

# Trip report: Western Sahara and Southern Morocco, 14-21 February 2008

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## **Introduction**

This was a pure birding trip with the ultimate aim to have some good birding in desert and sea shore habitats in Western Sahara and was made by the authors of this report.

## **Flight**

We purchased flight tickets from Apollo [www.apollo.se](http://www.apollo.se) and Fritidsresor [www.fritidsresor.se](http://www.fritidsresor.se) (SEK 3038, € 330) respectively and was carried by MyTravel Airways [www.mytravelairways.se](http://www.mytravelairways.se) from Stockholm-Arlanda direct to Agadir Al-Massira in Morocco in about 5½ hours. The ticket price included taxes and meals on board and 100 SEK was discounted as we booked via Internet. The return flight went via Göteborg-Landvetter which delayed us for a couple of hours.

## **Car hire**

We booked a Peugeot 407 Sedan at Avis [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com) to be picked up at the airport and returned there as well. The price was MDH 7381 (€ 675) for seven days, including unlimited kilometres, collision damage waiver and theft protection. We thought we had use of at least an intermediate sized car and we also saw the obvious advantage to have a 4-door sedan, rather than an estate car (5-door) because of the theft risk. If you want to park the car and leave it for a while (which often is the case when birding!) it's important not to leave anything visible in the car! The car complied well with our needs of space and comfort but soon we discovered that it was too low beneath for some of the rough tracks we encountered. Once we had to turn around because of that, so this type of car cannot be recommended! This car was fuelled with unleaded petrol which is not available south of Layoune (and only two of the stations in that town can provide unleaded petrol)! Although Moroccan cars seem to work well also with leaded petrol which our also did. Petrol cost was about MDH 12/l, but only half of that in Western Sahara, i.e. MDH 5,92-6,12/l. Our car used up around 8 litres per 100 km on average and the tank in our car had room for about 70 litres. This is important information since it's far between petrol stations in parts of Western Sahara!

## **Accommodations**

With one exception we did not book any accommodation in advance and we never experienced any problems to get rooms. We booked accommodation at a berber tent camp 40 km north of Layoune in advance: Le Roi Bédouin [www.geocities.com/leroibedouin](http://www.geocities.com/leroibedouin). The chart below shows the accommodations we used during our trip.

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Date	Town	Accommodation	Price (per person and night, one or two rooms)	Comment
14-15 Feb	Goulimine	Hotel Bahich	MDH 100	Alright
15-16 Feb	40 km north of Layoune	Le Roi Bédouin	MDH 215 (dinner and breakfast included)	Tent with mattresses, sheets and blankets provided. WC and shower in a separate building. Excellent!
16-19 Feb	Dakhla	Hotel Erraha	MDH 167	Alright
19-20 Feb	Tantan	Hotel Sable d'Or	MDH 110	Alright
20-21 Feb	Tiznit	Hotel de Paris	MDH 140	Excellent!

## Preparing the trip

There is some information available about birds and birding in Western Sahara and the following proved to be very useful, if not to say essential.

## Books

Bergier, P. & Bergier, F. 2003. *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Morocco*. Bird Watchers' Guides. Prion Ltd., Cley. ISBN 1 871104 09 2.

Thévenot, M., Vernon, R. & Bergier, P. 2003. *The Birds of Morocco*. BOU Checklist No. 20. Tring. ISBN 0 907446 25 6.

## Maps

Morocco – motoring & tourist map. 1:1 000 000/1:4 000 000. Michelin 742 National, 2003. ISBN 2-06-100223-4.

## Internet

Discovering and Birding Morocco: [www.go-south.org](http://www.go-south.org), by Patrick Bergier.

Southern Morocco & West Sahara January 2007 – extensive tour 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007, by Lee G. R. Evans. Available on [www.go-south.org](http://www.go-south.org)

Tide tables for Cap Boujdour: [www.mobilegeographics.com:81/locations/920.html](http://www.mobilegeographics.com:81/locations/920.html)

Weather at Dakhla: <http://www.wunderground.com/global/stations/60096.html>

## Important information

In Western Sahara, particular inland, watch from the car and DO NOT leave the roads. The area is still full of mines! We asked a few people, including some military personnel, about the situation and the answers we got varied from “no problem” to “you will blow up”. Therefore the conclusion must be: be cautious!

The military presence in Western Sahara is evident. Binoculars, telescopes and, in particular, cameras draw their attention. They seem especially worried about photographing so be discreet when using camera while being close to military installations! An attempt to photograph some White-crowned Wheatears in Awserd was perhaps the reason why we were interrogated by military/police for half an hour, although in a very friendly way (we were offered a stuffed Agama Lizard as a gift when we left!). During the trip we were stopped frequently by both military and police, but at all other occasions it was all done in a few minutes. They are eager to know what profession you have, and “biologiste” seemed to be a satisfactory answer (which is the truth concerning all three of us). Some knowledge in French (PW) proved to be useful at these events.

We found no petrol at Awserd or along the road between Dakhla and Awserd. In Awserd we found a small shop with sardines and potatoes as the only edible items. Be sure to bring food and (plenty of) bottled water from Dakhla when you go there. Neither any accommodation seemed to be available in Awserd.

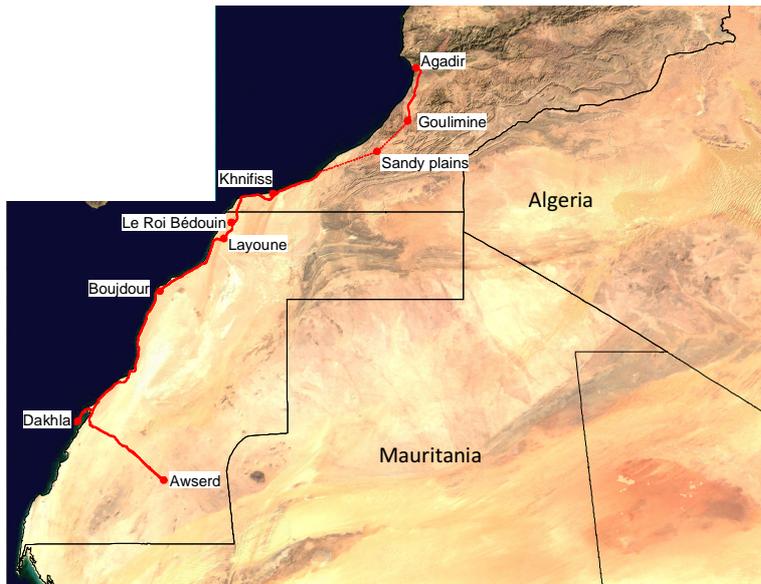
## Itinerary

### Summary

Altogether we (=PW) drove some 3500 km, which means an average of 500 km each day. The one way trip from Agadir to Dakhla comprises some 1200 km and this demand two days driving. With this arrangement we could have three nights as most in Dakhla which is far too paltry in such an excellent birding area. It's therefore recommended to have at least two weeks available or using domestic flights to Dakhla (or Layoune) and rent a car there. At least there are domestic flights from Casablanca to Dakhla and there are at least a couple of car rental firms in Dakhla.

