

MOROCCO

Trip Report 8th to 18th April 2006

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ITINERARY

8 April - Depart Newcastle, via Heathrow; arrive Casablanca at dusk to discharge some passengers, fly onward to Marrakech (arrived after dark).

9 April - Marrakech - Asif-n-Oumassine (fossil-sellers layby) - Oukaimeden - Anouffig - Marrakech.

10 April - Marrakech - farmland near Ait Ourir - Maison Forestière de Toufliat - gully 7km south of Taddert - Tizi-n-Tichka - Oarzazate.

11 April - Oarzazate - roadside semi-desert wadi - Barrage El Mansour Eddahbi - café by Asif M'Goun river crossing - Boumalne Dadès - Tagdilt track - Boumalne Dadès.

12 April - Boumalne Dadès - Tagdilt track - roadside desert wadi - Rissani - Merzouga.

13 April - Merzouga - Hotel Yasmina grounds - Rassini - Merzouga.

14 April - Merzouga - Tagdilt track - Oarzazate.

15 April - Oarzazate - 29km post near Amerzgane - Oued Souss - Agadir.

16 April - Agadir - Oued Massa - Massa bridge - Oued Massa fields - Agadir.

17 April - Agadir - Oued Massa - Tamri - Cap Rhir - Taroudant.

18 April - Taroudant - Tizi-n-Test - Asni - Marrakech; overnight flight back.

19 April - Arrived home, via Gatwick.

Note that references to Souss-Massa in the systematic list that follows relate to birds seen in the Parc National de Souss-Massa, part of Oued Massa. Other locations in the Oued Massa area are specifically mentioned.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Five at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Two at the Barrage near Ouzazate on 11th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Two were at the Oued Sous on 15th and about 15 were present in the Parc National de Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A drake at Souss-Massa on 16th was perhaps a little south of its normal winter range.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

A female at Souss-Massa on 17th.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Three at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

One was at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Several were either seen or heard singing at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Four were at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

In a northwesterly gale at least three flew north near Tamri on 17th.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

There was a light northerly passage off Souss-Massa on 16th, with at least 10 noted in 30 minutes; also one north near Tamri on 17th.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Three were at the Barrage near Ouarzazate on 11th, one at the mouth of the Oued Sous on 15th and up to 15 at Oued Massa in the Parc National de Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th. Several adults on the latter dates showed the extensive white breast plumage characteristic of *maroccanus*.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Two were at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th and one was in fields by the Oued Massa west of Massa village on 16th.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Noted regularly from the van in virtually all areas of cultivation, including over 50 on 11th and 40 on 15th. A spectacular sight involved around 150 adults and 3 young at many nests in the grounds of the Gendarmerie Royale at Asni on 18th.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

One noted at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th, two later the same day on the Asif M'Goun river at a café stop and several at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

At the Barrage east of Ouarzazate 3-4 were present on 11th, 23 were in the estuary of the Oued Sous at low tide on 15th and it was also noted at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

A few were noted at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th and also on 16th three were at the river west of Massa village.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Low numbers seen, mainly from the van, on four dates between 9th and 15th; also 26 thermalling together near Taroudannt on 18th. There were several nests around the police station at Asni on 18th, most with Cattle Egrets inhabiting the bases.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Up to 16 were at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th and on the former date a flock of at least 20 was in fields west of Massa village.

Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*

A drive along the road a few kilometres north of Tamri produced a minimum of 20 on 17th and many allowed close views as they fed on beetles, crickets and other large insects in bushy fields by the roadside. Fortunately, it was not necessary to leave the van and venture into a strongly gusting north west wind.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One flew past the Parc National de Souss-Massa on 17th.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Seven were in the estuary of the Oued Sous on 15th and three were at Souss-Massa next day.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Three individuals were seen en route between Taroudannt and Agadir on 15th in the Argan savanna country.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Recorded on a total of six dates, usually en route in ones and twos; also flocks of 18 and over 50 on 11th and 18 on 12th.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

A total of seven seen near Imiter en route between the Tagdilt track and Gorges du Todra on 12th.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Two at Forest Lodge on 10th, at least three were noted en route from Tazenakht to Taroudannt on 15th and another on the way to Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

