

Southern Morocco

6-23 February 2009

Janne Ouwehand and Sander Bot

Introduction

Good birds, nice climate in February, cheap flights, reasons enough to visit Morocco. We took an Atlas-Blue flight from Brussel to Marrakech, and paid € 230 including taxes per person. In Morocco we stayed in budget accommodation and paid on average Dh100 per night for a double room. We travelled by public transport only. This limited us extensively, especially in the desert, and this is reflected in our species list. This was not only a bird watching trip, we for instance visited Tafraoute for hiking and mountain biking. The European bird guides cover Morocco, but besides a bird guide, the birdwatchers guide to Morocco by Bergier and Bergier (2003) is essential for finding the key locations mentioned in this and other trip reports from www.travellingbirder.com. We did not use the (overpriced and outdated) Gosney booklet.

Day by Day

February 6

Arrived in Marrakech at 4 PM. First new species of the trip was **House Bunting**, seen at the airport. A stroll in Marrakech before dark gave **Pallid Swift** and more **House Buntings**.

February 7

This full day of the trip was spent in Marrakech. We were lucky, it rained all day! Few birds seen today included: **Common Bulbul**, **White Stork**, **Little Swift** and **White Wagtail**.



House Bunting, Marrakech



Collared doves don't like rain, Marrakech

February 8

In Marrakech we saw some **Black Starlings**. Most of the day was used to travel by bus from Marrakech to Boumalne du Dades. The trip took 7,5 hours (Dh99 per person). We were one of the first to travel over the pass in the High Atlas that day. It was just cleared from the snow and was open in only one direction, fortunately our direction. Polite as I am, I offered my girl friend the window seat. I shouldn't have done that, she saw several **Moussier's Redstarts** and

a **White-crowned Wheatear** on the way. Other species seen during the long drive: 2 **Long-legged buzzards**, few **Black Wheatears**, Migrating **Barn Swallows** over the pass in the snow, 1 **Lilith's Owl**, 2 **Maghreb Magpies**, 1 **Atlas Chaffinch**, 2 **Desert Shrikes** (splitting Dutchies) and some **Atlas Horned Larks**. In Boumalne du Dades we stayed in the friendly auberge café Tamazirte (Dh100 for a double).

February 9

We got up early to be at the Tagdilt Track at the first light. It took a while before the owner realized he had to get out of his bed to open the door of the hotel. During the walk to the track we were surprised to find a **Barbary Falcon** in the red and white radio mast in the village. It gave great views. According to the birdwatchers guide the Tagdilt track starts at the military barracks. There does not start a road at that point anymore, but if you drive a bit further and take the first road to the right you're fine. The whole area should be good anyway. After a 10 minutes walk we were in the desert and walked around there till around 10AM. The hoped for Thick-billed Lark could not be found. Species we did see included 1 **Desert Lark**, 1 **Long-billed Crested Lark** (near the village), **Red-rumped Wheatear** (common), **Temminck's Lark** (common) and especially around the rubbish dump different groups of **Lesser Short-toed Lark**. Many dogs wander around near the rubbish dump, but fortunately they appeared to be more interested in each other than in us. After a late breakfast we took the minibus to the Gorge du Dades. We got out the bus a bit too early so we never saw the gorge itself in the end, but walking through the valley was very nice too. We saw many common species like **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Atlas Chaffinch**, **Black Wheatear**, **Rock Pigeon**, **Sparrowhawk** and we obtained our only good views of **Ultramarine Tit** of the trip. At dusk we heard and saw **Lilith's Owl** in Boumalne du Dades, again near the red and white radio mast. This is where the road is steep, between the village centre and the military barracks. The nights here are very cold and our room had no heater so that was a bit unpleasant.