Date	Stretch	Sites visited (page refer to Bergier & Bergier 2003)
14 February	Agadir – Goulimine	The bridge over the Oued Massa (p. 87) Oued Sayed (p. 124)
15 February	Goulimine – Layoune	Oued Sayed (p. 124) The sandy plains (p. 124) Chebeika estuary (p. 128) Ouma Fatma estuary (p. 128) El Ouair estuary (p. 128) Oued Saquiat al Hamra (p. 133)
16 February	Layoune – Dakhla	
17 February	Dakhla – Awserd – Dakhla	Awserd road
18 February	Dakhla – Awserd (almost to) –	Awserd road

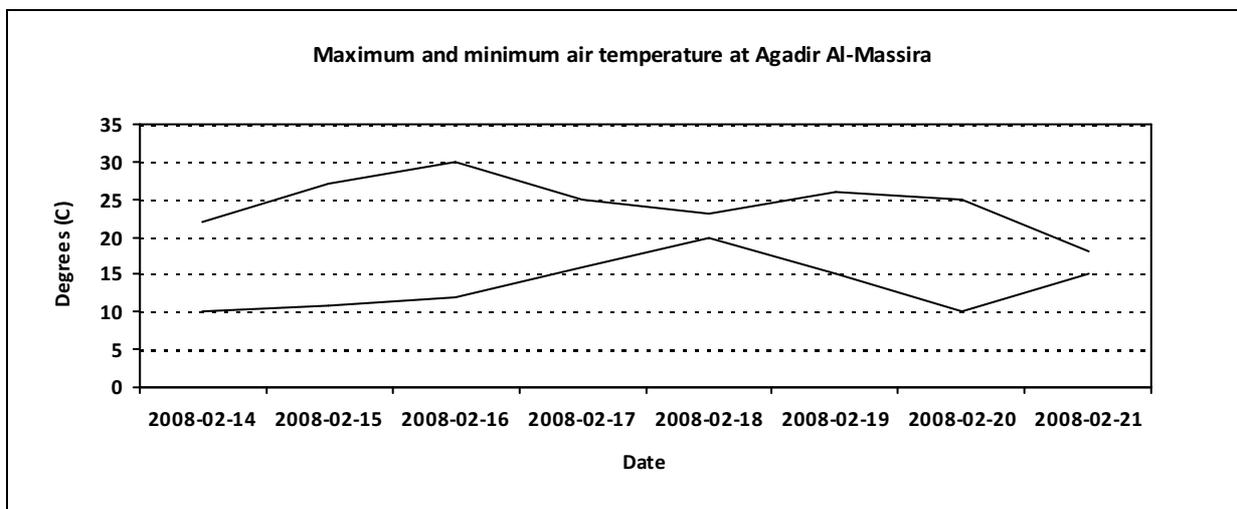
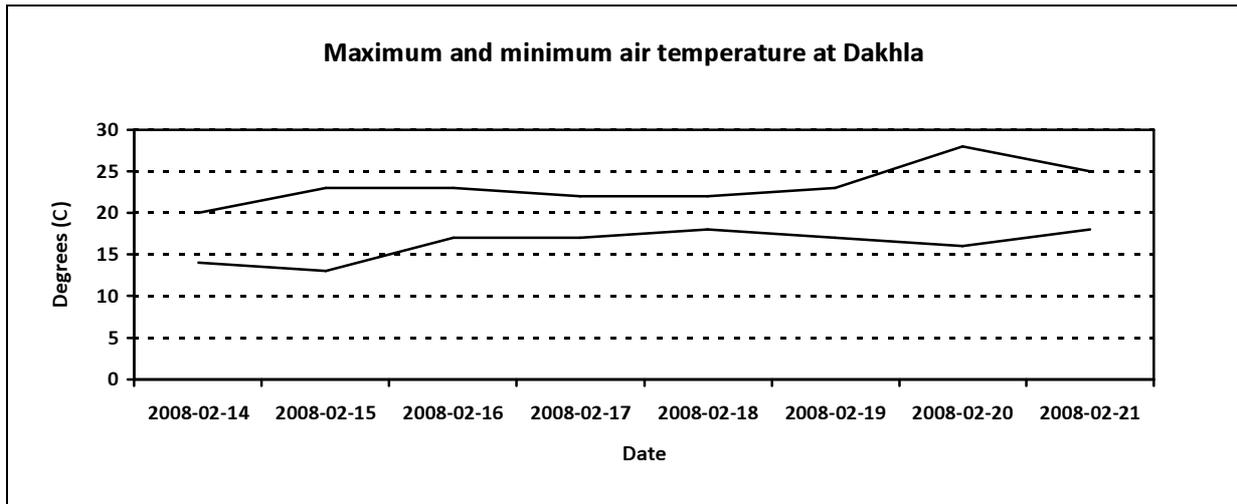
	Dakhla	Dakhla Bay (p. 134) Cap Dakhla
19 February	Dakhla – Tantan	Oued Saquiat al Hamra (p. 133) Khnifiss lagoon (p. 130)
20 February	Tantan – Tiznit	The sandy plains (p. 124) Area SE of Goulimine to Asrir
21 February	Tiznit – Agadir	Oued Massa estuary (p. 84)



Key map with our routes and some of the sites mentioned in the report.

## Weather

The weather was rather unsettled during our stay with overcast most days and moderate temperatures. Although temperature inland was considerably higher and, according to the car's thermometer, it was as high as +36° C at Awserd on the 17<sup>th</sup> despite overcast! Some light rain on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> in the Dakhla area, thunder north of Layoune on the 19<sup>th</sup> and light rain throughout the day on the 21<sup>st</sup> in Souss. Winds were predominantly from north-west to north-east, usually 3-7 m/s, annoying to some extent.



### Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February

We gathered at Arlanda airport around 0600 hrs and took off on schedule at 0705 hrs local time. The flight went smooth and we came down at Al-Massira at 1130 hrs local time. We swiftly withdraw money from a cash machine in the airport building and picked up our car whereupon we drove to the southern outskirts of Agadir for food and water supply at Aswak Assalam, a big supermarket. Already in the vicinity of the airport we encountered our first Common Kestrels (10), Bulbuls, White Wagtail (5), two different Moussier's Redstarts, Magpie (5), and House Sparrows. Inside (!) the supermarket there were a couple of House Buntings. We made our first birding stop where the main road crosses the Oued Massa, some 60 km south of Agadir, where we spent about an hour. Among the first birds we encountered there were two Stone-curlews on a cultivated field, seemingly wary. From the river itself two different Moorhen were heard and in the vicinity we saw Black Redstart, Blackbird, Bulbul, Thekla Lark and Corn Bunting. We also heard a *Sylvia* warbler in song, strongly recalling Tristram's Warbler, but the glimpses we had of it were too short to confirm this.

On our way further south we noticed single Black Kites a couple of times, but at a spot c. 4 km north of Tiznit about 100 Black Kites were swarming, possibly at a rubbish dump east of the road. We didn't have the time to investigate this, but it might be well worth the effort, bearing e.g. other raptors in mind. The area is found at N 29° 44.501', W 9° 41.487'.

The road over the Anti-Atlas Mountains was winding and we were slowed down by some trucks. As we reached Goulimine and the first real police checkpoint well before dusk, we noted Thekla Lark, Black Wheatear and a calling Little Owl. We went straight through the town to reach the Oued Sayed, some 5 km south of the town limits of Goulimine, where at least three Stone-curlews were heard as well as Green Toad *Bufo viridis* at dusk.

We checked in at Hotel Bahich and had a good dinner at one of the local restaurants.

### Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February

We arose at 0600 hrs to be again at the Oued Sayed, this time at dawn. The traffic was disturbing so we took our way along a track on the southern side of the river and followed that some hundred meters to the west. Quail was in song as well as Stone-curlew. Several Thekla Larks, Sardinian Warblers (3) and a couple of Robins were heard before sunrise. In the river bed there were a couple of Moorhen and a Green Sandpiper. Among raptors we noted a total of 17 Black Kites and two Black-shouldered Kites, one adult and one 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year. In the scrub and above there were some migrants and over-winterers such as Common Chiffchaff (10), Black Redstart, Iberian Chiffchaff, Barn Swallow, Song Thrush, Hoopoe, Blackcap (♂), Meadow Pipit and White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*). Apparently residents were Common Kestrel, Goldfinch, Bulbul (2), Laughing Dove (3), Spectacled Warbler, Fulvous Babbler (5), Linnet, Great Grey Shrike and Zitting Cisticola. Two Cream-coloured Coursers flew by. We left the area at about 0900 hrs and set off for "sandy plains".

En route we noted 6 Black Kites at a Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* carcass, 1+1 Desert Wheatears, 2 Cream-coloured Coursers and a Eurasian Buzzard.

We stopped at a small pond at roadside, some 30 km south of Goulimine, that looked promising (N 28° 49.258', W 10° 18.655') where 2 Buff-rumped Wheatears (1 ♂, 1 ♀) immediately were seen. Corn Bunting were in song as well as several Desert Wheatears. Raptors were in evidence by one Long-legged Buzzard, some Kestrels, 5 Black Kites and two Marsh Harriers (1 ad. ♂ + 1 immature ♂). White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*) drank at the pond and a pair of Thick-billed Lark was seen nearby, a little bit later also another male of the latter species. Cream-coloured Courser seemed to be common in the area and at least 13 were seen. Among larks also Greater Short-toed Lark (6), Lesser Short-toed Lark, Bar-tailed Desert Lark and Temminck's Lark (pair) were seen. Barn Swallows were on migration with a few dozens flying north. Among them also five Red-rumped Swallows were detected. We left the area at about 1130 hrs and headed further south.

Between Tantan and Tantan Plage another Long-legged Buzzard was seen.

Immediately S of Tantan Plage we made a brief stop at a promising wetland on the west side of the road where we saw Grey Heron, Little Egret, Grey Wagtail, Common Chiffchaff, Little Ringed Plover (6), Subalpine Warbler (♂), Kentish Plover (2), White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*, ♂) and some 300 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*L. f. graellsii*). We left the place at 1300 hrs when a Black Kite flew over. Two more Long-legged Buzzards were seen 10 minutes later.

We reached the mouth of the Oued Chebeika at about 1315 hrs where Barn Swallows (10) and House Martins (5) were seen on migration. In the scrub there were at least 3 ♂♂ Subalpine Warblers, a Tawny Pipit and a Black Wheatear sang. A Black Kite flew by as well as a Lanner Falcon. The river itself

was quiet with just a few birds such as Great Cormorant (12), Grey Heron (3), Little Egret, Osprey and Kentish Plover. Offshore a flock of at least 200 Black Scoter were seen.



*Oued Chebeika, viewed from the east, on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Thomas Pettersson.*

En route we noted a single Sandwich Tern at Oued Ouma Fatma and a little bit further south another Long-legged Buzzard.

A brief stop at the coastline c. 6 km east of Tarfaya showed some movement over the sea with c. 50 Northern Gannets, 12 Yelkouan Shearwaters (*P. y. mauretanicus*), at least 100 Sandwich Terns and 2 Great Skuas. Moreover three whales/dolphins were seen briefly.

En route between Tarfaya and Layoune a group of three White Storks and three single Long-legged Buzzards were noted.

We reached the turn-off (N 27° 26.424', W 13° 01.382') to Le Roi Bédouin, c. 40 km N of Layoune, at about 1745 hrs and made our way on a rough track, nearly too rough for our Peugeot 407, to the camp. In the surroundings we noted some good birds such as Cream-coloured Courser (3), Buff-rumped Wheatear (5), Desert Wheatear, Sardinian Warbler (♂), Common Chiffchaff (5), Thekla Lark (2) and a possible Iberian Chiffchaff. At a ridge nearby we had wonderful views of a pair of Little Owl, calling and eventually mating.

## Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February

We awoke before dawn to a calling Little Owl and Stone-curlew in display! We spent a couple of hours before breakfast strolling in the vicinity of the camp. Buff-rumped Wheatear, Desert Wheatear (2) and Sardinian Warbler were in song as well as Great Grey Shrike. Of the latter a total of at least four were seen, all seemed to be intermediate between *algeriensis* and *elegans* in plumage. Some 500 meters from the camp a spring produced a small stream that also created a waterfall before it flew out and disappeared into a large depression, Sabkhat Oum Dba, north of the camp. The scrub along this stream held a few migrants such as Common Snipe, Meadow Pipit (6), Common Chiffchaff, Grasshopper Warbler (1) and Subalpine Warbler. Also noted were two Barbary Partridges and an overflying Cream-coloured Courser.



*Birding at Le Roi Bédouin early morning on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The large depression Sabkhat Oum Dba in the background. Sign at main road inset. ©Thomas Pettersson.*

We left the camp at 0900 hrs and headed for Layoune and our last refuelling of unleaded petrol for a while. The way through the town was not obvious and so we had some difficulties to find our way through it and eventually find a petrol station in the southern outskirts. It is possibly better to try to go via town centre rather than following another road east of it as we did. We made a very brief stop where this eastern road crosses the Oued Saquiat al Hamra. Some birds noted were Ruddy Shelduck (2), Greater Flamingo (few), Avocet (small flock) and Dunlin. After refuelling we headed further south

through mundane and bird-poor habitats. At Boujdour we had a coffee break and also bought some food and water. Much of the road south of Boujdour goes inland with the coastline not visible, but when about 100 km south of Boujdour we came close to the coastline and saw our first Osprey. Further south (N 24° 54.646', W 14° 49.204') we encountered a Barbary Falcon at roadside. At a brief stop some 50 km north of the Dakhla turn-off we saw about 100 Great Cormorants (*maroccanus*), obviously flying to and from breeding sites nearby. Also noted were a single Kentish Plover. En route the last some 150 km to the Dakhla turn-off we noted altogether 13 Black Wheatears, 2 Buff-rumped Wheatears and one Desert Wheatear.

Eventually reaching Dakhla just before dusk we checked in at Hotel Erraha and had dinner at a local restaurant close to the great mosque in town.