The only record is of a female at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Singles over the Tagdilt Track on 11th, at the Kasbah Said wadi on the evening of 12th and over L'Oasis hotel gardens on 13th.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Singles at Forest Lodge on 10th and Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*

One over Tagdilt Track on 11th and one standing on top of an electricity pole beside the road to Taroudannt on 15th.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

Four were seen en route to Oukaimeden from Marrakech on 9th, 2-3 en route to Ouarzazate on 10th, one over the Tagdilt Track on 12th and one towards Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One over the Tizi-n-Tichka road near Toufliat en route to Ouarzazate on 10th and another next day along the road to Boumalne du Dadès.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted on seven dates during the trip but not in any great numbers; maximum of about 10 on 18th. None of those closely looked at were Lesser Kestrels

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus erlangeri*

One at a stop between Ouarzazate and Boumalne du Dadès on 11th and at least one over the Tagdilt track on 12th.

Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*

At least one, probably two, on the Tagdilt track on 12th. Several other unidentified falcons on several dates were either Barbary or Lanner, but not seen well enough for accurate identification.

Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara*

Three were heard calling on the road down from Oukaimeden to Marrakech on 9th. Birds were heard by the Barrage east of Oarzazate on 11th, one on 15th, two seen at Souss-Oued Massa on 17th, and one seen and another heard on 18th between Tizi-n-Test and Ijoukak.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One was calling from thick reed cover near the river bridge south of Massa village on 16th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Low numbers recorded at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Three at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th and at least 20 were present at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

At least two were in the Oued Sous on 15th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

The Oued Sous estuary held 15 on the evening of 15th and one was feeding at Souss-Massa on 17th.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avocetta*

Another species seen only at the Oued Sous, 12 on 15th.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

On the outward journey to Morocco on 8th, the aircraft landed at Casablanca to land some passengers, and observers on the port side could see several at the edges of the tarmac, as the plane taxied to the terminal.

Several were calling and a couple glimpsed over the heath near the Palais Royale, Agadir, at dusk on 15th, and two were viewed at close quarters in fields with the Bald Ibises near Tamri on 17th.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

Five flew together over the Tagdilt Track on 12th and another two were watched on the ground. Three flew over L'Oasis hotel gardens area on 13th, as did another next day and also on 14th one at the Tagdilt Track.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Two at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate and one on the Asif M'Goun river at a café stop on 11th, then 5 at a small body of water near Erfoud on 12th. Four were at Souss-Massa on 16th and one or two there on 17th.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

At least 12 were at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th and two at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Seven were on the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

At least two were at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Four were on the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

One at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th and another at Souss-Massa on 17th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Seven accompanied the Dunlin and Little Stint at the estuary of the Oued Sous on 15th and one was at Souss-Massa on 17th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Only recorded at the Oued Sous estuary; at least six on 15th.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Five at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

At least four at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Another species seen only at the superb Oued Sous estuary; 10 on 15th.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

In common with most of the waders, it was only recorded at the Oued Sous estuary; one on 15th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One on the Asif M'Goun river at the café stop on 11th, and one calling at the Oued Sous estuary on the evening of 15th were the only records.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Migrants seen and heard at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th and one present in a flooded field near the river west of Massa village on 16th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Singles en route to Ouarzazate on 10th and on the Asif M'Goun river at the café stop on 11th; 3 at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

One at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th, six at the estuary of the Oued Sous on 15th, and one or two at Souss-Massa on 18th.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*

A flock of gulls resting on the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th contained 12, in various stages of immature plumage.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

An estimated 10-12 were in the gull flock at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (cachinnans) atlantis*

Two at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th and about 20 in the gull flock resting on the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th. Also noted at the latter place on 17th and there were also "lots" in and around the resort of Agadir.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*

Two flew north along the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

One at the estuary of the Oued Sous on 15th, three next day in the beach area at Souss-Massa and one on 17th at the Parc.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Two at the Oued Sous estuary on 15th, about 10-15 loosely associated with the resting gulls on the beach at Souss-Massa on 16th, and about 50 fed close inshore south of Cap Rhir on 17th.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A pale-phase bird flew south off Souss-Massa on 16th.

Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles coronatus*

A group of five flew over the Tagdilt Track on 14th.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Seen on a daily basis in a variety of locations but not in any remarkable numbers. Birds, at least apparently, with no domestic ("Feral Pigeon") input seen at Oukaimeden and a few other sites.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Up to 10 noted on four days, often seen from the moving van; it was generally more evident in the Atlas Mountains on 10th.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Fairly common and widespread in lowlands and a few noted in desert areas.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Good numbers of this migrant could be found in cultivated areas and sometimes even in the deserts. It was particularly numerous on 15th and 18th, especially on roadside wires, with well over 100 on those days.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Evident in moderate numbers only in the period 11th to 17th, mostly en route from the van, but with 15+ in the oasis cultivation at Merzouga on 13th-14th.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One in flight near Toufliat Forest Lodge and another on a roadside wire towards Ouarzazate, both on 10th and one heard in the distance not far from Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

One flew across the track on the approach to the Palais Royale on the Red-necked Nightjar evening of 15th.

Pharaoh Eagle Owl *Bubo ascalaphus*

One peered from its hole at a well-known cliff site, about 5 kilometres from Rassini, on the afternoon of 13th.

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

Right on cue as darkness fell, at least four made their presence known over the heath next to the Palais Royale at Agadir on 15th. The security fence floodlights enabled particularly good views of one individual.

A nightjar, probably this species, flew in front of the van at dusk on 17th.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Perhaps surprisingly, the only one logged was at a stop between Ouzarzate and Boumalne du Dadès on 11th.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Hundreds scythed noisily through the dawn skies of central Marrakech on 9th and 10th. It was a familiar sight on most other days, although in much lesser numbers. Birds were visible incubating in nests at Marrakech Airport on 18th.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Several could be picked out from the Pallids in Marrakech on 9th and 10th; two were seen on 15th and a minimum of 10 between Taroudannt and Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Singles at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Northward passage was evident on most days but Bee-eaters can be difficult to spot as they 'quilt' their way across azure skies and doubtless many went uncounted. At least 150 were noted on 12th, the day when movement was most obvious.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

Two at a stop en route from Ouarzazate and five at the Barrage east of the town on 11th.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*

One landed near the top of a dead tree beside the river north of Asni on 18th and soon afterwards was joined by another, presumably its mate.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

On 11th a total of five was logged at various stages between Ouarzazate and Boumalne du Dadès; singles were found on each day from 12th to 15th inclusive.

Levaillant's Woodpecker *Picus vaillantii*

A female responded to the tape near Toufliat Forest Lodge on 10th and allowed prolonged views. Not long afterwards a male flew down the valley, calling. Later the same day, a couple of kilometres north of Tizi-n-Tichka, a male called repeatedly from the rock face and then in an adjacent small clump of trees, allowing excellent views. Another was calling, distantly, at Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

During the initial search for the previous species at Toufliat Forest Lodge, at least one and probably three were seen or heard on 10th.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

One was in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel near Erg Chebbi on 14th.

Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*

One was found at a chance roadside stop with suitable-looking habitat, east of Tagdilt on the way to Erfoud on 12th, which showed exceptionally well.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

More conspicuous than the next species; noted on all visits to the Tagdilt Track with two on 11th, 3 on 12th and 4 on 14th. Also two near Rassini on 13th and four en route on 15th. Also at the Mourning Wheatear site on 15th.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

Up to three at the Tagdilt Track on 11th, two on 12th and three on 14th. Also, one was singing and displaying at a desert stop near Merzouga on 13th. One was seen from the van beyond Tazenakt on 15th.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Found in small flocks on four dates: 20 on 11th and 15 in 12th at Tagdilt Track, around 10 at a stop between Erfoud and Er Rachidia on 14th and more than 30 near the Mourning Wheatear site on 15th.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

Two were at the Tagdilt Track on 12th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Much the commonest lark, it could often be found at the roadside and at most stops. One on 18th had a recently fledged youngster in attendance.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

Near the Auberge Soleil Bleu at Boumalne du Dadès at least 2 were noted on 12th and 3-4 were found along the Tagdilt Track on 14th.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris atlas*

A total of 11 were logged at the mountain ski resort of Oukaimeden on 9th.

