

Notes on mammals, birds, and reptiles

MOROCCO

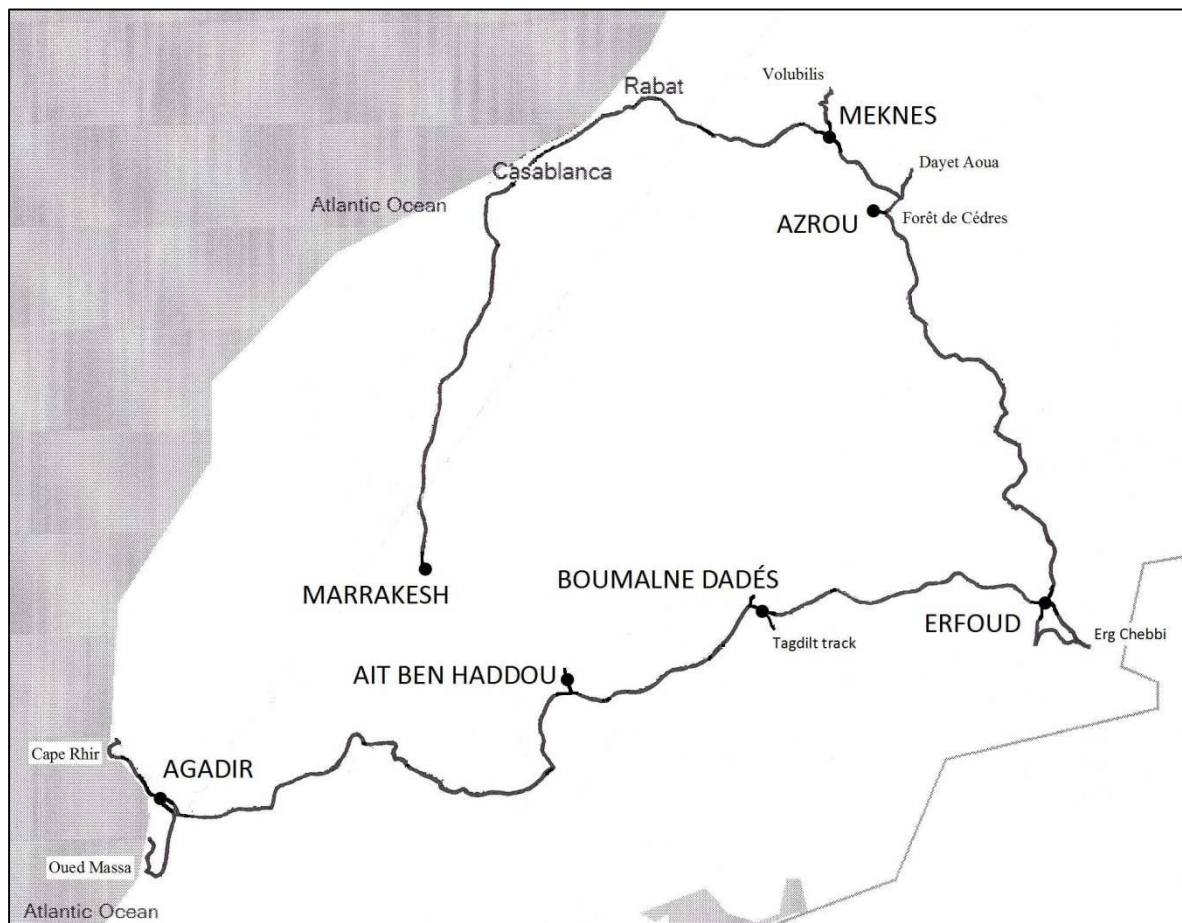
20-30. November 2011



Uffe Gjøl Sørensen, Denmark[©]