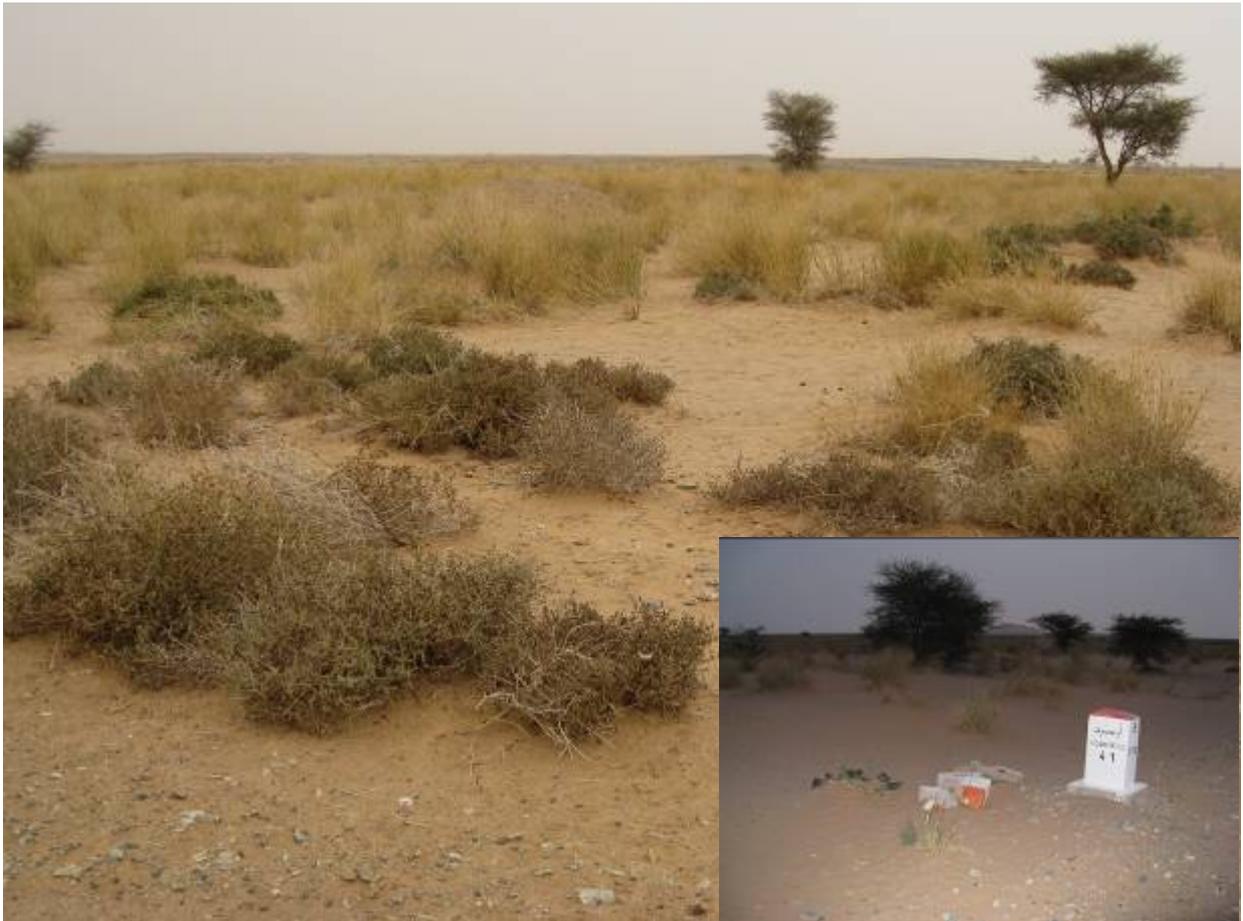
### **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February**

We left Dakhla well before dawn at 0520 hrs for a trip to the interior of Western Sahara to Awserd. As Lee Evans has pointed out in his trip report the first 100 km or so were poor bird habitats, we covered that stretch in darkness. One or two smaller sized Hares were the only animals to be seen. We made our first brief stop at dawn (N 23° 15.460', W 15° 10.440') pretty close to the Tropic of Cancer and a Hoopoe Lark in song was heard. Passing a Long-legged Buzzard we made our next stop at N 23° 09.983', W 15° 01.482', where another Hoopoe Lark in song was heard. Now the presence of Desert Sparrows became evident and they seemed to be spread all over the area, apparently breeding. We encountered them at almost every single stop from here to Awserd, but in the village itself we saw only one. At N 23° 07.213', W 14° 58.631', a Desert Warbler was in song. Soon after that we saw our first Desert Lark of the trip. A roadside Acacia tree (N 23° 00.821', W 14° 50.776') held two Brown-necked Ravens and their nest. At N 22° 48.010', W 14° 37.198', we found 4 Dunn's Larks, feeding on ground, with Bar-tailed Desert Larks nearby for comparison.



*Approaching Awserd the mundane desert changes to richer savannah habitat. ©Thomas Pettersson.*

Another stop at KM 176 (N 22° 47.211', W 14° 36.301'), 41 km W of Awserd, turned out to be very fruitful. Soon we heard a song, unfamiliar to us, from the grass on the north side of the road, a fast cricket-like song. We immediately suspected Cricket Warbler and that was confirmed when we eventually saw both a male in song and a female seemingly collecting nest material. Its plumage characters are obvious and if seen well this species can't be confused with any other. The song as well as another call were recorded (KM). This was a very exciting discovery! Three Acacia trees nearby hosted a group of Fulvous Babblers, at least 4, all of them silent and hard to find.



*Cricket Warbler habitat at KM 176, 41 km west of Awserd, on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The Acacia trees also hosted a group of Fulvous Babblers. ©Thomas Pettersson.*

We continued the last 40 km to Awserd, just to find a very strange village. New built wide streets and modern residential blocks, but very quiet and few people were seen. We stopped at a garage and asked a group of people working there if we could find any facilities in the village, such as petrol, food or coffee. They pointed us at a small shop where we found some tins with sardines but little else. At the garage we saw at least two Rock Martins, flying around some buildings, but no indications of breeding seen. Their plumage characters pointed unanimity towards this species rather than Crag Martin, but the only strange thing was that these birds seemed rather large, although we had nothing to compare with. In the village we also saw at least two White-crowned Wheatears, the only ones on the trip, as well as a male House Sparrow and a female White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*). No exciting doves were found, only feral Rock Doves. We also stopped at the entrance to a military camp to ask for facilities. In fact they were willing to get us some coffee from their base, but we said no thanks to that, bearing in mind that we were short of time. Anyhow we had a Spartan lunch (bread, sardines, and bananas) in the shadow from an empty building when some people (police, military and civilian) approached and told us that their boss wanted to see us. They were very friendly and told us to finish our meal first; although they took our passports and left one soldier to show us the way to the office nearby. The boss was grave serious and seemed concerned over our presence. He told us that this is a military zone and that permission was required for visiting. That was probably rubbish but after

assuring that we were only birding and not photographing any sensitive things he let us go. In fact he seemed proud when we told him about all the rare birds we had seen in the area and showed him our books and a copy of Lee Evans trip report, which they wanted to keep! Finally they offered us a stuffed Agama Lizard as a gift.

We went back to Dakhla before dusk and could confirm that the western half of the stretch was very quiet.

### **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February**

Again we woke up early for another birding trip to the interior along the road to Awserd. Already at 0430 hrs we were on our way to be at the Cricket Warbler spot at dawn, where we stepped out of the car at 0700 hrs. It was rather windy this morning and bird song activity was low.

At yesterday's spot no Cricket Warblers were heard or seen, but c. 100 meters to SW, on the south side of the road, we could hear song briefly and also had a short glimpse of one bird. At this spot we also saw a Desert Warbler, two Subalpine Warblers and one Common Chiffchaff. The group of Fulvous Babblers was also present, 5 silent birds this time.

Migration of hirundines was in swing this morning with Barn Swallows passing all the time with the odd House Martin and Sand Martin among them as well. Altogether four Greater Short-toed Larks were seen, obviously also on migration. The pair of Brown-necked Ravens was at their nest also today. On the way back towards Dakhla we suddenly spotted two large Falcons sitting on a small mound at roadside. They turned out to be Lanner Falcons; one of them, an adult bird, flew off immediately but the other one, an immature, gave us incredible views and opportunities to take some photos.

This time we halted about 40 km west of the village of Awserd and went back to Dakhla around midday for some birding at Dakhla Bay and on the tip of the peninsula.



*Some key sites along the Awserd road.*

### **Awserd road, February 2008 vs. January 2007**

Besides some highlights mentioned above birding was rather mediocre along the road west of Awserd, at least when we compare with the fabulous numbers Lee Evans *et al.* encountered in January 2007.

Perhaps this difference is due to the time of year or to different conditions between years, or both. In the chart below we compare figures for some species from January 2007 with ours, concerning the stretch some 100 km west from Awserd. Another species frequently encountered, and several were also in song, was Great Grey Shrike. All birds seen well seemed intermediate between *algeriensis* and *elegans*, i.e. no certain *elegans* noted as could be expected in this area.

