



MOROCCO ~ TRIP REPORT May-April 2004

By Phil Benstead

Day 1 Sunday March 21st

Lac du Sidi Bourhaba; Mehdiya

Said and Phil eventually met up with the American contingent at the airport after the rather tardy arrival of their flight. Phil had mooched around the airport grounds during the wait recording the first birds of the trip, including common quail (heard only), nightingale (heard only), greenfinch, spotless starling and a number of other common species. As we packed the minibuses pallid swifts flew overhead and single house martins and little swift were seen.

Most chose to snooze during the 1.5 hour drive to Rabat, roadside birds included crested lark, corn bunting, calandra lark and a continuous barrage of the monotonous song of the fan-tailed warbler (or zitting cisticola if you prefer). We did not stop long in Rabat but quickly checked into the hotel, dropped off our bags and headed back to the vans for the drive to Lac Sidi Bourhaba. On arrival it became apparent that it was a rather popular weekend destination for quite a few local people. Despite the incredible din we managed to see a number of great birds. Our first stop allowed us views of the red-knobbed coot (which was to be commonplace today) and also a fine marsh harrier (again one of many). The eucalyptus trees surrounding the lake held our first African blue tit, great tit and a number of chiffchaff. The small pools north of the causeway yielded a sleeping marbled duck, black-winged stilt and overhead black kites and white storks soared. Further along the lake there were a few rafts of duck, mostly common pochard but with a scattering of tufted ducks and about three fine ferruginous duck. But the big shock was a female white-headed duck that skulked along at the back of the lake, giving us a real hard job of determining that it was pure bred and not a hybrid with that cad of the duck world – the North American ruddy duck! Great to see this bird in Morocco, where it is a bit of a rarity.

To kill time before the hoped-for marsh owl display at dusk we headed to the nearby estuary and sea, picking up a few new birds including lesser black-backed gull and some very distant oystercatchers. Views out to sea were difficult due to poor light and there was no wind at all which gave us little confidence in seeing any seabirds. Most of us turned round and examined the spotless starlings on the nearby buildings. Eventually we headed back to the lake and admired the flock of marbled teal, a pair of gadwall and finally as dusk fell Adrian drew our attention to a spectacular marsh owl that flew over head and then quartered a nearby marshy area briefly. A fine end to the first day of the trip.

Day 2 Monday March 22nd

Forest de Zaers; Merdja Zerga; Moullay Boussellham

A very early start saw us heading for the royal forest of the Zaërs for a rendezvous with double-spurred francolin. Dawn broke as we arrived and we were soon listening to a variety of birds including our big target bird. Sadly hearing it was all we were going to do for despite a number

of hours of trying to coax one into view we failed to actually see one. Plenty of other birds to see here though with bee-eater, chaffinch, thekla lark and woodpigeon. We also heard Barbary partridge, cuckoo, robin and nightingale. The best bird by far being a spectacular black-crowned tchagra singing its incredibly powerful song and showing very well. Before long though it was time to return to the hotel and have a late breakfast before heading slowly out of town through the almost impenetrable traffic.

First stop in the Merdja Zerga area was the seafront where we gazed out to sea whilst lunch was prepared. Sandwich terns loitered just offshore. A distant jaeger appeared briefly and a trickle of northern gannets could be seen heading north. Rather surprisingly 14-15 night herons also flew past well out to sea and also heading north. The nearby cliffs and bushes also produced evidence of migration in action with at least four subalpine warblers and a Sardinian warbler, and a number of chiffchaff – all of which showed extremely well. Audouin's gulls proved plentiful here also but mostly gave flight views. After lunch we walked up the hill to survey the estuary and had very distant views of a group of flamingos and a hunting male Montagu's harrier. This glimpse spurred us on to get down to the waters edge and we were soon watching a number of shorebirds including curlew sandpiper, little stint, ruff, curlew, grey plover and greenshank. Bird of the day materialised in the form of a stunning encounter with a male Montagu's harrier that swept past us really close. Other birds seen during this period included a little owl, a pair of woodchat shrike and our first wagtails (both yellow and white) and pipit (meadow). Eventually we dragged ourselves away to have a look at the southern end of the marsh before dusk. Our first stop yielded our first good views of crested lark and a number of sand martins were obvious over the nearby marsh. Walking across the fields here just before dark afforded us views over another lagoon which held large numbers of Kentish and ringed plovers, as well as sanderlings and little stint. We also enjoyed watching a peregrine buzzing a marsh harrier and discussed large falcon identification whilst examining the bird when it perched. As dusk fell we headed back to Kenitra for dinner and a well-earned rest!