ITINERARY

- 19/11 Departure Copenhagen 14.15 and arrival in Agadir 4.5 hours later. Efficient entry in country but the delivered car had a serious dysfunctional lock-system. Arranged with the Europcar office, that we would seek them out at their town-office the next morning. Night: Hotel Kamal.
- 20/11 Agadir (Hotel Kamal) (07-08.30), Europcar Office (08.30-09.30, obtained new car), Agadir to Tamri (and return) (09.30-14.00), Oued Massa (15.30-18.20) – included a walk along the outer part of the river and a 4WD drive north along the coast to enclosure of Scimitar-horned Oryx and Dorcas Gazelle. Night: Hotel Kamal.
- 21/11 Drive Souss Valley (Agadir to Taliouine; 08.25-15.45) with stops in Taroudannt (10-11.30) and Argana forest near Tafingoult (13-14). Drive Taliouine to Ait Ben Haddou (15.45-18.45; last hour in darkness) with few short stops. Night: Hotel Fibule d'Or.
- 22/11 Ait Ben Haddou (07.00-08.30 + 09.30-10.15), drive to Tamdakht (10.15-11.00), drive to lunch-stop in Ouarzazate (11.45-13.00), stop by lake 15 km E of Ouarzazate, drive to Boumalne with few stops, walk from hotel 17.00-17.30). Night: Hotel Soleil Bleu.
- 23/11 Tagdilt old track 06.55-09.05, drive to Tinejdad with stop at Musee du Oasis (12.00-14.15), drive with few stops to Erfoud (15.00-17.20). Night: Kasbah Tizimi.
- 24/11 Walk around Wadi by Hotel Kashba Der Kaoua (08.30-09.30), drive to Yasmina Café in sandstorm, Café Yasmina – most of the time with much wind and sand (10.00-15.00), drive to Rissani and attempt to find ruins, ended by possible site for Desert Eagle Owl (16.40-16.50). Return to Erfoud. Night: Kasbah Tizimi.
- 25/11 Drive Erfoud-Azrou (08.00-17.00) with few, short stops, including a lunch-stop at Zeida but with the main stop at Forêt de Cèdres (15.50-16.50) for the Barbary Macaque. Night: Hotel Panorama.
- 26/11 Early morning at Forêt de Cèdres (06.55-09.30), Dayet Aoua (10.50-11.15), Meknes (from 13.00). Walk in Meknes up to sunset. Night: Riad Lahboul.
- 27/11 Drive from Meknes to Volubilis – ruins of ancient Roman city (300 BC to 280 AD) (10.00-13.30). Return to Meknes and late afternoon city-walk (15.45-17.30). Night: Riad Lahboul.
- 28/11 Drive from Meknes to Marrakesh (08.40-16.00). Took the swift highway and we were en route passing Rabat and Casablanca. When crossing low highland north of Marrakesh we took the parallel and smaller road from Skhour-Rehamma to Ben Guerir in an unsuccessful attempt to find Long-billed Crested Lark. Drop of car in Airport and transfer to hotel in old part of town. We just managed to have a short walk to the central square of town around sunset. Night: Riad Eden.
- 29/11 Walk around Marrakesh all day (08.45-17.30). Night: Riad Eden.
- 30/11 Walk to central square in Marrakesh (07.15-07.40). Transfer to airport (09.10-09.25). Flight delayed to 11.30. Arrival in Copenhagen 16.15.



INTRODUCTION

This report holds notes on mammals, birds, and reptiles observed on a visit to Central Morocco. The trip was a holiday with my partner, Lene Smith. The visit was as usual combining our shared multiple interests in both nature and culture and had the following main focus points:

- a. The Atlantic coast around Agadir with Bald Ibis as the main ornithological target.
- b. The drive inland to Erfoud including the Souss-valley (Argan forest), deserts and Tagdilt track as main ornithological goals but also a number of interesting cities and sites (e.g. Taroudant, Ait Ben Haddou, Tinejdad).
- c. A day around the sand dunes of Erg Chebbi
- d. Finally a drive north across the Atlas to reach the patches of cedar-forest near Azrou (Forêt de Cèdres) being one of the strongholds for the Barbary Macaque.
- e. Final activities were mainly cultural with Volubilis ruins from Roman period, and the cities of Meknes and Marrakesh.

The Moroccan landscapes are fantastic. The snow clad peaks of High Atlas set the scene – no matter if you are walking in desolate deserts or are in the middle of a throbbing city encircled by medieval walls.

The nature of the country is diverse – green fields at the Atlantic coast, farmland in the Souss-valley with the special Argana forest in contrast to deserts in all varieties and luxurious vegetation in the oases. The Atlas-mountains induce another dimension with vast bare rock - and suddenly you pass hillsides with Juniper and oaks if not - as we did – you seek out the high, dense forests on the west-side of the Middle Atlas – mixed Cedar and oak trees.

All over the landscape is controlled by an extremely high grazing-pressure from goats and sheep. Shepherds are met with as soon as any city ends and e.g. the Argana-forest seem to lack herb-vegetation between the scattered trees. This presence of domestic herbivores and humans everywhere must also set grave conditions for the natural herbivores not to mention you can only imagine what carnivores existed in former times.

A good chunk of our targets birds came in as hoped with the major exception that our one day in the sandy desert despite very successfully demonstrating desert conditions in the Sahara (wind, sand) came out as an almost complete failure in respect of birds – with absolutely no Desert Sparrows at Cafe Yasmina and other desert-goodies difficult or absent.

A visit in November will for obvious reasons lack all the summer-visitors, bee-eaters, warblers etc, and we should have had more time in the desert areas to find the scattered birds. No doubt, springtime is a better season if ornithology is the main purpose for a visit to Morocco.

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PRACTICALITIES

In contrast to rumours, we found Morocco a very easy country to visit. *People* are very friendly. Even Marrakesh seems to have undergone a dramatic change from its former reputation as being hassling-town no. 1. In one remote village S of Rissani, kids tried to open our car, when we were driving very slowly.

Hotels for the first six nights were booked over the net. Afterwards, we just asked the hotel to help book our next destination. This worked without any problems. There are only few tourists in November and for the desert sites we recommend booking. We were only guests a couple of places and e.g. Hotel Soleil Bleu at Boumalnes Dadès was probably only open because of our booking.