Temminck's Lark *Eremophila bilopha*

Showed well in good numbers at Tagdilt Track, where it was the commonest lark; at least 5 on 11th, 15 or more on 12th and 8 on 14th. On 12th a pair was building a nest at the base of a saltbush.

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Two were seen near the bridge over the river south of Massa village on 16th. About an hour later 4-5 were hawking insects over the same river a few kilometres to the north. Two were also at Souss-Massa on 17th.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

The only two were seen flying north at a roadside stop between Ouarzazate and Boumalne du Dadès on 11th.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

A stop at a gully about 7 kilometres south of Taddert on the Tizi-n-Tichka road produced about 15 on 10th, three were in Gorges du Todra on 12th and two between Taroudannt and Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Noted daily but not in unduly high numbers and most were clearly on northward migration.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropsis daurica*

Small numbers were logged on the road to Oukaimeden on 9th and the road to Tizi-n-Tichka on 10th, but it was not seen again until 7-10 on 18th near Asni.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

A few were noted en route: one on 9th and 4 on 15th.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

At least two were discovered in farmland adjacent to the Mourning Wheatear site 29 kilometres west of Ouarzazate on 15th.

Meadow Pipit *Anthis pratensis*

Three late winterers off passage at the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Migrants were found in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel: 2-3 on 14th.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

About 13 near the Barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th, 9 in L'Oasis hotel gardens and a couple en route on 13th, 5 on 14th; at least 60 at the stop 29 kilometres west of Ouarzazate on 15th and a few more from 16th to 18th. Not all, by any means, allowed views good enough to make positive racial identification but birds showing characteristics of *flava*, *flavissima*, *iberiae*, *thunbergi* and *cinereocapilla* were all recorded during the trip.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

A real surprise find was an adult male at Souss-Massa on 17th, which settled in a relatively small area to allow prolonged views. It is understood to be only the third record for Morocco.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Three on 9th, one on 10th and singles on 12th and 18th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Generally seemed to be scarce: singles in the supermarket car park at Marrakech on 9th, en route on 14th and at Agadir a couple of days later.

Two males, adult and probably subadult, of the distinctive race or species *subpersonata* were encountered by the river north of Asni on 18th.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Two were heard on 9th and singles were noted on 10th and 18th.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Seen on every day, it was fairly conspicuous in towns, villages and cultivated areas.

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

A stop at a likely looking spot en route to Boumalne de Dadès from Ouarzazate on 11th produced four. Singles were at the Kasbah Said wadi on 12th and two or three in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel on 13th and 14th.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Heard, and occasionally seen, almost daily in suitable habitats. One at the Yasmina on 13th and three in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel on 14th were more obviously migrants off-passage.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

At least five were at altitude in Oukaïmeden on 9th and one was seen en route on 12th.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Passage migrants were noted as follows: 3 on 11th, 3-4 on 12th, 5 on 13th, 5-6 on 14th and one on 16th. Locations included the Ouarzazate Barrage, the Kasbah Said wadi, the Yasmina and L'Oasis hotel gardens.

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*

A pair at Oukaïmeden on 9th were the first, followed the same day by three at Anouffig en route back to Marrakech. Another five were seen next day en route to Ouarzazate. After one en route to Agadir on 15th, 3-4 were in the Oued Massa area on 16th and 17th, and three en route to Marrakech on 18th.

There can be few more attractive species named in honour of the 'finder'; no doubt Monsieur Jean Moussier would have been delighted had he lived to see it so named, in 1852.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Singles at the Tagdilt Track on 11th, in the Kasbah Said wadi on 12th, a pair at the Pharaoh Eagle owl site near Rassini on 13th, singles in L'Oasis hotel gardens on and at a desert stop on 14th and three near the Mourning Wheatear site on 15th.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Pairs at the bridge west of Massa village on 16th, at Oued Massa on 16th and two pairs at the latter site on 17th. The birds were noted as distinctly paler birds than the UK race *hibernans*.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Small numbers were found in a variety of places en route; maxima 4 on 12th and 5 on 15th.