Day 3 Tuesday 23rd March **Volubilis; Fez**

Up early again and into the buses for the drive to Volubilis. We made two stops en route familiarising ourselves with several new birds, including alpine swift and house bunting and also getting better views of some we were becoming familiar with already including white stork and lesser kestrel. After driving up into the foothills of the Middle Atlas we eventually came to the Roman ruins at Volubilis and wandered around with a guide. An interesting set of ruins was livened up by the presence of blue rock thrush, southern grey shrike, linnet, little owl and a number of blackcaps. After lunch we drove onto Fez for a touristic tour of the old city that saw us trooping through the medina and experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of this bustling area. The tannery was an incredible place and the smell was unbelievable!

Day 4 Wednesday 24th March **Dayet Aouoa; Forest de Cedars; Lac de Aguelmana; Zeida Plain**

Today we headed into the hills stopping first at Dayet Aouoa, a lake surrounded by forest and heaving with birds. We quickly picked up short-toed treecreeper, great-spotted woodpecker, hawfinch and firecrest in a flurry of activity and then located a pair of Levaillant's green woodpecker as they flew across the lake away from us. We coaxed the male in by tape and he gave startling views at very close range – calling and drumming all the time. Moving on we looked out over the lake and spotted four garganey amongst the shoveler. Booted eagles, black kites and long-legged buzzards soared overhead on occasion. We stopped by a hoopoe and walked on up the track snatching brief views of an unobliging pair of woodlark before being distracted by a superb black-eared wheatear and then a splendid female ring ouzel. Flocks of linnets were apparent here and the first male blue rock thrush of the trip appeared on a distant

crag. Driving on a short distance we stopped briefly to watch rock sparrows, short-toed treecreepers, common redstart and a fine singing male cir bunting, before moving onto the next stop.

We drove on into the Forest of Cedars until we hit the tame herd of Barbary macaque (ugly brutes) and stopped here for lunch. This stop proved good for birds. Raptors and ravens were much in evidence in the skies above us. Bob pulled out a fine male Moussier's redstart for us all and a nuthatch lead us a merry dance amongst the towering cedars.

On the long drive to Midelt, we stopped briefly at the Lac de Aguelmane where we shivered in the brisk breeze at this high altitude lake. Ruddy shelduck were much in evidence and our first black wheatear and red-billed chough put in an appearance. More Moussier's redstarts were spotted and whilst driving we picked up our first northern wheatears of the race *seebohmi* (surely a tick for the future that one).

Our last stop was the Dupont's lark site where we intended to spend the early morning of the next day. We hoofed around in the desert for a while hoping for a glimpse of the lark but only succeeded in finding a pair of red-rumped wheatears – adequate compensation. Finally at dusk we headed off for the last few kilometres to the hotel for an early night before our early start in the morning.

Day 5 Thursday 25th March **Zeida Plain; Gorge de Ziz; Meski; Rissani; Erfoud**

Today started extremely early as we had to locate Dupont's lark singing pre-dawn! We arrived at the appointed place (Zeida) and when we piled out of the vans we could hear plenty. We set off across the steppe and stood waiting for dawn in a suitable place and as soon as it became light we played the tape and we did not have to wait long before he came running in and Colin spotted him singing from the top of a bush. We could not believe our good fortune we had scored this difficult bird in just 20 minutes. This left us a bit of time before breakfast to explore the track. Further along we stopped and watched lesser short-toed lark, red-rumped wheatear, desert wheatear, Temminck's lark and the first of the days black-bellied sandgrouse. Dragging ourselves away we headed for the hotel and breakfast – a sumptuous affair with omelettes!