Our car-rental proved also efficient although with a start-problem: We couldn't open the luggage room of the car awaiting us in the airport and it clearly had a problem with the electronic lock-system. A mechanic was called but he only temporarily fixed it. As it started to be a little late, we arranged over the phone to meet the following morning at EuropCars town-office to get another car. Except for the extra time this worked without major problems, and we had a well-working car of exactly the same standard.

Roads in Morocco are in general of a very good standard, but of course cautions should always be taken. We drove 2250 km during our visit. Speed-control seems to be a widespread pleasure for policemen. We had one fine on our second day (300 Dh) for driving 89 km where only 80 km was allowed. Afterwards we strictly followed speed-limits and avoided at least another 10+ tickets. Motorways in Morocco are toll roads - from Meknes to Marrakesh we paid less than 100 Dh in all.

Weather: We arrived in torrential rain and had the challenge of finding our hotel in the dark, wet city. A number of showers passed during the following morning when we were on the coast. Most other days were mild and pleasant – temperatures mostly 15-20 °C – but mornings in desert-areas are always chilly. Only at the end in Marrakesh temperatures were above 20°C. Our day in the desert at Erg Chebbi started by being overcast and even with rain for short periods. Then a persistent wind from the east took over and the sand started drifting. Mid-afternoon the eastern wind ceased and a western wind took over. When crossing the Atlas Mountains (up to 2200 m) it was bitterly cold – but still no snow on the roads anywhere. The night in Azrou was cold – the heater in our room worked hard during our stay but with little effect. Never travel in countries like Morocco in wintertime with your sleeping bag!

NOTES TO SITES VISITED

The planning of this trip was based on a number of reports from Travellingbirder.com web-site and the Birdwatchers' Guides by Patrick and Féedora Bergier: *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Morocco* (2003). The latter is informative and valuable but I have the following comments to some of the sites visited:

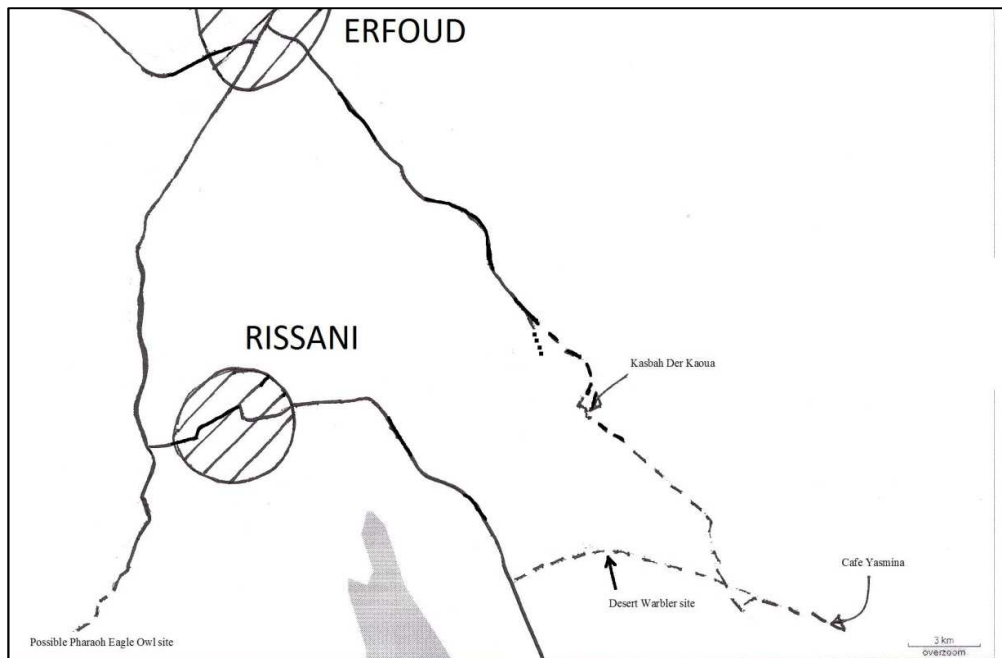
Oued Massa. The direction is not well-signed from the P30 road, but there is a new sign showing direction to the 'National Park Oued Massa'. Note, that when going north out of 'Arhbalou' one has to take the smaller left-bound side-road soon after leaving the village - the main tarmac road leads through the desert to Sidi-Rbat. After less than one km one reaches a check-post for the Park (where we had our only Brown-throated Sand Martin). As we were coming late in the afternoon with little time before sunset, we were soon convinced to join a Park-car just about to leave. So we jumped in the back of the car with a French family and we were involved in the following: A drive about 3km to after the warden's house. From here we walked along the river. There were very few waterbirds on the river itself (except for a few waders and gulls on the isthmus towards the sea) but in the scrub we had nice views of Black-crowned Tchagra and Moussier's Redstart. When reaching near Sidi-Rbat we were met by the Park-car and our visit took an un-looked for change: In the dwindling light we were taken 15 km due north along the coast in a dramatic drive in the magnificent dune-landscape. From a stop on a high cliff we were overlooking fishermen's houses on the beach including houses cut into the vertical cliffs. Finally we reached a high dune and from the top we could see part of the enclosure holding the restocking project for threatened large herbivores of the Saharan fauna which is located within this National Park. We saw two species: Scimitar-horned Oryx and Dorcas Gazelle, but missed the Addax also present. The animals should be living semi-wild. It is possible to reach this interesting area by the road to the village of Tifnite on the coast.