**Table.** Comparison between our tour and a tour in January 2007 (Lee Evans) regarding most species encountered and concerning the road stretch from Awserd and some 100 km to the west.

Species	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> January 2007
Black Kite	–	1
Golden Eagle	–	1
Lanner Falcon	2	1
Cream-coloured Courser	10	500+
Greater Hoopoe-lark	5	150
Black-crowned Sparrow-lark	–	>56
Bar-tailed Desert Lark	7	abundant
Desert Lark	2	several
Thick-billed Lark	–	3
Greater Short-toed Lark	4	–
Lesser Short-toed Lark	–	3000
Temminck's Lark	–	70+
Dunn's Lark	4	6
Tawny Pipit	–	6
Northern Wheatear	–	160
Buff-rumped Wheatear	2	very common
Desert Wheatear	7	abundant
Isabelline Wheatear	–	3
Cricket Warbler	2	–
Common Chiffchaff	1	–
Desert Warbler	2	–
Spectacled Warbler	4	common
Subalpine Warbler	3	–
Fulvous Babbler	5	–
Brown-necked Raven	5	3
Desert Sparrow	widespread	9*
Trumpeter Finch	–	5

\*) Also 55+ in the village of Awserd.

### Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February (continued)

We started birding at the northernmost part of Dakhla Bay around midday. Among several hundreds of Lesser Black-backed Gull, exclusively *L. f. graellsii*, we also found a few very good birds such as Audouin's Gull (2 adults), Caspian Tern (15), Royal Tern (5) and Little Tern (3). There were large gatherings of waders present but too often the distance was too long to be enjoyable. At a more reasonable range were c. 60 Oystercatchers, some Bar-tailed Godwits, a few Sanderlings, Grey Plovers, Curlews and Kentish Plovers. Sandwich Terns were numerous and a single Slender-billed Gull was also seen as well as one Marsh Harrier. At the entrance to Dakhla we saw a Temminck's Lark and a White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*).

Next target was to check some of the more well vegetated parts of Dakhla city, i.e. parks, gardens etc. The most promising gardens turned out to be well guarded, but we found one open park close to the harbour. There we could confirm that both House Sparrow and Collared Dove had taken place in Dakhla. A couple of Pallid Swifts flew over. At the harbour there were some Turnstones and a single Little Egret.

In late afternoon we found our way through the southern outskirts of Dakhla and on rough tracks just to find out that there is a new built tarmac road along the western shore of the peninsula. Eventually we reached the tip of the peninsula where a large fishing camp is situated. This turned out to be a very bird rich area with tremendous amounts of gulls, terns and waders. Some 200 Caspian Terns were roosting and among them also three Royal Terns. Among thousands of Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*L. f. graellsii*) there were also Black-headed Gull (1), Slender-billed Gulls (15) and Audouin's Gulls (30). Among waders we saw e.g. Turnstone (25), Sanderling (50) and Red Knot (3). A few Gannets were seen offshore and the odd Little Egret was also present.

## **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> February**

We set off early from Dakhla for our journey back north. Our aim today was to get some reasonable time for birding at Khnifiss lagoon, north of Layoune. Birds along roadside between Dakhla and Boujdour were few: Buff-rumped Wheatear (3), Black Wheatear (21), Cream-coloured Courser (1) and again a few Thekla Larks and some Bar-tailed Desert Larks. We reached Boujdour at 9.00 am, an ideal time for a coffee break!

North of Boujdour birds were very far between; in fact we travelled for more than one hour before we saw the first bird, a Desert Wheatear. Only one other bird was seen before Layoune, a Cream-coloured Courser. At a refuelling stop just south of Layoune we saw a Marsh Harrier and 25 White Storks circling above us. A brief stop at the Oued Saquiat al Hamra, at the western bridge this time, we saw e.g. Ruddy Shelduck (2), Avocet (20), Black-winged Stilt (50), Common Redshank (1), Greater Flamingo (6) and Cattle Egret (75).

En route between Layoune and Khnifiss we noted Hoopoe Lark (2), White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*), Cream-coloured Courser (1) and our first, for some days, Common Kestrels. We made a stop east of Tarfaya where the road goes close to the coastline (N 27° 58.853', W 12° 39.595') and encountered some good birds in the northern breeze: Great Skua (4), Arctic Skua (2) and Northern Gannet (50). Some Black Scoters were resting offshore.

We reached the warden's house at Khnifiss lagoon at 1400 hrs. It was high tide at 1215 hrs and water level was now sinking with expected low tide at 1800 hrs. This is a huge and amazingly bird rich wetland which can't be done justice with a short visit as we made due to our time constraints. Waders, gulls and terns were literally all over the place and with a few exceptions we made no attempts to do any counts. Bar-tailed Godwits were abundant as well as Sanderling. Of the latter we estimated the number to no less than 1 500 with pure flocks of several hundreds! Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*L. f. graellsii*) were present in thousands and here we also saw some of our first Yellow-legged Gulls of the trip. An adult Peregrine Falcon, race *F. p. brookei*, made several hunting attempts that made large flocks of waders to fly around in a marvellous spectacle. At least three Ospreys were present and, surprisingly, also eight Brent Goose (*B. b. hrota*), a very rare species in Morocco and to our knowledge

this subspecies has not been recorded before. Around the buildings and at the nearest shoreline there were also some passerines such as Black Wheatear, White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*), Common Chiffchaff, Meadow Pipit, Red-throated Pipit and a few Yellow Wagtails (*M. f. iberiae*). Also 11 Eurasian Spoonbills were resting in the lagoon as well as some Great Cormorants and Greater Flamingos. Some Marsh Harriers were also present as well as 6 Caspian Terns and some Slender-billed Gulls and Audouin's Gulls.

Although the bird of today and a strong candidate to be labelled the bird of the week was the unexpected discovery of 4 adult Kelp Gulls! They were initially found resting on the northern sandy shore of the lagoon, black-backed very large and bulky gulls in direct comparison with the Lesser Black-backed Gulls. They were obviously two pairs and they also displayed together for a while, a display that differed clearly from that of the Greater Black-backed Gull and more resembling the display of the Herring Gull. When they stretched their wings and in flight we could easily see the very small amount of white on primaries. After a while one of the two pairs took off and came considerably closer, landing on a grassy island in the middle of the lagoon, seen close to a markedly smaller Yellow-legged Gull.



*Part of Khnifiss Lagoon, viewed from the south, on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 1600 hrs, two hours before low tide. Kelp Gulls in display and a Yellow-legged Gull to the right. ©Peder Wærn.*

For spending the night we tried to reach Fort de Tafnidilt, east of Tantan, but the track was too rough for our Peugeot 407, so we had to go back and check in at Hotel Sable d'Or in Tantan.

### **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February**

We went off early, as usual, to the 'Sandy plains' south of Goulimine. En route at a brief stop we noted a Buff-rumped Wheatear female with alarm call and food in beak. Also 30 Black Kites, a total of three Long-legged Buzzards, an over flying Trumpeter Finch, Spectacled Warbler, White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*) and a Marsh Harrier (♂).