February 10

This morning we saw ourselves again at the Tagdilt Track at first light. Despite extensive searching till 2 PM we could not find Thick-billed Lark. We saw mainly the same species as yesterday and **Temminck's Lark** was surprisingly common. We also found two **Hoopoe Larks**. At the edge of the village, near the military barracks, we found a group of 40 **European Serins** and some **White-crowned Wheatears**. At dusk a group of **Cattle Egrets** came to roost in a tree near the Shell Petrol Station.



Boumalne, seen from the Tagdilt track



Cattle Egret, Boumalne du Dades

February 11

This day was used to travel from Boumalne to Erg Chebbi. In our hotel in Boumalne we met Houssijn who's brother runs a hotel near the Erg Chebbi sand dunes, so we made a reservation for that hotel. We met his brother, Hasan, at the Erfoud bus station. From there we took the minibus to his hotel, which is called Etoile du Dunes. The hotel is also on the map in the Birdwatchers guide to Morocco. The hotel was very nice and good value for money: we paid Dh 150 per person per night including very good breakfast and dinner. Between Erfoud and the hotel I saw a **Hoopoe Lark** from the bus, and a stroll around the hotel in the late afternoon was especially good for species who occur even in Amsterdam: **Feral Pigeons**, **Collared Doves**, **House Sparrows** and a **White Wagtail**. But the **White-crowned Wheatears** are less frequent in Holland I have to admit.

February 12

This was the day we realized that a car would be nice. You can not walk too far from your hotel, and there was for instance no wadi or desert warbler habitat at walking distance. We could however walk to Café Yasmina, where Tristram's Warbler and Desert Sparrow are regularly reported. From the latter, only one pair was present last year between Yasmina and the next auberge, la Caravane. We checked all House Sparrows we encountered, but could not find any Desert Sparrows. Café Yasmina was surrounded by a lake, which held 4 **Ruddy Shelducks**. We ordered a tea at the terrace and birded the trees around the terrace in hope to find a **Tristram's Warbler**. We found one while **Sardinian Warbler** and **Chiffchaff** were much more common. A walk around the lake produced 1 **Spanish Wagtail**, 3 **Kentish Plovers**, 1 **Teal**, 1 **Bluethroat** and many Vagrant Emperors (*Anax ephippiger*, a dragonfly).



White-crowned Wheatear, Erg Chebbi

February 13

Another day in the desert. We walked to Yasmina again. No Desert Sparrow, but a male **Spanish Sparrow** was found in a group of **House Sparrows** at the café. This time we could not find any Tristram's Warblers, but the lake held 2 **Marbled Ducks**. The Afternoon was spend in the sand dunes. No birds there, but the highest sand dune at the northern end of Erg Chebbi gave spectacular views.



Views from the dunes near café Yasmina, Erg Chebbi

February 14

While having breakfast outside, we enjoyed a **Barbary Falcon** hunting the local doves, spectacular. After breakfast we took the bus to Erfoud. Because the bus to Ouarzazate departed only at 3PM we had our lunch alongside the river in Erfoud. With hindsight a good idea because this was the only place were we would see a **Moroccan Wagtail**. We also had great views of a pair of **Trumpeter Finch** here. Rest of the day we were in the bus to Ouarzazate. In Ouarzazate we changed busses and took the bus to Agadir.

February 15

The bus arrived at Inezgane, near Agadir at 6 AM, and here we took the bus to Tafraoute, a place in the Anti-Atlas. From a birders perspective you can skip this place, but I still can recommend it, the area is really nice. We arrived in Tafraoute at 11 AM. We took a room in the friendly hotel Tanger and paid only Dh60 for a double per night. After a well-deserved rest we walked to the Blue Rocks, near Agard-Oudad. By far the best bird we saw was a male **Isabelline Wheatear**. I realized that this species is very scarce in Morocco so I made a good description and submitted the record to the Moroccan Rarity Committee. **Moussier's Redstarts** are very common here, and so are **Crested Larks** and **Sardinian Warblers**. We also saw **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Cirl Bunting**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Atlas Chaffinch**, **Desert Shrike**, **Great Tit** and **Rock Pigeon**.