Tagdilt track by Boumalnes Dades: With only time for a couple of morning hours, I took the 'old' track from town. The crossing of the dump is indeed not a pretty sight, but the track itself is easy to follow. I just managed to reach the

nearest foothills of Jebel Sarhro. The ‘weather-wall’ today is behind a fence of barbed wire but within sight from the track.

Sand dunes of Erg Chebbi: The information in the guide-book is out-dated and the map lacks vital details. The map below shows our route recorded by GPS. We took the tarmac road from Erfoud (starting a couple of hundred meters north of where road 162 meets N13). The tarmac road is followed for 15+ km before one takes a sign-posted, sandy

track towards Kasbah Der Kaoua. Behind this hotel one finds a track (marked with poles in the start) which takes you directly to the shifting dunes. All tracks we used were unproblematic for a 2WD. Reading Birdwatchers’ Guide gives the impression that a 4WD is needed – but this is only if you really want to go deep into the desert. However, the easiest way to Cafe Yasmina is to take the *tarmac* road from Rissani towards Merzouga and then take the west-east track leading directly to the place. The track is sign-posted and marked with yellow poles/stones almost all the way. As we got stuck at Cafe Yasmina because of the wind and sand our programme for the day deteriorated and we never reached Merzouga. On the

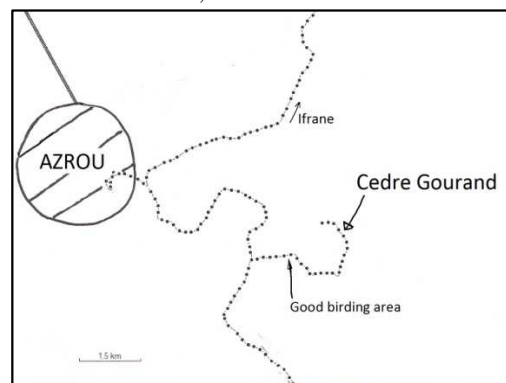


way out we passed the open wadi with scattered vegetation, where several reports have records of Desert Warbler (indicated on the map). I searched the species without success. Based on experience, we can only recommend bringing a GPS – particularly reassuring if drifting sand temporarily obscures the tracks. In an attempt to find some cultural remains (ruins) south of Rissani we ended by a possible site for Pharaoh Eagle Owl (see map). The area has steep cliffs and looks very promising – however we didn’t see any owls.

Forêt de Cèdres. When arriving to the forest late in the afternoon, we went straight to Cedre Gouraud, which is a known place for Barbary Macaques. By a magnificent dead trunk of Atlas Cedar there are a number of souvenir-shops, one can go horse-riding etc. but most notably: A group of macaques are habituated to the local tourism (or perhaps the opposite: tourists are habituated to the macaques). Bags of peanuts can be bought and the monkeys soon seek you out and tug at your trouser leg if they feel you are too slow in sharing....

It was interesting to see this intra- and inter-specific primate-interaction - and in particular to see the how gentle if not almost humble the macaques behaved with humans around. Dealing with a Rhesus Macaque in India or a Vervet Monkey in Sub-Saharan Africa is a much more aggressive experience.

Late in the afternoon the forest was very quiet, but a revisit the following morning was very productive with very high bird activity, including Levillant’s Woodpecker. It is interesting to be in an African forest with European birds in numbers. In the morning, I mainly birded the first two km of the track towards Cedre Gourand. Here it was also great to see three macaques passing by and vanishing in the forest without any tourist influence. When leaving Azrou for Meknes, we made a short stop by the lake Dayet Aoua, north of Ifrane. This was very productive and only to be recommended.



Marrakesh: The old centre is very quiet and pleasant with breeding storks here and there. The famous central square, Djemaa el Fna, has a sad leftover tradition with captured macaques on display and several snake charmers (cobras, puff adders and various non-poisonous snakes). One man had a miserable Long-legged Buzzard and a hedgehog on display.

MAMMALS

1. ***Barbary Macaque** *Macaca sylvanus*. 25/11 25+ Forêt de Cèdres – one by crossroad 7 km E of Azrou – rest by Cedar Gouraud, 26/11 3 Forêt de Cèdres.
2. **Cape Hare** *Lepus capensis*. 22/11 1 road-kill E of Ouarzazate.
3. **Barbary Ground Squirrel** *Atlantoxerus getulus*. 25/11 4+1 Tagalm. Very shy.
4. **Scimitar Oryx** *Oryx dammah*. 20/11 6 + 10+ (semi-wild) Dunes N of Oued Massa.
5. **Dorcas Gazelle** *Gazella dorcas*. 20/11 11 (semi-wild) Dunes N of Oued Massa.

