on the Tagdilt Track (at both places common).
Desert Lark	Only a few were seen at the site of the Scrub Warbler.
Thick-billed Lark	Seen very well at the Tagdilt track (a single and 2 birds).
Temminck's Horned Lark	Seen at the Scrub-warbler site (4) and at the Tagdilt Track (> 20).
Shore Lark	Only seen in the Oukaimeden area (> 10).
Dupont Lark	1 Bird was seen very well in the late afternoon at point 3 in the Gosney guide. More were heard until well after dawn.
Hoopoe Lark	Well seen and heard in the wadi at the entrance road to Auberge Yasmina. What a beautiful and attractive birds! Also a few at the Scrub Warbler site.
Brown-throated Martin	Just 1 bird along the Oued Massa.
Moroccan Wagtail	A few birds were seen along bigger rivers.
Alpine Accentor	A few were seen 200 meter after the saddle at a viewpoint (walk from Oukaimeden, see text).
Rufous-tailed Srub-Robin	Common throughout the trip.
Moussier's Redstart	Seen at different locations (i.e. near Azrou, Oued Massa, Oukaimeden).
Seebohms Wheatear	Seen at different locations (i.e. in agricultural fields near Ifrane and Oukaimeden).
Desert Wheatear	Common in all desert areas.
White-crowned Wheatear	Common along the road in all desert areas.

Black Wheatear	Common in rocky desert areas.
Red-rumped Wheatear	A few on the Zeïda plains and on the Tagdilt Track.
Melodious Warbler	Seen a few times (and heard more often) during our trip, especially in orchards.
Western Orphean Warbler	Seen in the Argan Steppe behind the village of Tafinegoult (see Gosney guide).
Desert Warbler	3 Were seen and a few more heard in the wadi along the entrance road to Auberge Yasmina.
Tristrams Warbler	2 were seen well in the small valley near the Tiz-n-Tairhemt pass (see text).
Scrub-Warbler	2 couples were seen at the well known site, 43 km west of Errachidia.
Olivaceous Warblers	Both (sub-)species were seen well in hand at Auberge Yasmina (bird ringing project). The western Olivaceous Warbler was heard a lot of times in parks, gardens etc. After seen both species very well at Auberge Yasmina, we didn't pay attention to the differences between them.
Black-crowned Tchagra	Just 1 bird was seen well along the footpath towards the river mouth along the northern side of the Oued Massa.
Fukvous Babbler	At last a group of these great birds was seen in the wadi near hotel L'Arganier D'Or (see Gosney guide).
Moroccan Magpie	Scares and only a few birds were seen, mainly along the coast.
Brown-necked Raven	In the Merzouga area we saw a few distant birds (which can not be identified for 100 %), but on the last morning a group was foraging on the ground close to Auberge Yasmina and were seen very well.
Spotless Starling	Rare inland, but common in coastal areas.
Spanish Sparrow	Only seen in the Argan steppe area.
Rock Sparrow	1 Big group was seen on the way back from Dayet Aoua to Ifrane. Common in Oukaimeden.
Desert Sparrow	Only the male was seen near the nestbox at Auberge Yasmina.
Hawfinch	Just 1 one seen on the way back from Dayet Aoua to Ifrane.
Trumpeter Finch	Large groups (> 25) were seen at the wheatear wall and in a village near the (dry) Lake Merzouga.
Crimson-winged Finch	Seen very well at Oukaimeden, where they appeared at the parking area at the ski lifts much later in the morning than we expected. A few were also seen along the walk to the saddle (track past the chair lift).
House Bunting	Our first bird of the trip: singing in the patio at our Hotel in Casablanca. These birds are common in bigger cities.