At least 8, mostly males, of the distinctive race or species *seebohmi* were at Oukaimeden on 9th, and two at the summit of the Tizi-n-Tichka pass on 10th.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

Three en route to Tizi-n-Tichka on 10th and one at the Kasbah Said wadi on 12th.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Regularly encountered in arid areas from 11th to 15th, including 8 on 12th and 16 on 14th. Also on 15th, near the Mourning Wheatear site, a female was sitting on a nest, with the male in close attendance.

Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta*

This resident was found only at the Tagdilt Track, the first a pair on 11th somewhat incongruously beside a burning, stinking rubbish tip! Two more were seen that day, 5-6 on 12th and at least 7, plus three fledged young on 14th.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

A pair was at a recognised site 29 kilometres west of Ouarzazate on 15th, and one briefly at the roadside near the Tizi-n-Bachkoun pass between there and Tazenakht on 15th.

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

Counts reached double figures on most days from 11th to 15th (the only dates it was seen), often at the roadside or on wires, buildings etc.

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*

A pair was found in a roadside gully about 7 kilometres south of Taddert on 10th and another en route, two between Tazenakht and Taroudannt on 15th and two towards Tizi-n-Test on 18th, one of which was at Chafarni.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Two at Oukaimeden on 9th, one en route next day and three in the Gorges du Todra on 12th.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Not difficult to find in natural vegetation or cultivated areas, even in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel near the magnificent dunes of Erg Chebbi.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

One, presumably a late wintering bird off passage, was near Tizi-n-Tichka on 10th.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Three in the Oukaimeden area on 9th, a few near Tizi-n-Tichka next day and two near Tizi-n-Test on 18th.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Several heard and/or seen en route on 9th, 10th, 12th and 18th, mainly in lowland areas not far from water.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Two or three south of Marrakech en route to Ouarzazate on 10th, one at the Oued Sous on 15th, several in the Oued Massa area on 16th and 17th, and one near Asni on 18th.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Two singing at Souss-Massa on 16th, and one there on 17th.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Two sang from luxuriant reed growth alongside the river bridge south of Massa village on 16th and allowed brief glimpses.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Singles heard singing at Souss-Oued Massa on 16th and 17th.

Western Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais opaca*

Two en route to Ouarzazate on 10th, two at the Barrage east of the town on 11th, two or three at the bridge west of Massa village on 16th, one at Oued Massa on 17th, and two near Asni on 18th.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida reiseri*

Four to six were at a desert wadi just east of Ouarzazate on the road to Boumalne du Dadès on 11th, and two in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel and two near Rissani on 13th.

[Note: the name *H. pallida reiseri* follows Brit. Birds 97: 292].

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Two at the barrage east of Ouarzazate on 11th, one in the wadi at Hotel Said on 12th and one near the Yasmina hotel on 13th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

One on 9th, two on 10th including one at 2200m near Tizi-n-Tichka and one, presumably a passage migrant, in the gardens of L'Oasis hotel on 14th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Singles were at Kasbah Said wadi on 12th and at each of two desert stops on 14th.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*

A migrant at a desert stop on 14th, by kilometre post 43 on the road to Erradichia.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Noted at stops with suitable habitat: probably two pairs en route to Marrakech on 9th, at least 5 on 11th, two at Yasmina on 13th, one in L'Oasis gardens on 14th and 4-5 at the Tizi-n-Test pass summit on 18th.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Most evident on 16th and 17th at Souss-Massa; 1-3 logged on three other dates.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

At least three were found across the road from the Mourning Wheatear site 29 kilometres west of Ouarzazate on 15th.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonellii*

Singles en route on 9th and 10th, 4 at a stop near Ouarzazate on 11th, two at the Yasmina on 13th and singles in the L'Oasis hotel gardens on 13th and 14th.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

One en route on 11th and one at Souss-Massa on 16th.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

One, presumably a late winterer or passage bird, was found on 11th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Passage migrants featured in reasonable numbers at several places in a variety of habitats, including deserts: 10 on 11th, 15-20 on 12th, over 20 on 13th, 10 on 14th and at least 3 on 15th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

One at Souss-Massa on 16th and two in separate locations near Asni on 18th.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleucos*

One in the hotel gardens at Ouarzazate on the morning of 11th. In the gardens of L'Oasis there was one on 13th and 4 on 14th. Finally, one at a desert stop on 14th. Most were males.