Tristram's Warbler habitat near Tafraoute

February 16

You can rent mountain bikes in Taфраoute (Dh80), and this is a good way to explore the area around Taфраoute. While biking some 10km south of Taфраoute, a small *Sylvia* warbler crossed the road, and sure enough this appeared to be a male **Spectacled Warbler**, a lifer I always managed to miss so far. A few kilometres further we found a pair as well. Near Agarsif a group of ca. 20 **Trumpeter Finches** was feeding close to the road. Other noteworthy species seen this day: **Black Wheatear**, many **Crested Larks**, **Atlas Chaffinch**, **Hoopoe** and **Desert Shrike**.

February 17

We had lunch at 7:15 at our hotel terrace, when a puzzling falcon flew past several times. Fortunately it landed on the red-white radio mast in the village, and with the telescope we could see it was an falcon with characters of both Barbary and Peregrine Falcon. See the species list for a description. After lunch we had a productive walk to the village Agard-Oudad. Besides the earlier mentioned species seen here 2 days ago we also found **Tristram's Warblers**. We had only bad views at Yasmina, so this sighting was very welcome. We found 2 males in a more dry habitat compared tot the Sardinian and Spectacled Warblers. Very exact GPS location: N29.41'38" W8.58'34". We left Taфраoute at 2 PM, and it took the bus an unpleasant 6 hours to reach Inezgane. This is a very depressing place, but because it is a good gateway for the Oueds, we took a hotel here for the next 3 nights (Dh130 for a double).

February 18

We got up early in the hope to have a full day at Oued Massa. But transport to Massa was very low at this time of the day. After waiting 45 minutes for more passengers for the shared (grand) taxi, we gave up and took the bus to Tiznit, and were dropped of at the junction to Sidi Rbat. We got a ride to Massa, and finally arrived at the national park. It is nice to walk along the river to the sea up and down, and added many new trip species. One of the target species, Plain Martin, could no be found. **Black-crowned Tchagra** however proved to be easy, and was seen and heard singing between the wardens house and the sea. We saw different colour ringed **Eurasian Spoonbills**, and managed to read the colour rings of one individual. The absence of wagtails was notable. We expected to find Moroccan and Spanish Wagtails here or at Oued Souss, but we found none. At the beach we found a group of roosting **Lesser Black-backed** and **Yellow-legged Gulls**. In this group we also found 10 **Audouin's Gulls** and 10 **Sandwich Terns**. Other interesting species seen along the Oued Massa: 5 **Greater Flamingo's**, **White-breasted Cormorants**, 2 **Squacco Herons**, 70 **Common Cranes**, 1 **Quail**, 1 **Kingfisher**, **Moussier's Redstart** (common), some **Maghreb Magpies** and 1 **Cirl Bunting**. At 7PM we took bus 17 from Massa back to Inezgane.



Maghreb Magpies, Oued Massa



Oued Massa

February 19

I accept missing quite some species, but dipping on Bald Ibis was no option. So this morning we took an Essaouira bound grand taxi (shared taxi for 6 persons) from Inezgane and arrived at Tamri at 10:30AM. Because we are a bit immobile without a car, our strategy was to wait at the river mouth for drinking birds at midday. While waiting, a group of **Pallid Swifts** was flying above us and at the river mouth we saw 35 **Audouin's Gulls** and our only **Marsh Harrier** and **Reed Warbler** of the trip. At 11:18 the first **Bald Ibis** arrived and after some 20 minutes of bathing and preening it flew away. Unexpectedly this also appeared to be the last one who came down to drink. However, we saw 5 other birds flying past. Later that day we met Swiss bird watchers who saw 100 birds some kilometres north of Tamri. Well, we are happy that at least one of them decided to drink at the river mouth that day! At 13:15 we took bus no 61 to Agadir, damage: Dh9. Walking from the city centre to Oued Souss appeared to be a bit far so we took a taxi to the reserve. While our taxi was driving along the river, approaching the end of the sealed road I noticed a Barbary partridge sitting on the wall of the golf course! A weird sight, and when the taxi stopped, another bird joined, and 2 **Barbary Partridges** decided to stand on the wall of the golf course for several minutes, allowing fantastic views. After this sighting we walked along the river to the sea. Many other people did the same, so there was substantial disturbance. Despite this we saw: 1 **Peregrine**, 1 **Black Kite**, first **Meadow Pipits** of the trip, 1 **Mediterranean Gull**, 3 **Slender-billed Gulls**, 20 **Greater Flamingo's**, 1 **Little Stint** and a group **Maghreb Magpies**. At dusk we tried to find Red-necked Nightjar. We waited near the river, near where the sealed road along the river ends, and turns to the Palace. When nearly dark one nightjar flew past, and not much later at least one **Red-necked Nightjar** started calling. They were a bit distant, somewhere in the backyard of Mohammed VI. Fortunately Swiss bird watchers were also waiting for the nightjar, so we got a ride back to Agadir.