BIRDS – Systematic names and sequence follows the IOC-list (www.worldbirdnames.org)

1. **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. 25/11 38 Aquemame de Sⁱ.Ali.
2. ***Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*. 25/11 30 Aquemame de Sⁱ.Ali, 26/11 100+ Dayet Aoua, 10 Ifrane.
3. ***Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*. 26/11 250+ Dayet Aoua.
4. ***Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*. 25/11 3 male 1 female Aquemame de Sⁱ.Ali, 26/11 600+ Dayet Aoua.
5. ***Ferruginous Pochard** *Aythya nyroca*. 26/11 59 Dayet Aoua.
6. ***Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. 26/11 150+ Dayet Aoua.
7. **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* 22/11 3 Reservoir E of Ouarzazate, 25/11 5+ Ar-Rachidia, 3 Aquemame de Sⁱ.Ali.
8. ***Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa, 26/11 15+ Dayet Aoua.
9. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*. 28/11 1 most likely this species S of Casablanca. A feeding bird in a steam. Observation from car while on the motorway.
10. ***White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*. 21/11 2 on nest E of Taroudannt, 22/11 1x used nest Ait Ben Haddou, 3x used nest Tamdakht, 25/11 nest at 2100 m Ascent to Col du Zad, 26/11 5 nest Azrou, 25+ Meknes, 27/11 125+ for night-roost at the walls of the Imperial city in Meknes, 4 occupied nests in suburbs of Meknes, 2 used nest Volubilis, 28/11 nests here and there along the road from Meknes to Marrakesh, 3 Marrakesh, 29/11 40+ (many pairs on nest and some apparently brooding) Marrakesh, 30/11 2 Marrakesh.
11. ***Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*. 20/11 8+5+3+3 mig. S N of Cap Rhir, 120+ Cap Rhir. A magnificent bird and a high proportion of the entire population seen.



12. ***Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*. 20/11 2 Agadir, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 5 Agadir, 2 Souss Valley, 5 Aoulouz, 22/11 10+ Boumalne Dadés, 23/11 1 Tinejdad, 25/11 1 all day, 26/11 30+ Azrou-Ifrane-Meknes, 8 Meknes, 27/11 45 Meknes, 175 Meknes-Volubilis, 10 Volubilis, 28/11 500+ Meknes-Marrakesh.
13. **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*. 20/11 2 Tamri, 21/11 20+ Aoulouz, 22/11 4 Reservoir E of Ouarzazate, 25/11 1 all day, 26/11 1 Ifrane, 28/11 5 Meknes-Marrakesh.
14. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*. 20/11 1 Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 2 Aoulouz, 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou, 2 Reservoir E of Ouarzazate, 25/11 2 all day, 27/11 1 Volubilis.
15. **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassana*. 20/11 40+ Agadir to Tamri.
16. **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Two subspecies recorded:
 - a. *Spp. maroccanus*. 20/11 6+1+1 Agadir to Tamri, 1+2 Oued Massa.
 - b. *Spp. sinensis*. 22/11 1 Reservoir E of Ouarzazate, 25/11 2 Ar-Rachidia reservoir.
17. **Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*. 27/11 2 just N of Meknes, 28/11 2 near Meknes, 1 near Casablanca, 1 S of Casablanca.
18. **Eurasian Griffon** *Gyps fulvus*. 23/11 2 20 km W of Erfoud.
19. **Western Marsh-Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*. 25/11 1 female/juvenile Midelt, 26/11 1 male Meknes, 28/11 2 Meknes-Rabat.
20. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*. 24/11 1 S of Rissani, 26/11 1 Meknes.
21. **Eurasian Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*. 23/11 1 Tinejdad.
22. ***Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*. 21/11 1 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 1 E of Ouarzazate, 23/11 5 Tagdilt old track, 26/11 1 Forêt de Cèdres.
23. **Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*. 20/11 4 Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 1 Agadir, 15+ Souss Valley, 2 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 2 Ait Ben Haddou, 1 Tamdakht, 25/11 2 all day, 26/11 1 Azrou-Ifrane, 2 Meknes, 27/11 3 Volubilis, 28/11 10+ Meknes-Marrakesh, 29/11 2 Marrakesh.
24. **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*. 29/11 1 most probably this species Marrakesh. This Peregrine-type was seen hunting Little Swifts around the minaret just before sunset.
25. **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*. 25/11 1 juvenile? Col du Zad.
26. ***Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata*. 26/11 50+ Dayet Aoua (se photo). Numbers could easily have been much higher as we only made one short stop on the southern shore. The species seemed to be closer to the shore than the Eurasian Coots in the centre of the lake.
27. ***Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*. 22/11 220 Reservoir E of Ouarzazate, 25/11 100+ Ar-Rachidia reservoir, hundreds Aquemame de Sⁱ.Ali, 26/11 2000+ Dayet Aoua.
28. **Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa.
29. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*. 20/11 10+ Oued Massa.
30. **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*. 20/11 6 Oued Massa.
31. **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*. 26/11 2 Dayet Aoua.
32. **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*. 21/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou.