A male in the gardens on 14th was initially thought to show the characteristics of *speculigera*, sometimes known as 'Atlas Flycatcher' but later research by the observer suggests the bird was a Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*.

Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus*

Two at the Barrage on 11th, up to five in the L'Oasis gardens on 14th and one at a stop in the desert later the same day.

Coal Tit *Pariparus ater*

One on 9th, several noted en route to Ouarzazate and at Forest Lodge on 10th, and 2-3 on 18th.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*

One of the delights of the trip were several sightings of the north west Africa race, *ultramarinus*: two en route from Oukaimeden back to Marrakech on 9th, 3-4 near the gully about 7 kilometres south of Taddert on 10th and 4-5 at stops on 18th.

Great Tit *Paus major*

One or two were found en route to Ouarzazate on 10th, one on 15th and a few near Massa village on 16th.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Whilst searching for a certain large green woodpecker at Forest Lodge on 10th, 2-3 allowed close approaches.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala*

At Souss-Massa there were 5-6 on 16th and at least one or two on 17th. Their distinctive song, often accompanied by display flight, revealed most of them.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

Mostly seen on wires etc from the moving van: one on 9th, 3 on 16th, at least 30 on 15th, several on 17th and 3-4 on 18th. All those studied in sufficient detail proved to belong to the coastal race *algeriensis*, with no confirmed sightings of the desert race *elegans*.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Noted daily, except 14th, in variable numbers: maxima 8-10 on 11th, 'many' on 15th and a minimum of 10 on 18th.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

One or two in the woods around Toufliat Forest Lodge on 10th.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Noted in lowish numbers on 10th and from 15th to 18th inclusive. Some confiding individuals came to eat discarded pizza at Souss-Massa on 16th, allowing the blue patch of skin behind the eye of the race *mauritanica* to be seen well.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

At least 50 were at Oukaïmeden on 9th, with often groups feeding in open grassy areas with the next species.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Around 30 were logged on the way to Oukaïmeden and 120 at the place itself on 9th. Also, 11 on 10th near the summit of the Tizi-n-Tichka pass.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*

Two between L'Oasis and the Yasmina hotels near Erg Chebbi on 13th and two later the same day at the cliffs near Rissani. Another was seen en route on 14th.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Two in the Tizi-n-Tichka area on 10th, and two or three at the Bald Ibis site near Tamri on 17th.

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Noticed fairly commonly in Marrakech on 9th and en route on 10th. A few were seen here and there from 15th to 18th, maximum 35+ on 16th.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

A male flew in front of the van near Massa on 16th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily around towns and villages; no significant numbers apart from 'lots' on four dates! One at a roadside stop on 18th.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Two flocks, totalling about 100 birds, were seen by the roadside a few kilometres west of Taroudannt on the evening of 17th.

Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*

This species, at the extreme western edge of its range at Erg Chebbi, proved difficult to find. A prolonged stakeout on 13th from the terrace of the Yasmina hotel, assisted by one sharp-eyed observer in our party, produced a female feeding on the ground in open view. After several minutes she flew off, heading for the dunes. Any thoughts of leaving were instantly dismissed when a male appeared at the same spot, about 20 minutes later.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Three at Oukaïmeden on 9th, a flock of more than 40 on 10th near Tizi-n-Tichka and two near the Mourning Wheatear site on 15th.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Reasonable numbers of the race *africana* were encountered in mountainous areas on 9th, 10th and 18th. Also, several near the river west of Massa village on 16th.