February 20

No birds today because we used this day for travelling to Marrakech and do the necessary shopping there.

February 21

Oukaïmeden was our destination for today. We initially scheduled this for the start of our trip, but heavy snowfall made the road impassable back then. But not this time. Grand Taxi's to Oukaïmeden depart just outside town, at a place called Bab er Rob, and are expensive: Dh100 per person. Everything went smooth this time, and we arrived already at 10:30 at the ski resort. We found out that Club Alpine Francais was full booked, it was apparently vacation time. Fortunately the neighbour had still space, and we got a room for Dh150 per person. While having lunch at the balcony of the room we found a **African Crimson-winged Finch**, a good start! After lunch we walked to the radar station up and down and saw **Choughs** and **Alpine Choughs**, many **Atlas Horned Larks**, some **Atlas and Common Chaffinches**, 1 **Mistle Thrush**, 4 **Ravens** and a **Rock Bunting** on the chimney next door. In the afternoon we took the ski lift, bringing us to an altitude of 3268m. Not particularly good for birds (actually, no birds at all at this altitude), but the views are certainly worth the Dh 25.

February 22

Before 7AM we were outside, walking to the parking lots. We expected to be the only one outside at this time of the day, but this was not the case. This must be one of the busiest days in Oukaïmeden, probably a combination of vacation time, weekend and good snow conditions. Despite the many people around at the parking lot in the village, we found 10 **African Crimson-winged Finches**. We quickly walked to the parking lot between the village

and the ski lift. No people here yet, but good numbers of **African Crimson-winged finch**: about 50 birds! So apparently much snow is good for observing finches. Probably they rely more on the parking lots when the rest of their habitat is covered with snow. In the group also some **Rock Sparrows**, **Atlas Horned Larks**, **Choughs** and **Alpine Choughs** were common on the parking lots as well. After an hour the crowd slowly took over the parking lot, so we went back to the hotel asking ourselves what to do the rest of the day. Without own transportation but with heavy backpacks we decided not even to try for the woodpecker and to go back to Marrakech for some final souvenir shopping in the souqs. We took a minibus and later a bus back to the city. On the way we saw our first **Red-rumped Swallows** of the trip. On the 23rd we did not see any birds, because our flight departed already at 7:20 AM.



African Crimson-winged Finch



Atlas Horned Lark, Oukaïmeden

Species List

Species marked with an asterisk (*) are sound recorded. You can find the recordings on <http://www.xeno-canto.org/africa/> Great website!

The numbers before the sightings refer to the day in February.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

18: Common in the Oued Massa, specially at the very end of the river, where a group of 20 was present.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

18, 19: Small numbers at sea at Oued Massa and Tamri.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

18: Both ssp. *carbo* and *lucidus* common at Oued Massa.

***Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

Common.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

18: 2 at Oued Massa.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

15: few birds between Agadir and Tafraoute.

18: Fairly common, Oued Massa.