The long drive to Erfoud was made with just a few stops. First stop was to get better views of black-bellied sandgrouse which flew close by the group and then we stopped a little further on and Alison spotted our first greater short-toed larks. A stop at the Gorges de Ziz produced some bona fide rock doves and a fleeting crag martin. Lunch was taken later by the side of the road and birding the agricultural fields produced our first laughing dove and white-crowned black wheatear and a selection of migrants was also present. Overhead several flocks of bee-eaters could be heard flying north. Driving on we eventually reached Erfoud and elected to check out the track to Merzouga before taking to the landrovers. But the strong wind that had become apparent during the day was blowing dust and sand around so much we elected to turn back and head for Rissani. En route Van 1 managed to get views of two blue-cheeked bee-eaters but Van 2 were thwarted because a large tree was in the way. At Rissani we chased migrants around in the palms and fields out of the wind recording willow warbler, garden warbler and subalpine warbler. Arriving back at Erfoud to transfer to the landrovers we were surprised to come across a number of blue-cheeked bee-eaters in the town centre which were obviously intent on roosting. The flock totalled over 20 birds when we left it to drive into the incredible Auberge Derkaoua which was to be our home for the next two nights. A luxury after the peripatetic behaviour of the last few days. Laundry! The food here was splendid and we all went to bed hoping that the wind would drop in the morning and all would be well.

Day 6 Friday 26th March

Kasbah Derkaoua wadi; Kasbah Said; Kasbah Yasmina; 5km West of Rissani

Today dawned reasonably clear but the wind had barely dropped and we feared that minor sand storms might occur and we were right. But for the moment all was relatively tranquil. Before breakfast we headed up the wadi past the nearby radio mast and bumped into some new migrants including western Bonelli's warbler and a stunning wryneck. Tape playback revealed the presence of fulvous babbler but it took some time before we could locate them let alone get good views. But eventually they sat up and glared at us from the bushes and palm trees. Well satisfied with this start to the day we headed back for a big breakfast. Straight after eating we headed out to the nearby Kasbah Said, stopping briefly to admire our first hoopoe larks and delight at their looping display antics.

Arriving at the Auberge we quickly started to bird the nearby wadi. Almost immediately Ron located a pair of African desert warblers and we had excellent views for fifteen minutes as the pair fossicked around in nearby bushes. Two of us even managed a female desert sparrow here but it quickly disappeared. We could not believe our good fortune but as we congratulated ourselves it became apparent that the weather was taking a turn for the worst and the sand started to move. We elected to drive straight to our next bird (desert sparrow) and the conditions were amazing at some stages visibility was reduced to 20-30 yards but the drivers took us unerringly straight to Kasbah Yasmina! How they did it we will never know. Conditions on arrival were poor but some headed straight out and were rewarded with views of a female desert sparrow and a number of migrants were also present here including common redstart and more western Bonelli's warblers. In the poor conditions we struggled to nail down a desert warbler and so after a coke and a coffee we headed out to find a camel rest area and we did not have to wait long before a fine male desert sparrow flew in and started to feed around the ruminating camels. How good was that? Running well ahead of schedule in terms of target birds we headed into Rissani for a necessarily leisurely lunch of BBQ chicken and french fries.

After lunch we navigated out of Rissani and headed for the desert eagle owl site. As we got nearer one of the landrover drivers started doing an impersonation of the eagle owl and we were overjoyed that he said we could drive up the wadi almost to the bird! No hard slog for us. We stopped about 200 yards short and walked into a stiff breeze until we reached the right spot. We could tell we had arrived because James Lidster (Sunbird) had left a message delicately made of rocks with an arrow pointing to the birds hideaway. Colin beat us to the hiding place and pretty soon we were all looking at an incredibly feline face staring at us from a small hole in the cliff face. What a day! All we had to do now was head back to the Kasbah for a rest-up before the dusk nightjar session.

We all assembled in good time just outside the Kasbah walls, well sheltered from the wind, and waited for dusk with the Sunbird crew. Just at 7.00 pm the Egyptian nightjar came in close in response to a brief burst of tape playback. The spotlight picked it out and we all had time to get on it before it melted back into the gloom. We had another brief glimpse and then nothing. Not a bad end to the day!

Day 7 Saturday 27th March

6km South of Erfoud; West of Jorf; Gorge du Todra; Tagdilt Track

A dawn start saw us searching the desert between the kasbah and Erfoud for cream-coloured coursers. We failed to find any but did get more views of short-toed lark, desert wheatear and also found two Kentish plovers just standing around in the desert. Reluctantly we left for breakfast and were reunited with our minibus drivers. The rest of the day was spent driving towards Boulmanes Dades. We made a number of stops, just outside Erfoud we finally all got good views of blue-cheeked bee-eater, the birds sitting up on wires by the road. A little further along we came across some European bee-eaters and got our first good views of them also

(although recorded on most days until now they had just been seen migrating north overhead). About half way to the Gorges du Todhra we stopped by a small rock outcrop and a quick walk around here revealed trumpeter finch, bar-tailed lark and some migrants including a large dark northern wheatear that was almost certainly of the Greenland race.