Serín *Serinus serinus*

Good numbers found singing and displaying in the foothills of most mountain areas and sometimes in lowland areas.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Two en route to Ouarzazate on 10th, several at Souss-Massa on 16th and two near Asni on 18th.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

One near Marrakech on 9th, several were in Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th and, on the former date, at least six near the river bridge south of Massa village. At least one noted on 18th.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Two in the Atlas foothills on 9th, two on farmland south of Marrakech on 10th, and a few were noted at Souss-Massa on 16th and 17th.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

At least six around the Toufliat Forest Lodge on 10th, and three on 18th by the river north of Asni.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

Two along the Tagdilt Track on 12th, three near the Yasmina on 13th, two more on the Tagdilt track next day and around 20 at the Mourning Wheatear site on 15th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

At least 40, and more probably 50 were in a loose flock, mostly feeding on elm seeds, near the Toufliat Forest Lodge on 10th; many allowed close views. About 12 were near the river north of Asni on 18th.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirulus*

Three at Anouffig en route from Oukaïmeden to Marrakech on 9th, two on 10th and a couple near the river bridge south of Massa village on 16th.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Two or three at Anouffig en route from Oukaïmeden to Marrakech on 9th, two on 10th, a singing male towards Tizi-n-Test on 16th and another singing in the Atlas on 18th.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata*

Noted on a daily basis, sometimes in fair numbers. A stop for provisions in Marrakech on 9th produced several singing from roof struts inside the supermarket!

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

Singles en route on 9th and 10th and one, with a juvenile, in a field near the river west of Massa village on 16th.

TREES & SHRUBS

Moroccan Cypress *Cupressus atlantica* (Cupressaceae)

Good numbers of this endangered endemic species seen on 18th in its only locality, the Oued-n-Fiis valley between Tizi-n-Test and Ouirgane.

Spanish Juniper *Juniperus thurifera* (Cupressaceae)

Rare, with only scattered trees seen, around Oukaimeden on 9th, and Tizi-n-Tichka on 10th.

Phoenician Juniper *Juniperus phoenicea* (Cupressaceae)

Common in the northern foothills of the High Atlas; best numbers seen at Asif-n-Oumassine on 9th.

Prickly Juniper *Juniperus oxycedrus* (Cupressaceae)

Common in the Atlas Mountains.

Alerce *Tetraclinis articulata* (Cupressaceae)

Common in the northern foothills of the High Atlas; best numbers seen at Asif-n-Oumassine on 9th, and between Ouirgane and Asni on 18th.

Argan *Argania spinosa* (Sapotaceae)

Abundant in the foothills of the Sous valley from about Taliouine to Agadir, and north to Tamri and the southern approaches to Tizi-n-Test. Endemic to this region.

Holm Oak *Quercus ilex* (Fagaceae)

Locally common in the High Atlas.

Oleander *Nerium oleander* (Apocynaceae)

Frequent in desert wadis.

Tamarisk *Tamarix* spp. (Tamaricaceae)

Locally abundant in desert wadis.

A spurge *Euphorbia officinarum* (Euphorbiaceae)

This cactus-look-alike with poisonous white sap was common on the coast just south of Cap Rhir. No common name.

Mediterranean Fan Palm *Chamaerops humilis* var. *cerifera* (Arecaceae)

Locally abundant on the Tizi-n-Tichka road; scattered elsewhere in the High Atlas. The Moroccan populations are referred to the variety *cerifera*, with more glaucous leaves than typical var. *humilis* north of the Mediterranean.

Date Palm *Phoenix dactylifera* (Arecaceae)

Abundant as a cultivated tree and widely naturalised.

Other species seen were nearly all cultivated, with very little natural forest vegetation left anywhere. Plantations in the Oukaimeden Valley, around the Toufliat Forest Lodge, and elsewhere included Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*; native further north in Morocco), Maritime Pine (*Pinus pinaster*; native further north in Morocco), Canary Islands Pine (*Pinus canariensis*), Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus libani* var. *atlantica*; native further north in Morocco), Mediterranean Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), Arizona Cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*), Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*), Euphrates Poplar (*Populus euphratica*) Walnut (*Juglans regia*), Elm *Ulmus* spp., Apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*), Almond (*Prunus dulcis*), Orange (*Citrus* spp.), Prickly-pear (*Opuntia* spp.), Olive (*Olea europaea*), and (as an often invasive alien) Australian gum trees (*Eucalyptus*, several spp.). Numerous other introduced species were planted as ornamental trees in the larger cities.