*Desert habitat interspersed with arable land at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008.  
©Thomas Pettersson.*

We reached the pond, with considerably less water compared with a few days ago, at roadside at 0745 hrs where Corn Bunting, Quail and a Zitting Cisticola were in song. Three Trumpeter Finches and a Meadow Pipit were drinking and the usual Long-legged Buzzard was present. Bar-tailed Desert Lark entertained us with its song flight. Among migrants we noted Northern Wheatear (c. 10) and Hoopoe (2). Larks and Wheatears were abundant here today with at least 500 each of Greater Short-toed Lark and Lesser Short-toed Lark. Altogether at least 10 Isabelline Wheatears were also present as well as a pair of Kentish Plover and a Tawny Pipit. Also four Thick-billed Larks and a couple of Hoopoe Larks were in song as well as a few Desert Wheatears. Cream-coloured Coursers were all over the place, flying around and calling, at least 50 of them. At 0917 hrs the first two Black-bellied Sandgrouses arrived to feed and drink in a small pond in an almost completely dry small river bed. During the next two hours at least 13 Black-bellied Sandgrouses and 4 Pin-tailed Sandgrouses were present in the area. Three Stone-curlews were flushed and a steady stream of hirundines passed, predominantly Barn Swallows

but also some Red-rumped Swallows and House Martins. A Yellow Wagtail with a call characteristic of the nominate race *M. f. flava* flew over. At least three Marsh Harriers (2♂♂, 1♀) hunted in the area. A small colony of Spanish Sparrows was found in a bush.

En route to Goulimine another Long-legged Buzzard was seen and while having lunch in town a White Stork was soaring over us.

After lunch we headed south-east towards an area close to the village of Asrir. This area looked promising on Google Earth™ which we soon could confirm being the case. We had a good set of Larks and other passerines, such as Thick-billed Lark (♂♀), Desert Wheatears, Buff-rumped Wheatears and some 20 Trumpeter Finches. A pair of Temminck's Lark was also present as well as a couple of Cream-coloured Coursers. In more vegetated areas and close to a small river bed we encountered three Woodchat Shrikes, one of nominate race *L. s. senator*, one of race *L. s. badius* and one not assessed to subspecific level. Other noteworthy birds were a Blue Rock-thrush (♂), a Fulvous Babbler, Yellow Wagtail *M. f. iberiae* (♂), Moussier's Redstart (♂), Subalpine Warbler (2), Common Stonechat (♂♀), White Wagtail *M. a. alba* (2), Long-legged Buzzard (1), Greater Short-toed Lark (10), Lesser Short-toed Lark (2), Spectacled Warbler (a few), Sardinian Warbler (in song), Common Chiffchaff (1) and also Spanish Sparrow, Linnet (3), Greenfinch (1) and Goldfinch (10). At 1455 hrs three Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew by.



A small pond near Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008, a veritable magnet for birds. ©Thomas Pettersson.

On our way back towards Goulimine we encountered a gathering of c. 700 Black Kites, slowly spiralling to the north. After that we went straight to Tiznit and Hotel de Paris.



*Some of the c. 700 Black Kites spiralling near Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.*

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February**

We left Tiznit well before dawn, heading for Oued Massa. At a short coffee break in the northern outskirts of Tiznit we heard a Stone-curlew in song.

At about 0715 hrs we reached the village of Massa and the river where immediately some waterbirds were seen, such as Little Grebes, Shovelers (50) and Ferruginous Ducks (2). Among passerines there were e.g. Common Stonechat (♂), Moussier's Redstart (♂), Blackcap (♂), Chiffchaffs, Spanish Sparrow, Greenfinch and Zitting Cisticola in song. Serins was common as well as Bulbuls. A nice male Chaffinch of the race *F. c. africana* was seen and a Laughing Dove was in song at the entrance to the reserve. During a couple of hours of strolling along the path besides the northern side of the river we heard three Black-crowned Tchagras and also saw one of them briefly in the pouring rain. Some 60 Cattle Egrets were resting as were a few Grey Herons and Little Egrets. Altogether some 35 Spoonbills were present, including a colour-ring marked immature. Among them were also two Greater Flamingos. Waders were present in low numbers, such as Common Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Northern Lapwing (5), Greenshank, Common Redshank, Ruff, Black-winged Stilt (1), Curlew, Pied Avocet (7), Ringed Plover and Little Ringed Plover. Noteworthy was some 40 Black-tailed Godwits.

Wildfowl were represented by Pochard, Mallard, Common Teal, Tufted Duck, Ruddy Shelduck (5), Marbled Teal (18), Pintail (6), Garganey (♂♂♀) and Gadwall (♂♀). Some 20 Cranes were flying above the ridge beyond the opposite shore and a Kingfisher was briefly seen. Above the river there were numerous hirundines hunting insects, mostly Barn Swallows but also the odd Little Swift and Plain Martin. The only raptors seen were a Marsh Harrier (♀) and an Osprey. Some 70 Audouin's Gulls were resting on the sandy shore at the river mouth. A Sedge Warbler was seen and heard in song in reed close to the hide where also a Glossy Ibis was flushed. Finally a couple of Cetti's Warblers in song were heard and in the village of Massa a single House Bunting.

We left the area at about 1115 hrs and headed for the airport and flight back home. KM stayed for another week, but that's another story.

### **Annotated species list**

We follow the systematic adopted by

- Josep del Hoyo, *et al.* 1992-2007. *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Vol. I – XII. Lynx Ediciones. Barcelona.
- Stanley Cramp & C. M. Perrins. 1993-94. *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa*. Vol. VII – IX. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Site names in accordance with Thévenot *et al.* (2003) and referring to Morocco's geographic subdivisions in brackets.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus r. ruficollis* (PALLAS 1764). Numerous at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan mauretanicus* LOWE 1921. 12 at 6 km east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Gannet** *Sula bassana* (LINNAEUS 1758). C. 50 at 6 km east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few (all ages represented) off Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 50 at east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus* HARTERT 1906. 12 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. C. 100 offshore at 50 km north of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Some at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea c. cinerea* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Little Egret** *Egretta g. garzetta* (LINNAEUS 1766). 1 south of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Singles at Dakhla Bay, Dakhla harbour and Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus i. ibis* (LINNAEUS 1758). Noteworthy sightings: 75 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. C. 60 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**European White Stork** *Ciconia c. ciconia* (LINNAEUS 1758). 3 some 60 km NE of Layoune (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A gathering of some tens just W of Layoune (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 25 at Layoune (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 soaring over Goulimine (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (LINNAEUS 1766). 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea l. leucorodia* Linnaeus 1758. 11 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 35 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber roseus* PALLAS 1811. A few at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 6 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Some at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla hrota* (O. F. MÜLLER 1776). 8 at Khnifiss lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

- Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* (PALLAS 1764). 2 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup> and on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 5 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Gadwall** *Anas strepera* LINNAEUS 1758. 2 (♂♀) at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Teal** *Anas c. crecca* LINNAEUS 1758. Some at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Mallard** *Anas p. platyrhynchos* LINNAEUS 1758. Some at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Northern Pintail** *Anas a. acuta* LINNAEUS 1758. 6 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Garganey** *Anas querquedula* LINNAEUS 1758. 3 (♂♂♀) at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* LINNAEUS 1758. >50 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (MÉNÉTRIÉS 1832). 18 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* (LINNAEUS 1758). Some at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* (GÜLDENSTÄDT 1770). >5 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (LINNAEUS 1758). Some at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Black Scoter** *Melanitta n. nigra* (LINNAEUS 1758). C. 200 off Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Some resting offshore at east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.



Lanner Falcon at Awserd Road (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Thomas Pettersson.