33. **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*. 20/11 1 Agadir to Tamri.
34. **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*. 26/11 1 Dayet Aoua.
35. **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. 20/11 2 Agadir to Tamri.
36. **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*. 20/11 1 Oued Massa.
37. **Slender-billed Gull** *Chroicocephalus genei*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa.
38. **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa.
39. **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaeus audouinii*. 20/11 two flocks of 100 + 500 and in addition 50+ here and there Agadir to Tamri.
40. ***Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*. 20/11 ++ Agadir to Tamri, + Oued Massa, 21/11 + Agadir.
41. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*. 20/11 +++ Agadir to Tamri, + Oued Massa, 21/11 + Agadir, 28/11 hundreds along highway by Casablanca.
42. **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis*. 20/11 25 Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa.
43. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*. 23/11 1+2 Tagdilt old track.
44. **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*. 20/11 + Agadir, 21/11 +, 22/11 + Ait Ben Haddou.
45. **Common Wood-Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*. 21/11 3 Souss Valley, 26/11 525 (400 in one flock) Dayet Aoua, 30/11 30 Marrakesh.
46. ***Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*. 20/11 2 Agadir, 10+ Agadir to Tamri, 21/11 seen in most towns Souss Valley, 22/11 5+ Ait Ben Haddou, + Ouarzazate, + drive Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadès, 23/11 + Tinejdad, 24/11 32+ Cafe Yasmina, + Rissani, 25/11 + Erfoud, + Ar-Rachidia, + Midelt, 26/11 + Ifrane, + Boufacrane, 75+ Meknes, 28/11 +, 29-30/11 common Marrakesh.
47. **Laughing Dove** *Stigmatopelia senegalensis*. 20/11 1 Tamri, 22/11 4+ Dadès Valley, 23/11 + Tinejdad, 24/11 6 hotel just N of Cafe Yasmina.
48. **Little Owl** *Athene noctua*. 20/11 1 Oued Massa, 25/11 1 near Midelt.
49. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis*. 29/11 30+ Marrakesh. Only seen right at sunset.
50. **Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*. 21/11 1 near Agadir airport.
51. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*. 25/11 1 female Forêt de Cèdres, 26/11 1 male + 1 + heard Forêt de Cèdres.
52. **Levaillant's Woodpecker** *Picus vaillantii*. 26/11 2 male + 2 heard Forêt de Cèdres.
53. ***Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus*. 20/11 4 Oued Massa.
54. ***Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis*. Two subspecies recorded (which may be split to the species *L. elegans*):
 - a. Ssp. *algirensis*. 20/11 4 Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 5+ Souss Valley, 8 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 25/11 1 Oued R'Mal, 3 Ar-Rachidia-Col du Zud, 27/11 1 Meknes-Volubilis, 28/11 11 Meknes-Marrakesh.
 - b. Ssp. *elegans*. 21/11 1 btw. Taliouine and to Anzal, 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou to Ouarzazate, 1 E of Ouarzazate, 23/11 2 drive Boumalne-Erfoud, 24/11 1 Cafe Yasmina.

55. **Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*. 26/10 20+ Forêt de Cèdres. Some individuals looked almost black-capped but a closer look always revealed dense broadly streaked crown. Likely subspecies *minor*.
56. ***Magpie** *Pica pica mauritanica*. 20/11 6 S of Agadir, 4 Oued Massa, 21/11 6 Souss Valley, 2 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 1 near Taliouine, 28/11 4+1 Meknes-Rabat. The blue skin-patch behind the eye is distinct. In the field it appears slightly neater and more agile compared to European Magpies. Candidate for being separated as a species.
57. ***Eurasian Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula*. 26/11 50+ Meknes, 27/11 50+ Meknes, 100+ Moulay Idriss.
58. **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis*. 24/11 2 Cafe Yasmina, 150+ pre-night roost S of Rissani, 25/11 3 near Erfoud. The large pre-roost is a surprisingly high number – most were seen at some distance, but about 25 ravens seen at close range were of this species.
59. **Common Raven** *Corvus corax*. 20/11 2 Agadir to Tamri, 25/11 2 near Ar-Rachidia, 30 E of Forêt de Cèdres, 5 Forêt de Cèdres, 26/11 30+ Forêt de Cèdres. The subspecies, *tingitanus*, is candidate for being split to separate species.
60. **Coal Tit** *Parus ater atlas*. 26/11 30+ Forêt de Cèdres. Large black throat reaching upper breast makes an obvious difference to Coal Tits in Europe.
61. **Great Tit** *Parus major*. 20/11 2 Agadir to Tamri, 22/11 2 Ait Ben Haddou, 26/11 5 Forêt de Cèdres.
62. **African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae*. 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou, 26/11 1 Forêt de Cèdres.
63. ***Greater Hoopoe-Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes*. 23/1 2+1 Tagdilt old track, 24/11 2 Erfoud-Cafe Yasmina.
64. **Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey*. 22/11 1 male 1 female btw. Skoura and the pass Tizi-n-Tadderts.
65. **Bar-tailed Lark** *Ammomanes cinctura*. 24/11 8 Erfoud-Cafe Yasmina, 1 Cafe Yasmina-Rissani.
66. **Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti*. 22/11 4+2+1 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 24/11 2 Erfoud, 2 S of Rissani.
67. **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*. 24/11 2 N of Cafe Yasmina.
68. ***Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens*. 23/11 200+ Tagdilt old track.
69. ***Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*. 20/11 5+ Oued Massa, 27/11 6+ Volubilis. Looked in vain for the newly separated *G. macrodactyla* in the desert and when approaching Marrakesh from the north.