Arriving at the gorge we disembarked and took a short walk through. Along the stream a number of grey wagtails were present and crag martins zipped overhead and along the cliffs. Over lunch we birded the upper part of the gorge picking up black wheatear and a very mobile barbary ground squirrel. A short walk afterwards produced the hoped-for desert lark and a fleeting glimpse of a Bonelli's eagle.

Moving ever on we stopped briefly to take photographs of the impressive palmerie at Tinehir and made a booze stop to stock up before getting to our 'dry' hotel. Just before Boulmanes we headed off down the Tagdilt track to the rubbish dump (very picturesque with the plastic bags fluttering in the strong breeze - not). But there were birds here and in the brief time we spent here we all got to grips with Temminck's lark (feeding fledged young) and thick-billed lark – a male also feeding three fat, fledged youngsters. This brief introduction to the Tagdilt Track made us look forward to the morning when we would be scouring the area more thoroughly and hoping for more larks, sandgrouse and perhaps a courser.

Day 8 Sunday 28th March

Tagdilt Track; 55km East of Ouarzazate; Kasbah Skoura; Barrage El Mansour

This morning we all woke to the sound of rain!! We really were experiencing all the weather had to offer. After an early coffee we headed out into the steppe and fortunately the rain stopped but many of the small wadis that had been bone-dry yesterday were now flowing. Birding was tough, the wind was blowing and birds were mostly huddled up under bushes. We did manage to see a male Montagu's harrier, and more black-bellied sandgrouse, hoopoe larks and Temminck's lark though before breakfast.

After a breakfast shared with the Limosa group we headed back to the vans for the drive to Ouarzazate. The rain started in earnest again and at one point we watched with amazement as a wall of hail approached us up the road. We stopped for a windy but mercifully dry spell of searching for mourning wheatear and eventually after a bit of a run-around most of us managed to get views of the bird and plain martin was a surprise here too. Next stop was lunch near an abandoned kasbah and then we visited the nearby Skoura kasbah in the rain for a quick guided tour. A flock of bee-eaters driven from the sky by the weather festooned a nearby palm tree and provided a spectacle for us and the locals who had a look through the scope.

Driving on we drove through puddles and flowing wadis to get to Ouarzazate and our final birding stop on the Barrage el Mansour. Most elected to go back to the hotel after a rather breezy and exhausting day but a plucky few braved the walk down to the waters edge and were rewarded with good birding and a bit of sun. Along the drain here we found a number of shorebirds including our first wood sandpipers and as dusk fell a huge flock of 500 white stork came in to roost. Also of interest here were some spoonbills, western reef heron and a marbled duck. A really enjoyable end to the day.

Day 9 Monday 29th March

20km South of Amergzane; Ait Benhaddou; 6km South of Amergzane; Marrakesh 138.5km; Tiz-n-Tichka; Oukaimeden

Today we had a leisurely departure and drove up to Ait Ben Haddou, en route we made a stop by the movie studio, whilst the other van went back to the hotel to look for a misplaced camera – all was well, it was eventually found in the van! Another stop was made 20 km south of

Amergzane for photos but as we all got out of the van a cream-coloured courser appeared and was joined by a female much displaying ensued whilst we admired them. Moving on we arrived at Ait Ben Haddou – the World Heritage kasbah site – to find that the wadi was running from all the rain over the last few days. We elected to admire it from a distance and look around the shops/bushes depending on our persuasion. Birds here included melodious warbler, nightingale, common redstart and a number of *Phylloscopus* warblers, including western Bonelli's.

Driving ever on we stopped about 6 km south of Amergzane to look for mourning wheatear and very quickly located a very cooperative male, which was seen by all. Rather easier than yesterdays bird which gave us a bit of a run-around. Another stop 138 km from Marakesh really produced the goods with great views of barbary partridge, western olivaceous warbler, reed warbler, and skulking Cetti's warbler and nightingale that mostly failed to show. Well pleased we headed up to the Tiz-n-Tichka and stopped just afterwards in the bitter cold for lunch. Here we had migrating Montagu's harriers, our first black redstarts and a flock of rock sparrows. Pushing on we headed up to Oukaimedan – this long drive was punctuated with occasional roadside birds but we just kept driving.