- Osprey** *Pandion h. haliaetus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at c. 100 km S of Boujdour (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus c. caeruleus* (DESFONTAINES 1789). 2 (1 adult + 1 in 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year) at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Black Kite** *Milvus m. migrans* (BODDAERT 1783). Noteworthy sightings: C. 100 at 4 km north of Tiznit (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 17 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 6 on carcass S of Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 5 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 30 en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. C. 700 soaring en route Asrir-Goulimine (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Western Marsh-harrier** *Circus ae. aeruginosus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 2 (1 ad. ♂ + 1 imm. ♂) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Layoune (Saquiat Al-

Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. >2 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 3 (♂♂♀) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♀ at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Eurasian Buzzard** *Buteo b. buteo* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 south of Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* LEVAILLANT 1850. 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 between Tantan and Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 adult east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 singles en route between Tarfaya and Layoune (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Sandy plains-Goulimine (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco t. tinnunculus* LINNAEUS 1758. Common in Souss and Lower Draa and also a few seen in Tarfaya.

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus erlangeri* KLEINSCHMIDT 1901. 1 adult at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 (adult + immature) between Dakhla and Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus brookei* SHARPE 1783. 1 adult at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides* TEMMINCK 1829. 1 at roadside N of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb; N 24° 54.646', W 14° 49.204') on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara spatzi* (REICHENOW 1895). 2 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix c. coturnix* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 in song at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Crane** *Grus grus* (LINNAEUS 1758). C. 20 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula ch. chloropus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 2 at the bridge over the Oued Massa (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Coot** *Fulica a. atra* LINNAEUS 1758. Common at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus o. ostralegus* LINNAEUS 1758. C. 60 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus h. himantopus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 50 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* LINNAEUS 1758. Small flock at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 20 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 7 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus saharae* (REICHENOW 1894). 2 at the bridge over the Oued Massa (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 3 heard at dusk at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Oued Sayed at dawn on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) at dawn on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song just north of Tiznit (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. We cannot for certain rule out migrating birds of the nominate subspecies *B. o. oediconemus* (LINNAEUS 1758), but on behaviour that seems less likely.

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius c. cursor* (LATHAM 1787). 2 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 south of Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 13 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. C. 10 en route Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Dakhla-Boujdour (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route north of Boujdour (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Layoune-Khnifiss (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. >50 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 5 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* (LINNAEUS 1758). Rather common at Dakhla Bay and Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup> as well as at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius h. hiaticula* LINNAEUS 1758. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius curonicus* GMELIN 1789. 6 south of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Kentish Plover** *Charadrius a. alexandrinus* LINNAEUS 1758. 2 south of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at 50 km north of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 2 (pair) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Common Snipe** *Gallinago g. gallinago* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa subsp.* (LINNAEUS 1758). 40 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Subspecific level uncertain, nominate *L. l. limosa* or *L. l. islandica* C. L. BREHM 1831.
- Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa l. lapponica* (LINNAEUS 1758). Numerous at Dakhla Bay and Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Abundant at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Whimbrel** *Numenius ph. phaeopus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius a. arquata* (LINNAEUS 1758). A few at Dakhla Bay and Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Redshank** *Tringa t. totanus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* (GUNNERUS 1767). 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* (LINNAEUS 1758). A few at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria i. interpres* (LINNAEUS 1758). A few at Dakhla Bay and c. 10 at Dakhla harbour (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 25 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Red Knot** *Calidris c. canutus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 3 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Sanderling** *Calidris alba* (PALLAS 1764). 50 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. At least 1500 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* (LEISLER 1812). Numerous at Dakhla Bay and Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup> as well as at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Dunlin** *Calidris a. alpina* (LINNAEUS 1758). Noted at Oued Saquiat al Hamra (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup> and at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Great Skua** *Catharacta skua* BRÜNNICH 1764. 2 at 6 km E of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 2 at east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Also two unidentified smaller skuas seen on that occasion.
- Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* PAYRAUDEAU 1826. 2 adults at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 30 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Some at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. C. 70 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* LICHTENSTEIN 1823. 4 adults (two pairs) at Khnifiss lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans michahellis* J. F. NAUMANN 1840. A few (<10) at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus graellsii* A. E. BREHM 1857. Common along the coastline and especially roosting in estuaries and on sandy shores, e.g. c. 300 S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and thousands at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and thousands at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Very doubtful if any *L. f. intermedius* SCHIØLER 1922 at all were involved.
- Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* LINNAEUS 1766. 1 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* BRÈME 1839. C. 35 off Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 15 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Some at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* (PALLAS 1770). 15 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. C. 200 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 6 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus s. sandvicensis* (LATHAM 1787). 1 at Oued Ouma Fatma (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. >100 at 6 km east of Tarfaya (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Numerous at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus albididorsalis* (HARTERT 1921). 5 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Cap Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Tern** *Sterna a. albifrons* PALLAS 1764. 3 at Dakhla Bay (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.



*Black-bellied Sandgrouse at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.*

**Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata caudacutus* (S. G. GMELIN 1774). 4 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles o. orientalis* (LINNAEUS 1758). Altogether 13 in small groups at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Rock Dove** *Columba l. livia* J. F. GMELIN 1789. Common in towns and villages and also seen at some rocky coastlines. Doubtful if any wild birds were seen at all.

**Eurasian Collared-dove** *Streptopelia d. decaocto* (FRIVALDSZKY 1838). Common in most towns and villages visited as well as Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis phoenicophila* HARTERT 1916. 1+2 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua saharae* (KLEINSCHMIDT 1909). 1 calling just north of Goulimine (Lower Draa) at dusk on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 2 (pair) at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 calling at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) at dawn on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus brehmorum* HARTERT 1901. 2 at Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

- Little Swift** *Apus affinis galilejensis* (ANTINORI 1855). 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo a. atthis* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa e. epops* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Greater Hoopoe-lark** *Alaemon a. alaudipes* (DESFONTAINES 1789). 1 in song at Sandy Plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. C. 5 in song Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 2 en route Laâyoune-Khnifiss (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 2 in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Bar-tailed Desert Lark** *Ammomanes cinctura arenicolor* (SUNDEVALL 1850). Not uncommon en route anywhere in Western Sahara in desert environments as well as en route Dakhla-Awserd on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. Some notes: 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti payni* HARTERT 1924. 2 at Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>.
- Thick-billed Lark** *Rhamphocoris clotbey* (BONAPARTE 1850). 3 (♂♂♀) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 2 (♂♀) at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



Thick-billed Lark at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Thomas Pettersson.

- Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla rubiginosa* FROMHOLZ 1913. 6 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. C. 500 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 10 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. We can't rule out the possibility of nominate *C. b. brachydactyla* (LEISLER 1814) involved.
- Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens minor* (CABANIS 1851). 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. C. 500 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Temminck's Lark** *Eremophila bilopha* (TEMMINCK 1823). 2 (♂♀) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 2 (♂♀) at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda d. dumni* (SHELLEY 1904). 4 seen feeding Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae aguirrei* CABRERA 1922. Common en route, except in the interior of Western Sahara where not seen at all. Subspecies assessed on plumage characters (KM). Taxonomy of Thekla larks is complicated in NW Africa. According to HBW (Vol. 9, p. 596) the subspecies occurring in this area should be *G. t. theresae* MEINERTZHAGEN 1939..." (HBW). We here tentatively follow Roselaar in BWP (Cramp 1988) in recognizing the rufous-tinged birds in coastal SW Morocco (S of Anti-Atlas) and Western Sahara as *G. t. aguirrei* (CABRERA 1922) . Vaurie (1959), however,

synonymised *G. t. aguirrei* with the more brownish-tinged *G. t. erlangeri* (HARTERT 1904), whereas *G. t. theresae* was synonymised with *G. t. ruficolor*. It can also be mentioned that we at no occasion at all had any reason to suspect Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (LINNAEUS 1758).

**Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola mauritanica* (MEADE-WALDO 1901). Some at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.