Crested lark at Volubilis



Thekla Lark near Rafingoult

70. ***Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae*. 20/11 4 Agadir to Tamri, 21/11 6 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 23/11 5 Tagdilt old track, 1 drive Tinejdad-Erfoud, 25/11 3 all day, 4 Zeida plains, 28/11 6 N of Marrakesh.

71. ***Temminck's Horned Lark** *Eremophila bilopha*. 22/11 3+1 E of Hotel Soleil Blue (Boumalne Dadés), 23/11 50+ Tagdilt old track.
72. ***Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus barbatus*. 20/11 25+ Agadir, 15+ Agadir to Tamri, 10+ Oued Massa, 21/11 common Souss Valley, 22/11 30+ Ait Ben Haddou, 5 Tamdakht, + Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 23/11 2 Tinejdad, 25/11 5 all day, 27/11 5+ Volubilis, 28/11 + Meknes-Marrakesh, 29-30/11 10+ Marrakesh.
73. **Brown-throated Sand Martin** *Riparia paludicola*. 20/11 1 Oued Massa.
74. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*. 20/11 3 Oued Massa.
75. **Eurasian Crag-Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*. 21/11 1 after Aoulouz, 22/11 4 Ait Ben Haddou, 2 Tamdakht, 4 Boumalne Dadés, 25/11 10+ Ar-Rachidia reservoir.
76. **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*. 20/11 heard Oued Massa.
77. **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*. 20/11 10+ Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou, 23/11 1 Tinejdad, 24/11 8 Hotel Kasbah Der Kaoua, 8 Cafe Yasmina, 26/11 1 Azrou, 27/11 4 Volubilis, 1 Meknes, 30/11 1 Marrakesh.
78. **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa, 27/11 2 Volubilis.
- Un-identified Sylvia** *Sylvia sp.* 24/11 2 Hotel Kasbah Der Kaoua. The first was probably a Subalpine Warbler (*S.cantillans*) while the second was probably Tristam's Warbler (*S.deserticola*).
79. **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*. 22/11 1 female Ait Ben Haddou, 26/11 1 male Forêt de Cèdres, 27/11 5+ Volubilis.
80. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*. 20/11 4 Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 1 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 4 Ait Ben Haddou, 1 Tamdakht, 24/11 1 Cafe Yasmina, 25/11 1 Oued R'Mal, 27/11 8+ Volubilis.
81. **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*. 26/11 2 + heard Forêt de Cèdres.
82. **Wren Troglodytes troglodytes**. 26/11 1 heard Forêt de Cèdres.
83. **Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*. 26/11 6 Forêt de Cèdres. The ssp. *hispaniensis* to my eye had a paler reddish underside and neater bill compared to Central European *caesia*-nuthatches.
84. **Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*. 26/11 2 Forêt de Cèdres. The subspecies, *mauritanica*, looked to my eye a little more speckled on the upper-side – but only brief views.
85. **European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*, 26/11 2 Forêt de Cèdres.
86. **Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor*. 20/11 25+ S of Agadir, 21/11 100+ Agadir, 22/11 1 Ouarzazate, 25/11 50+ Zeida, 26/11 50+ Forêt de Cèdres, 100+ Meknes, 27/11 common Meknes and in farmland around, 28/11 common Meknes-Marrakesh, 300 in one flock Marrakesh, 29/11 2 Marrakesh, 30/11 50+ Marrakesh.
87. **Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula*. 20/11 1 male Agadir, 2 Tamri, 2 Agadir to Tamri, 6 Oued Massa, 21/11 10+ Souss Valley, 22/11 2 Ait Ben Haddou, 1 Boumalne Dadés, 24/11 1 Cafe Yasmina, 25/11 1 Azrou, 26/11 2 Azrou, 6 Forêt de Cèdres, 27/11 2 Meknes, 3 Volubilis. The strong bill of ssp. *mauretanicus* is notable.
88. **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*. 26/11 20+ Forêt de Cèdres.



