

Western Sahara and Morocco in a week

October 15th -22nd 2017

This was a little challenging as often this is a two week trip. However we got all our key targets except Dunns's Lark and Golden Nightjar

Target Birds

- 1) Marsh Owl
- 2) Bald Ibis
- 3) Desert Sparrow
- 4) White-headed Duck
- 5) Thick-billed Lark
- 6) Cricket Longtail
- 7) Tristram's Warbler
- 8) Crimson-winged Finch
- 9) Desert Warbler
- 10) Hoopoe Lark
- 11) Dunn's Lark
- 12) Scrub Warbler
- 13) Barbary Partridge
- 14) Levaillants Green Woodpecker
- 15) Golden Nightjar
- 16) Maghreb Wheater

Finding Key Species

Marsh Owl - Saw it with Hassan Dalil. He meet us 4ish and took us to the roost site and used some local to flush about 4 of them. This was not a good experience and in retrospect I would have asked him to just take us to the spot and wait.

Bald Ibis - In the end we saw around 80 very well but it took us from 8 until 4 in the afternoon to find them. Ultimately we saw them at Oued Sous, saw a flock of around 200 and followed them to the coast. The areas in Gosney seem about right

Desert Sparrow - Easy to see if you just follow the road from Dakhla towards Awsard and 20 k before the town they start appearing (lots of Larks by this road mostly Hoopoe and Bar-tailed but Temmincks and Black-crowned regular)

White-headed Duck - Just where they should have been on Lac de Sidi (along with Red Crested Pochard, Red-knobbed coots and, Moroccan Magpie ad Cormorant Ferruginous Duck – but no Marbled Teal))

Thick-billed Lark - By the rubbish tip on the Tagdlit Track, this was our key target their so did stay long at the track but seemed to be a good selection of other Lars eg Hoopoe, Short-toed and Thekla

Cricket Longtail - Fairly common in right habitat as you approach Awsard, first seen (but best not to show your binoculars in the town as the Police questioned us for 20 mins)

Tristram's Warbler – a number on the road out of Imlil (this town was not just very birdy but a great place to visit)

Crimson-winged Finch – Oukaimeden at the start of the track into the mountains (14 on Gosney Map) the track itself had 100s of Alpine Accentors and a few “Seebohms’ Wheatear

Desert Warbler - it is more or less at the site near Hotel Said (although it is not called that anymore) but the road has been up-graded since Gosney and so more difficult to find. This was the bird that took most looking but they are there.

Hoopoe Lark – fairly common in right habitat particularly on road to Awsard

Scrub Warbler – exactly where Gosney said it would be (p17) however the 43k marker is no longer there but the ‘bridge’ and lone tree our – it is a fair walk to the large bushes however.

Barbary Partridge – only one in an enclosed farm in Oued Sous as we looked for Bald Ibis

Levillants Green Woodpecker – from the roof terrace of Raid Jnane in Imlil (we did use playback)

Maghreb Wheatear – early on road from Amerzgane to Taznaknt (we did the whole circuit as described on Gosney p23 but did not add much to our list except for Rock Martin and some Eagles

(we also saw a lot of Pied Flycatchers but could not tell the subspecies)

Itinerary

14th October afternoon flight from London to Dakhla (arriving 23.00)

15th Desert Birding towards Aousserd

16th Desert Birding to Aousserd then flight to Agadir

17th Agadir and Ouad Massa

18th Imlil & Oukaimaden

19th Around Ouarzazate

20th Tagdilt Track

21st Erfoud

22nd Lac de Sidi Bourhade & Merdia Zerga

We covered a lot of ground birding until early afternoon and then driving to the next destination, on the whole it was very doable. However to cover the whole of the country we had to sacrifice some species most notably Dupont's Lark and Double Spurred Francolin (but these are easily seen elsewhere)