19: Common, Oued Sous.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Breeding on the old city wall of Marrakech.

19: Group of ca 250 birds circling.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

18: Very common in Oued Massa, with groups of up to 100 birds.

Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremite*

19: One bird came to drink at the river mouth near Tamri from 11:18AM on, 5 others flying past around midday.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

18: Common at the Oued Massa, several wearing colour rings.

19: 3 at Oued Sous.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

18: 5 at Oued Massa.

19: 20+ at Oued Sous.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

12, 13: 2 pairs at the lake near Café Yasmina, Erg Chebbi

19: 2 at the river mouth near Tamri.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

18: Pair at Oued Massa.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

18: Pair at Oued Massa.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

18: 3 females at Oued Massa.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

18: 1 female Oued Massa.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

12: 1 male at the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

Marbled Duck *marmaronetta angustirostris*

13: 2 at the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

18: 2 females at Oued Massa.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

18: 1 male at Oued Massa.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

17: 1 seen from the bus near Tiznit.

19: 1 Oued Sous.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

19: 1 female at the Tamri river mouth.

Atlas Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*

Fairly common, for instance seen in the Anti-Atlas, High Atlas and Tagdilt track.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

9: 1, Dades valley.

18: 1, Oued Massa.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Common, seen at Erg Chebbi, Tiznit, Oued Massa etc.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco Peregrinus*

19: 1 at the Oued Sous.

See also Barbary Falcon.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*

9: In the early morning 1 adult in the radio mast at Boumalne du Dades.

14: Adult hunting the pigeons near the hotel at Erg Chebbi.

17: In Tafraoute one adult with characters of both Peregrine and Barbary Falcon. First seen in flight, and later on the radio mast in the village.

Short description: flight as peregrine, big bird, slow wing beats.

Very broad moustache. Upper breast and throat white, ground colour of breast and belly crème. Barring on underparts, especially flanks and trousers, intensity intermediate between Barbary and *brookei* Peregrine. Light grey upperparts, as in Barbary. Some brown in the neck.

Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara*

19: 2 birds on the wall of the golf course at Oued Sous

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

18: 2 calling at Oued Massa.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Common.

Crane *Grus grus*

18: 70 birds at Oued Massa; first landing in the fields south of the river, later in flight again.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

19: Common at Oued Sous.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

18: Common at Oued Massa.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

17: 1 seen from the bus at dusk, between Tiznit and Inezgane.

19: Heard while waiting for the nightjar, Oued Sous.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

19: 1, Oued Sous.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

12: 3 at the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

18: 1 at the beach near Oued Massa.

19: Few birds Oued Sous.

Grey Plover *Puvialis squatarola*

19: Common at Oued Sous.

Red Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

19: 1 Oued Sous.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

18, 19: Common at Oued Massa and Oued Sous.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

19: Several birds at Oued Sous.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

19: 1 at Oued Sous.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

18: 1 at Oued Massa and.

19: Few at Oued Sous.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

18, 19: Both seen at Oued Massa and Oued Sous.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

19: Few birds at Oued Sous.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

19: Common at Oued Sous.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
18 Group (20) at Oued Massa.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
19: Very common at Oued Sous.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*
19: 3 at Oued Sous.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
19: 1 first winter at Oued Sous.

Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*
18,19: Common at Oued Massa and Tamri.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus greallsii/intermedius*
18,19: Very Common at Oued Massa and Tamri.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*
18: 10 birds on the beach, and 20 at sea near Oued Massa.
19: 35 roosting at the Tamri river mouth.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
18: 10 on the beach near Oued Massa.

Common Pigeon *Columba livia*
8: In the High Atlas, from the bus.
9: Common in the Dades valley.
Common in Erg Chebbi, Tafraoute and Tamri.
Especially in the mountains all birds looked perfectly fine.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*
Small numbers in Marrakech and Oued Massa.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
Very common, seen everywhere, also in Erg Chebbi.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
Fairly common at Erg Chebbi.
17: 1 at Tafraoute.
18: Few birds at Oued Massa.