Greater Short-toed Larks at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.

**Collared Sand Martin** *Riparia r. riparia* (LINNAEUS 1758). A few on migration en route Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo r. rustica* LINNAEUS 1758. A few dozens on migration at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 10 on migration at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Steady stream on migration Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Steady stream on migration at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Numerous at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula presaharica* (VAURIE 1953). At least 2 in Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Subspecific level doubtful since these birds seemed not particular small sized, although no satisfactory comparison possibilities were at hand. But all plumage characters clearly pointed to this species.

**Northern House Martin** *Delichon urbicum subsp.* (LINNAEUS 1910). 5 on migration at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few on migration Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A few on migration at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Subspecific level uncertain and birds seen could involve nominate *D. u. urbicum* as well as *D. u. meridionale* (HARTERT 1910).

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica rufula* (TEMMINCK 1835). 5 heading N at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A few on migration at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus c. campestris* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus p. pratensis* (LINNAEUS 1758). 6 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



Temminck's Lark at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.



Thekla Lark near Boujdour (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Thomas Pettersson.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* (PALLAS 1811). 1 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

- White Wagtail** *Motacilla a. alba* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♀ in Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 1 in Dakhla on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Layoune-Khnifiss (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla f. flava* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 over flying at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Subspecies assessed on call.
- Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava iberiae* HARTERT 1921. A few at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla c. cinerea* TUNSTALL 1771. 1 S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus b. barbatus* (DESFONTAINES 1789). Common in Souss, e.g. at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Song Thrush** *Turdus ph. philomelos* C. L. BREHM 1831. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula mauritanicus* HARTERT 1902. Common in Souss.
- Blue Rock-thrush** *Monticola s. solitarius* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 ♂ at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- European Robin** *Erithacus r. rubecula* (LINNAEUS 1758). 2 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros gibraltariensis* (J. F. GMELIN 1789). 1 at the bridge over the Oued Massa (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri* (OLPHE-GALLIARD 1852). 2 ♂♂ near Agadir (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata rubicola* (LINNAEUS 1766). 2 (♂♀) at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe l. leucopyga* (C. L. BREHM 1855). 2 in Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucura syenitica* (HEUGLIN 1869). 1 in song at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 13 en route up to 150 km N of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 21 en route Dakhla-Boujdour (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe subsp.* (LINNAEUS 1758). C. 10 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Subspecific status unclear, but could have been nominate *Oe. oe. oenanthe*, *Oe. oe. libanotica* (HEMPRICH & EHRENBERG 1833) or perhaps also *Oe. oe. leucorhoa* (J. F. GMELIN 1789).
- Buff-rumped Wheatear** *Oenanthe moesta* (M. H. K. LICHTENSTEIN 1823). 1 pair at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 5 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 2 en route up to 150 km N of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 2 en route Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 3 en route Dakhla-Boujdour (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♀ with alarm call and food in beak en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Some at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti homochroa* (TRISTRAM 1859). 1+1 S of Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 (2♂♂, 1♀) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route up to 150 km N of the Dakhla turn-off (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 7 at Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route north of Boujdour (Saquiat Al-Hamra) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A few in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Some at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* (TEMMINCK 1829). >10 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. With this and several other reports in mind it seems that this species is a regular passage migrant and/or over-winterer in southern Morocco.
- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis cisticola* (TEMMINCK 1820). 1 in song at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A few in song at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Cricket Warbler** *Spiloptila clamans* (TEMMINCK 1828). 1 ♂ in song and 1 ♀ seemingly collecting nest material at KM 176 Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ in song and briefly seen c. 100 meters west from this spot on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia c. cetti* (TEMMINCK 1820). 2 in song at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Western Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella n. naevia* (BODDAERT 1783). 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 in song at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.



Desert Wheatear at 'Sandy plains' (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Thomas Pettersson.

**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus c. collybita* (VIEILLOT 1817). At least 10 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 5 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 1 at KM 176 Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Khnifiss Lagoon (Tarfaya) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. >10 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* TICEHURST 1937. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 possible at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* subsp. (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 ♂ at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. >10 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Subspecies involved could have been the resident *S. a. heineken* (JARDINE 1830), but perhaps more likely nominate *S. a. atricapilla*, wintering or on migration.

**Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana deserti* (LOCHE 1858). 1 seen and in song west of Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 1 seen there at another spot on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia c. conspicillata* TEMMINCK 1820. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 1 en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A few at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* subsp. (PALLAS 1764). 1 ♂ S of Tantan Plage (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 3 ♂♂ at Oued Chebeika (Tarfaya) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 3 at

Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. 2 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. When calls heard they indicated in all cases *S. c. inornata* TSCHUSI 1906 or nominate *S. c. cantillans*, thus never any indications of *S. c. moltonii* ORLANDO 1937.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala valverdei* CABOT & URDIALES 2005. 3 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2 (♂♀) at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 1 ♂ in song at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Subspecific level assessed on distribution only.

**Fulvous Babbler** *Turdoides fulva buchanani* (E. J. O. HARTERT 1921). 5 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at KM 176 Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 5 there on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Tit** *Parus major excelsus* BUVRY 1857. 1 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala cucullata* (TEMMINCK 1840). 3 in song and 1 briefly seen at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor subsp.* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 at Oued Sayed (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 4 at Le Roi Bédouin (Saquiati Al-Hamra) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Widespread and several in song in Oued Ad-Deheb on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. All birds seen well, including in deserts of Western Sahara, showed intermediate characters of *L. e. algeriensis* LESSON 1839 and *L. e. elegans* SWAINSON 1831.



Desert Sparrow at Awserd Road (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius s. senator* LINNAEUS 1758. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator badius* HARTLAUB 1854. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Also another bird, not assessed to subspecific level, seen there.

**Common Magpie** *Pica pica mauritanica* MALHERBE 1845. Common in Souss.

**Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus r. ruficollis* LESSON 1831. 5 at Dakhla-Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>; also 2 at nest in Acacia tree.

**Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* TEMMINCK 1820. Common in Souss.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus tingitanus* (LOCHE 1867). Common in most villages and cities visited. Noteworthy sightings: 1 ♂ in Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Common in Dakhla (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer h. hispaniolensis* (TEMMINCK 1820). Noteworthy sightings: small colony (<50 birds) at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Some at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Desert Sparrow** *Passer simplex subsp.* (LICHTENSTEIN 1823). Widespread in pairs or small groups along the road west of Awserd (Oued Ad-Deheb) on the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, also one single in the village of Awserd on the 17<sup>th</sup>. We have no suggestions about subspecies, nominate *P. s. simplex* or *P. s. saharae* ERLANGER 1899.

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs africana* LEVAILLANT 1850. 1 ♂ at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus* (LINNAEUS 1766). Common at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris voousi* ROSELAAR 1993. 1 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. >2 at Oued Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis parva* TSCHUSI 1901. 10 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina subsp.* (LINNAEUS 1758). 3 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Subspecies involved could have been over-wintering nominate *C. c. cannabina* or *C. c. mediterranea* (TSCHUSI 1903) as well as residents of unknown subspecies.

**Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus zedlitzii* (NEUMANN 1907). 1 en route Tantan-Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 3 at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. C. 20 at Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



Trumpeter Finch near Asrir (Lower Draa) on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008. ©Peder Wærn.

**House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata sahari* LEVAILLANT 1850. A few seen in Agadir (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup> and in Massa (Souss) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria c. calandra* (LINNAEUS 1758). 1 in song at the bridge over the Oued Massa (Souss) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 1 in song at Sandy plains (Lower Draa) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and on the 20<sup>th</sup>.