Useful info

Gosney – still mostly good but out of date for some areas eg around Erfoud

People guides

For Agadir – Mohamed Bargache, +212615885199 - although there are a lot of Ibis it took us a long time to find them so probably a good idea if you do not have much time, plus he found us our only Partridge of the Holiday

For Marsh Owl – Hassan Dalil, in retrospect would probably have used one in Western Sahara for night in Desert as I feel that would have found us the Dunn's Lark

Car Hire

Dakha – used Dakhla Cars aka Laargoub Cars – **avoid!!!!** Got the car in the dark at the airport, was not the car we asked for, speedometer did not work, windscreen wipers did not work, lights barley worked, leaked petrol and it stopped working in the Desert. Also expensive at 40 Euros a day

Although booked for two days we did not dare use it on the second and its unreliability meant we cut short the first day. On second day hired car from Hotel Dar Rio Oro much better, much cheaper and it worked

For navigation use a map or Google Maps – Tom Tom virtually useless

Agadir to Tanger – used Hertz good car, good service

Hotels

Dakhla – Dar Rio Ora, great hotel near the Airport and facing the Ocean, Also a great place to hire a car. However if you are just focused on the Desert you might be better in one of Kite Surfing hotels which would save you 20 mins driving.

Agra – Tildi Hotel and Spar – fine but in the north of town so 40 mins from Oued Massa

Imlil – Raid Jnane, set 100 meters back from the rd down a narrow path, but a great hotel, roof terrace give views of the whole area with Green Woodpeckers flying over, Blue Tits all around and Dippers in the nearby river

Le Perle – Ouarzazate, easy to find on main road fine and reasonable location

Soliel Blue – Boumaine Dads, birdy hotel on outskirts right by the track so great location and unusual rooms

Hotel Taf – Erfoud, location is fine right on the main road, but not nice

Appartment Mahdia – Kenitra, well located for Lac de Sidi but phone them for directions, it is impossible to find on your own.

What we saw (I use HBW)

Common name	Genus	Species
Barbary Partridge	Alectoris	barbara
White-headed Duck	Oxyura	leucocephala
Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna	ferruginea
Red-crested Pochard	Netta	rufina
Common Pochard	Aythya	ferina
Ferruginous Duck	Aythya	nyroca
Garganey	Spatula	querquedula
Northern Shoveler	Spatula	clypeata
Gadwall	Mareca	strepera
Mallard	Anas	platyrhynchos
Common Teal	Anas	crecca
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus	ruficollis
Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps	cristatus
Greater Flamingo	Phoenicopterus	roseus
Rock Dove	Columba	livia
European Turtle-dove	Streptopelia	turtur
Eurasian Collared-dove	Streptopelia	decaocto
Laughing Dove	Spilopelia	senegalensis
White-rumped Swift	Apus	caffer
Western Water Rail	Rallus	aquaticus
Purple Swamphen	Porphyrio	porphyrio
Common Moorhen	Gallinula	chloropus
Red-knobbed Coot	Fulica	cristata
Common Coot	Fulica	atra
Balearic Shearwater	Puffinus	mauretanicus
White Stork	Ciconia	ciconia
Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea	leucorodia
Northern Bald Ibis	Geronticus	eremita
Glossy Ibis	Plegadis	falcinellus
Cattle Egret	Bubulcus	ibis
Grey Heron	Ardea	cinerea
Great White Egret	Ardea	alba
Little Egret	Egretta	garzetta
Northern Gannet	Morus	bassanus
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax	carbo
Eurasian Thick-knee	Burhinus	oedicnemus
Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra	avosetta
Kentish Plover	Charadrius	alexandrinus
Whimbrel	Numenius	phaeopus
Eurasian Curlew	Numenius	arquata
Green Sandpiper	Tringa	ochropus