Climbing up to Oukaimedan it quickly became apparent that the place would be shrouded in cloud and sure enough when we got to the top visibility was poor and a lot of fresh snow lay on the ground. Undismayed we toggged up and headed out for some birding. We were rewarded with great views of a frisky pair of dippers, heard our first wrens and all got views of black redstart and shore lark. It had become a nightly occurrence to hope for better weather and we went to bed hoping for a clear bright morning and a chance of our two target birds alpine accentor and the incomparable crimson-winged finch.

Day 10 Tuesday 30th March
Oukaimeden; Tiz-n-Test; Taroudannt

Today we woke to low cloud and a dusting of snow! What a trip! Before breakfast we wandered about near the ski-lifts checking out the shore larks, black redstarts and rock sparrows. Small flocks of alpine chough drifted out of the mountains and settled in the village, squabbling over rubbish and other tidbits. After breakfast we headed up the hill behind the village and succeeded in seeing winter wren (heard only yesterday) and a superb alpine accentor. By now the cloud had lifted and the sun shone down on us. Views were variable depending on the moment, changing swiftly from breathtaking to non-existent. Walking back down we searched the area around the village before loading the bags onto the buses and walking downhill for about 1 km. This produced an adult golden eagle and the same pair of dipper as yesterday (nest-building). Try as we might though we could not locate any crimson-winged finches – the search possibly being hampered by the extent of the snow coverage.

Driving down we found three Levaillant's woodpeckers perched in roadside trees and then drove on to try and cover some distance before lunch. Lunch was taken in a stunted pine forest that yielded a surprising number of birds. Tristram's warbler was heard and eventually seen reasonably well. Western orphean warbler appeared for the first time as did a brief Dartford warbler. Fantastic stuff. Continuing on we climbed the windy road through small villages and terraces to the top of the pass. We stopped briefly at the Tiz-n-Test and had an obliging rock bunting before continuing on to a site that Said knew held Tristram's warbler. Sure enough he quickly found one and we all got good views as it perched on the top of a bush. That just left the final two hours of the journey to Taroudannt and the welcoming and comfortable townhouse/hotel run by Latifa (Said's wife).

Day 11 Wednesday 31st March
Ouled Brahim; Igli; Igoudar; Aoulouz Gorge; 5km West of Taroudannt

Those up early watched birds from the rooftop – getting good looks at house bunting, red-rumped swallow and other denizens of the town. After a 0730 breakfast we headed out of town and spent some time birding in the fields nearby. This gave us all a chance to catch up with some birds we had been hearing and glimpsing from the vans including zitting cisticola (which showed well), ciril bunting and black-shouldered kite. Roadside stops en route to our next site produced short-toed and booted eagle, black kite and long-legged buzzard. We spent some time scanning the skies from a small hillock at Igoudar but failed to add to our raptor tally – species such as tawny eagle and dark chanting goshawk have sadly become very scarce in Morocco in the last decade. Lunch was taken under an argan tree and in the ‘forest’ here we managed to find a whitethroat and Fred scared a goat clean out of a tree.

Next we moved onto Aoulouz gorge where we walked for a couple of hours. The gorge contained a breeding pair of booted eagle – a bird we were beginning to get quite familiar with. Also here we had a number of heron species, moustached warbler, sedge warbler and reed warbler. Some of us managed to get great views of nightingale but the Cetti’s warblers present eluded us all. Eventually we turned back to the hotel and had another great evening meal – Latifa really was looking after us.

After dinner we got back into the vans for a quick shuttle to a site 5 km outside town where we hoped to see some nightjars. Unusually we heard European nightjar here before finding a pair of red-necked nightjars calling and sitting on the track. We managed to approach the female to within a metre and all had great views and many photos were taken. In the distance we could hear stone curlews but failed to draw any near with a tape. An excellent end to the day.

Day 12 Thursday 1st April
Agricultural fields around Freija; Tiouti Palmery

Today we made a leisurely start and headed back out into the agricultural fields around Taroudannt. Here we found many of the same birds as yesterday but also managed to see some fly-by Spanish sparrows (not very satisfying), corn bunting (well) but even better were the flight views of common quail which came in close to tape but would not show itself until flushed in exasperation! Moving on we walked another track hoping for views of stone-curlew but the recent rain had made the habitat unsuitable and we failed to find any. There was however plenty to look at including a fine perched black-shouldered kite. The fields here were yellow with wildflowers and looked particularly stunning against the backdrop of the High Atlas.