89. ***Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*. 25/11 2 Forêt de Cèdres, 26/11 75+ Forêt de Cèdres. Likely the local subspecies *deichleri* which is paler and greyer than the nominate subspecies. Feeding on the red berries of the locally numerous Mistletoe *Viscum cruciatum*, the thrushes fully lived up to their name.
90. **European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*. 26/11 5 + heard Forêt de Cèdres, 27/11 1 heard Volubilis.
91. ***Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*. 21/11 1 near Taroudant, 1 male Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 4 Ait Ben Haddou, 24/11 1 Hotel Kasbah Der Kaoua, 27/11 2 Meknes, 10+ Volubilis.
92. ***Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri*. 20/11 2 Tamri, 4 Cap Rhir, 4 Oued Massa, 22/11 1 female Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 25/11 1 male Oued R'mal. NW African endemic. A beauty.
93. **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus*. 20/11 2 Tamroi, 6 Cap Rhir, 15 Oued Massa, 21/11 3 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 2 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 25/11 2 all day, 26/11 2 Azrou-Dayet Aoua, 27/11 6+ Volubilis, 28/11 5+ Meknes-Marrakesh.
94. ***Red-rumped Wheatear** *Oenanthe moesta*. 21/11 1 pair btw. Taliouine and to Anzal, 22/11 1 female Ait Ben Haddou, 23/11 5 Tagdilt old track.
95. **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*. 21/11 2 btw. Taliouine and to Anzal, 22/11 3 Ait Ben Haddou, 8 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 23/11 10+ drive Boumalne Dades-Erfoud, 24/11 10+ all day in desert, 25/11 12+ all day.
96. **Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucura*. 20/11 1 Agadir to Tamri, 21/11 2 btw. Taliouine and to Anzal, 22/11 3 Ait Ben Haddou, 23/11 3 Tagdilt old track, 25/11 3 Nzala, 2 Col du Zad.
97. **Blue Rock-Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*. 20/11 1 Agadir to Tamri, 1 Oued Massa, 21/11 3 Souss Valley, 2 btw. Taliouine and to Anzal, 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou, 4 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 25/11 1 all day.

98. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*. 20/11 10 Agadir, 5 Tamri, 10 Oued Massa, 21/11 common all over Souss Valley, 22/11 yes, 23/11 yes, 4 Tagdilt old track, 24/11 150+ Cafe Yasmina, 75+ at 6 camel-stables nearby Cafe Yasmina, 25/11 yes, 26/11 oh dear, 27/11 sure, 2 'Italian Sparrow' Meknes, 28/11 + Meknes-Marrakesh, 29-30/11 + Marrakesh.
99. **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*. 21/11 3 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult.
100. **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*. 20/11 1 Agadir, 26/11 1 Dayet Aoua.
101. **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*. 20/11 6 Agadir to Tamri, 21/11 5+ Souss Valley, 3 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 22/11 10+ Ait Ben Haddou, 1 Tamdakht, 2 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 23/11 2 Tinejdad, 4 drive Tinejdad-Erfoud, 24/11 4 Cafe Yasmina, 25/11 4 all day, 27/11 2 Meknes-Volubilis. No luck with the Moroccan White Wagtail *M.[a] subpersonata*.
102. **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*. 20/11 6 Tamri, 2 Agadir to Tamri, 2 Oued Massa, 21/11 5 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult, 26/11 5 (some could be European ssp) Forêt de Cèdres, 27/11 2 Meknes, 4 Volubilis. The majority were of ssp. *africana* but some of the birds in Forêt de Cèdres were probably European winter-visitors (ssp. *coeleps*).
103. **European Serin** *Serinus serinus*. 27/11 5 Meknes-Volubilis, 5 Volubilis.
104. **European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*. 21/11 1 Aragana Forest near Rafingoult. Very yellowish compared to European birds which corresponds well to the ssp. *aurantiventris*.
105. **European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*. 20/11 3+ 8 Oued Massa, 21/11 50+ Souss Valley, 22/11 1 Tamdakht, 25/11 20 all day, 26/11 10+ Azrou-Meknes, 27/11 5 Meknes-Volubilis, 28/11 + Meknes-Marrakesh.
106. **Eurasian Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*. 20/11 9 Oued Massa, 22/11 8 Ouarzazate-Boumalne Dadés, 23/11 1 Tagdilt old track, 25/11 20 all day, 28/11 + Meknes-Marrakesh.
107. **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus*. 22/11 1 Ait Ben Haddou, 23/11 2+4 Tagdilt old track, 24/11 1 near Hotel Kasbah Der Kaoua, 8 Cafe Yasmina.
108. **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. 26/11 15+ Forêt de Cèdres. The NW African subspecies, *buvryi*, is paler but overall similar to the nominate ssp.
109. **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*. 5/11 1 Zeida, 10 all day, 27/1 1 Meknes-Volubilis.
110. ***House Bunting** *Emberiza [striolata] sahari*. 20/11 2 Agadir, 4 Tamri, 21/11 4 Taroudant, 1 Talouine, 22/11 25+ Ait Ben Haddou, 23/11 8 Tinejdad, 27/11 1 Meknes, 29/11 15+ Marrakesh, 30/11 10 Marrakesh.

REPTILES

1. ***Spanish Terrapin** *Mauremys leprosa*. 21/11 3 Aoulouz.
2. **Fringe-toed lizard sp.** *Acanthodactylus sp.* 20/11 1 Oued Massa. A striped juvenile - both *A.busacki* and *A.aureus* is possible.
3. ***Moorish Gecko** *Tarentola mauritanica*. 27/11 1 Volubilis.

BUTTERFLIES

Only few seen: *Pieris napae* was fairly regular. *Cynthia cardui*. 20/11 2 Oued Massa.

During the trip we managed to get photos of 1 mammal, 29 birds and 2 reptiles. For each species this is indicated by and * in front of the species name.