Common Greenshank	Tringa	nebularia
Audouin's Gull	Larus	audouinii
Common Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon	nilotica
Caspian Tern	Hydroprogne	caspia
Common Tern	Sterna	hirundo
Sandwich Tern	Thalasseus	sandvicensis
Little Owl	Athene	noctua
Marsh Owl	Asio	capensis
Osprey	Pandion	haliaetus
Black-winged Kite	Elanus	caeruleus
Short-toed Snake-eagle	Circaetus	gallicus
Golden Eagle	Aquila	chrysaetos
Western Marsh-harrier	Circus	aeruginosus
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter	nisus
Long-legged Buzzard	Buteo	rufinus
Common Kingfisher	Alcedo	atthis
Maghreb Green Woodpecker	Picus	vallantii
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos	major
Common Kestrel	Falco	tinnunculus
Lanner Falcon	Falco	biarmicus
Peregrine Falcon	Falco	peregrinus
Greater Hoopoe-lark	Alaemon	alaudipes
Desert Lark	Ammomanes	deserti
Thick-billed Lark	Ramphocoris	clotbey
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Calandrella	rufescens
Temminck's Lark	Eremophila	bilopha
Crested Lark	Galerida	cristata
Thekla Lark	Galerida	theklae
Barn Swallow	Hirundo	rustica
Rock Martin	Ptyonoprogne	fuligula
Tawny Pipit	Anthus	campestris
Meadow Pipit	Anthus	pratensis
Water Pipit	Anthus	spinoletta
White Wagtail	Motacilla	alba
Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla	flava
Grey Wagtail	Motacilla	cinerea
Common Bulbul	Pycnonotus	barbatus
White-throated Dipper	Cinclus	cinclus
Northern Wren	Troglodytes	troglodytes
Alpine Accentor	Prunella	collaris
Common Blackbird	Turdus	merula
Common Rock-thrush	Monticola	saxatilis
Bluethroat	Luscinia	svecica
European Robin	Erithacus	rubecula

Black Redstart	Phoenicurus	ochruros
Common Redstart	Phoenicurus	phoenicurus
Moussier's Redstart	Phoenicurus	moussieri
Whinchat	Saxicola	rubetra
Common Stonechat	Saxicola	torquatus
White-crowned Wheatear	Oenanthe	leucopyga
Black Wheatear	Oenanthe	leucura
Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe	oenanthe
Mourning Wheatear	Oenanthe	lugens
Buff-rumped Wheatear	Oenanthe	moesta
Desert Wheatear	Oenanthe	deserti
Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa	striata
European Pied Flycatcher	Ficedula	hypoleuca
Common Firecrest	Regulus	ignicapilla
Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola	juncidis
Streaked Scrub-warbler	Scotocerca	inquieta
Cricket Warbler	Spiloptila	clamans
Cetti's Warbler	Cettia	cetti
Isabelline Warbler	Hippolais	opaca
Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus	collybita
Blackcap	Sylvia	atricapilla
Desert Warbler	Sylvia	nana
Tristram's Warbler	Sylvia	deserticola
Spectacled Warbler	Sylvia	conspicillata
Subalpine Warbler	Sylvia	cantillans
Sardinian Warbler	Sylvia	melanocephala
Fulvous Babbler	Turdoides	fulva
Coal Tit	Periparus	ater
Great Tit	Parus	major
Common Blue Tit	Cyanistes	caeruleus
Southern Grey Shrike	Lanius	meridionalis
Common Magpie	Pica	pica
Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax	pyrrhocorax
Eurasian Jackdaw	Corvus	monedula
Carrion Crow	Corvus	corone
Common Raven	Corvus	corax
House Sparrow	Passer	domesticus
Desert Sparrow	Passer	simplex
Common Chaffinch	Fringilla	coelebs
European Serin	Serinus	serinus
Common Linnet	Carduelis	cannabina
Crimson-winged Finch	Rhodopechys	sanguineus
Trumpeter Finch	Bucanetes	githagineus
Red Crossbill	Loxia	curvirostra
House Bunting	Emberiza	sahari