En route to the palmerie at Tiouti we stopped at the women’s co-operative and watched them cracking open argan nuts and then went to sample and buy some of the oil and other goodies in the nearby shop. Lunch was taken on the edge of the palmerie and afterwards we walked around finding a few birds including western orphean warbler, good views of turtle dove and fantastic views of a very obliging black-crowned tchagra. After a good walk about we headed back to the vans for an early return to base before our shopping expedition into the souk. The shopping trip was very successful with kelims, carpets, slippers, basketware and ceramics all bought from the thronging market and we all left feeling like we had got a bargain!

Day 13 Friday 2nd April
Agadir coast; Arghoud Beach; Tamri; Cape Rhir; Sous Estuary

We really enjoyed our last Taroudannt breakfast and all regretted having to leave this splendid haven tucked away in the heart of this quintessentially Moroccan city. However it was time to head for our last big bird – the bald ibis. Driving to Tamri took some time, with frequent stops made to examine raptors. En route we also stopped at a beach in Agadir and another further up

the coast. The latter produced an oystercatcher and a good flock of gulls and terns – including a number of Audouin's gulls. Arriving at Tamri we quickly spotted a number of spoonbill (including two ringed birds whose rings could be read) and then Adrian spotted a group of about 20 bald ibis feeding on the opposite hillside. We had scored. A number of these birds flew over our heads whilst we lunched and gave excellent views.

Driving south we stopped off at Cap Rhir in the hope of some sea-watching but the light had taken a turn for the worse and we could only pick out the gannets that were passing in good numbers. Our last stop of the day was a quick visit to the Souss estuary (near our hotel). Here we got close views of a number of shorebirds including whimbrel, bar-tailed godwit and red knot. Other highlights included a number of slender-billed gulls, good views of flamingos and a group of at least 8 stone curlew.

Day 14 Saturday 3rd April **Massa**

Today we headed to the Massa estuary area. First we birded a series of vegetated pools and adjacent farmland, then we stopped briefly at a bridge and finally we walked along the track through the reserve and made it all the way to the sea. In the farmland we got good views of plain martin and Cetti's warbler, but bluethroat and spotted crane were much more elusive. The reedbeds were full of reed and sedge warblers all singing away, but drowned out by the incessant racket created by the ever present zitting cisticolas. Also here were more Moussier's redstarts, an abundance of stonechat and plenty of laughing doves. Moving onto the bridge we failed to turn up the hoped-for little bittern but did repeatedly see a water rail as it crossed a channel in front of us – the bird flew back and forth and occasionally squealed like a pig – presumably feeding young?

Driving on through the village we came to a stretch of road that overlooked the reserve and from here we could see a small flock of glossy ibis in the distance – we were to get better views of four later in the day. Lunch was taken by the gate, from where we could see a number of birds including pintail, wigeon, cormorant and loads of purple heron and even spotted 4 wild boar feeding on the far side. After lunch we walked on towards the sea through light swarm of locusts that were being predated by flocks of gulls, as well as the occasional little owl and kestrel. The walk produced our first osprey and finally good views of Bonelli's eagle. Arriving at the dunes we scanned out to sea fruitlessly for 15 minutes before settling back and enjoying the sun. We had experienced more than our fair share of overcast days on this trip and it was pleasant to be out in the sun and by the sea. Walking back to the vans we drove back to the bridge in the vain hope of a little bittern but did not find any. Eventually we headed back into Agadir along a coast road inhabited by very casual drivers.

Day 15 Sunday 4th April **Oued Souss**

Our last day was spent birding the Oued Souss estuary and taking it easy and doing some last minute shopping. In the morning we all worked the Souss estuary and were rewarded with a our only avocet of the trip and some rather high, over-flying collared pratincoles – the latter giving their tern-like flight call. Also here we had another two subadult Bonelli's eagles. Arriving at the sea the winds were poor for sea-watching and the heat-haze made viewing almost impossible – through the haze we glimpsed occasional jaegers. With the wind coming from the east the day soon started to heat up and we elected to return to the hotel at 11 o'clock for a large lunch!

We split up in the afternoon and went out at 3 o'clock either to buy wine and then go birding along the Souss or to sight-see in Agadir. The birders enjoyed an ice cream and bought wine at the supermarket before heading out to enjoy the waterbirds along the Souss. They succeeded

in reading another spoonbill ring as well as one on a flamingo. Dinner was spent recapping our adventures and saying goodbye to Said, before an early night.

Day 16 Monday 5th April

Flight home.