Lilith's Owl *Athene lilith*
Recent split from Little Owl.
8: 1 From the bus between Ouarzazate and Boumalne du Dades
9: 2 birds seen while actively calling at dusk in Boumalne du Dades. If you walk from the village centre in the direction of the Tagdilt track, the road soon becomes steep, with views on the village on your right. At that point, the birds were on the houses on the left side of the road.

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

19: One seen and 1 or 2 calling near the Royal Palace, Oued Sous. See main text for site description.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Swifts spec. were common. This species identified with certainty at Tiznit.

***Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*

Swifts spec. were common. Positively identified at Marrakech and a big group at Tamri.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

7: Few birds flying over the main square at Marrakech.

20: 2 from the bus between Agadir and Marrakech.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

18: 1 at Oued Massa.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

13: 1 at Erg Chebbi.

16: Around Tafraoute.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

9: 1 at the Tagdilt track, at the edge of Boumalne de Dades.

Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

10: 2 birds at the Tagdilt Track.

11: 1 from the bus between Rissani and the hotel in Erg Chebbi.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

9,10: Different groups at the Tagdilt track, especially near the rubbish dump.

Long-billed Crested Lark *Galerida macrorhyncha macrorhyncha*

Recent split from crested Lark. All crested larks southeast of the High Atlas should be this species.

9: 1 in Boumalne du Dades, near the start of the Tagdilt Track.

Crested larks spec were very common near Tafraoute. According the distribution map in the scientific paper about this complex, Tafraoute is just in the range of Long-billed. However, the bills of these birds where not long at all, so I doubt whether Long-billed was involved.

***Common Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata riggenbachi*

Common along the Atlantic coast.

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Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

9, 10: Fairly common on the Tagdilt track, usually single birds.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

9,10: One group near Boumalne du Dades, near the start of the Tagdilt track.

***Atlas Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris atlas*

8: Small group seen from the bus while taking the pass in the High Atlas.
21,22: Very common at Oukaimeden.

Temminck's Lark *Eremophila bilopha*

Common at the Tagdilt track, usually small groups of 2-4 birds.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

18: 1 at Oued Massa.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicon*

8, 9, 10: some migration was noted with few birds flying south.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

22: At least 2 birds near Marrakech, and 1 in Marrakech. Probably just arrived.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common, daily low numbers of migrating birds, once at 2200m in the High Atlas.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

8: 1 from the bus between Marrakech and Boumalne du Dades.
15: Group seen from the bus between Inezgane and Tafroute.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

19: In the late afternoon small numbers flying south at Oued Sous.

Spanish Wagtail *Motacilla iberiae*

Only one definitive record!

12: 1 at the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

18: 1 'yellow wagtail spec' flying past at Oued Massa was probably this species, it made the call of a yellow wagtail of southern origin, but head pattern was not seen

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Very common, also in the desert. Large groups in Boumalne du Dades and at dusk flying over de souqs at Marrakech.

Moroccan Wagtail *Motacilla subpersonata*

Not seen at the Oueds!

14: 1 adult along the river in Erfoud.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

9: Common along the river in the Dades Gorge.

***Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Abundant, also in urban areas like Marrakech.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Fairly common, for instance seen at Marrakech.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

12, 13: 1, maybe 2 individuals along the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

***Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common, for instance near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi and near Tafraoute.

***Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri*

8: Few birds seen from the bus in the High Atlas.

Very common around Tafraoute and common at the Atlantic coast.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Fairly common, seen at different places.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

15: 1 male in summer plumage near Tafraoute. Scarce bird in Morocco.

Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta*

9, 10: Only seen at the Tagdilt track, but common there.

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

Fairly common at Boumalne du Dades, very common at Erg Chebbi.

17: 1 Adult in the Anti Atlas seen from the bus, between Tafraoute and Tiznit. Not common in this region, based on the fact that we saw none around Tafraoute itself.

***Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucura*

8: Commonly seen from the bus in the High Atlas.

9, 10: Seen in Boumalne du Dades and in the Dades valley.

Fairly common around Tafraoute.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Common near Tafraoute.

9: Few individuals in the Dades valley.

***Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

Common.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

17: 1 bird at Tafraoute was the only sighting.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

21, 22: Singing in Oukaïmeden.

***Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*

18, 19: Heard singing at Oued Massa and Tamri.

***Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*

18, 19: Heard and seen at Oued Massa and Tamri.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

19: Song heard at Tamri.

Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*

12: 1 elusive bird at Yasmina gave brief views.

17: At least 2 near Tafraoute, in dry habitat. Exact GPS location: N29.41'38" W8.58'34".

Both were males, somewhere between summer and winter plumage, and one was sub-singing.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

16: At two different locations while mountain biking around Tafraoute. Both in fairly green riverbeds near villages, ca. 10 km. south of Tafraoute.

***Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*

Common, found for instance at Erg Chebbi, Tafraoute and the Atlantic coast.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Fairly common, singles seen at Marrakech, Dades valley, Tafraoute and Oued Massa.

***Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common, for instance good numbers in Marrakech but also near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

***Ultramarine Tit** *Cyanistes ultramarines*

Seen at only two locations:

9: At least 3 at the Dades valley.

18: 2 at the Nightjar spot, Oued Massa.

Great Tit *Parus Major*

Fairly common with singles at different locations.

***Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus*

18: Several birds heard and seen at Oued Massa, between the warden's house and the sea, on both sides of the path.

***Desert Grey Shrike** *Lanius elegans/algeriensis/koenigi*

The Dutch further split the Southern Grey Shrike, and both subspecies occurring in Morocco belong to Desert Grey Shrike.

algeriensis: Common at Tafraoute and the Atlantic coast.

elegans: 1 from the bus between Boumalne de Dades and Erfoud.

Maghreb Magpie *Pica mauretanicus*

8: 2 seen from the bus, just north of Marrakech.

Common at the Atlantic coast, a big group seen at Oued Sous.

***Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

21, 22: Very common at Oukaïmeden.

***Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

21, 22: Very common at Oukaïmeden.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

8: 5 from the bus near the High Atlas.

17: 3 near Tafraoute.

19: 2 at Tamri.
21: 4 at Oukaïmeden.

Spotless starling *Sturnus unicolor*
Fairly common in Marrakech
18: Common in Massa.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Abundant.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
1 Male in a large group of House Sparrows at Café Yasmina, Erg Chebbi.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*
Common in Oukaïmeden.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
21: Few birds at Oukaïmeden were the only sightings.

***Atlas Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs Africana*
Common, but fairly shy, so took a while before I got good views of a male. Small numbers at:
Dades valley, Tafraoute, High Atlas.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*
Common.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*
Common.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Common.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
Fairly common, large group near Tafraoute on the 16th.

***African Crimson-winged Finch** *Rhodopechys alienus*
Recently split from its Asian counterpart.
21: One at 11AM opposite Club Alpine Francias.
22: Surprisingly common at 'P1', up to 60 tame birds present! See also main text.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*
14: Pair near the river in Erfoud.
16: Group of up to 20 individuals along the road while mountain biking south of Tafraoute.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*
15: 1 singing male at the northern end of Tafraoute.
18: 1 singing male at Oued Massa.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*
21: 1 on a chimney in Oukaïmeden.

***House Bunting** *Emberiza sahari*

Very common, especially in villages and towns.

Butterflies

Anthocharis belia Fairly common around Tafraoute

Euchloe charlonia Once at Tafraoute

Lycaena phlaeas Once at Tafraoute

Vanessa cardui Common, seen even in the desert

Dragonflies

Anax ephippiger Abundant at the lake near Yasmina, Erg Chebbi

For any questions, feel free to email me: sanderbotATyahoo.co.uk