

OTHER TRIP REPORTS AVAILABLE

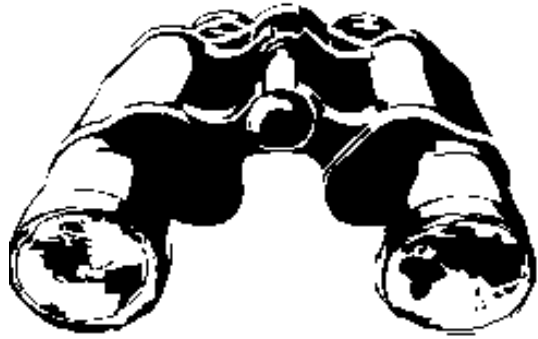
A Birding Trip Report

Australia
Argentina: Patagonia
Bhutan
SE Brazil
Caribbean (Yucatan, Cozumel, Grand Cayman, Jamaica)
Caribbean (Lesser Antilles)
China: Sichuan
Colombia: Santa Marta
Ecuador & Galapagos
Cuba & the Dominican
Guatemala (Atitlán)
Ethiopia
Hong Kong
Indonesia: North Sulawesi, Halmahera, Batanta, Salawati, Vogelkop, and Biak
Kenya and Uganda
Madagascar
Malaysia
Mexico (Colima)
Mexico (Tamaulipas CBC's)
Mexico (Tamaulipas, SL Potosi, Coahuila)
Mexico (Baja & Oaxaca)
New Zealand
Panama (Canal Zone & Darien)
Peru: Manu
Peru: Marañón
Russia: Primorye
Sabah
Spain
South Africa
Scotland
Thailand
Trinidad-Tobago
Turkey

Morocco

March 2-15, 2001

Report prepared by Chris Bradshaw



ORNIFOLKS—Safer and easier than doing it alone.
Less expensive than a professional tour.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the participants and all those who assisted with help and advice both before and during the trip: Adam Rowlands, Richard Cruse, the staff at Travel Link (Nait & Amal) and our driver Ibrahim. Michael Duffy kindly commented upon a first draft of this report.

CGB

Participants: Michael Duffy, John Hoogerheide, Fran Lenski, Frani Lowe, Scott Marshall, C.A Martin, Sandy Martin, P.K. Martin, Ete Mae Martin, Frank Murphy.

Policy Regarding Trip Leaders

The goal of our organization is to enable birders to visit difficult areas at less expense than with a professional group. If any Ornifolks member can set up trips for a fraction of the cost of a professional tour, find other members willing to participate, and go for less or at no cost, we see no ethical problem. Many participants don't have the time, expertise, or inclination to do the necessary research or make the preparations, but instead are willing to assist the leaders by defraying their expenses, and few potential organizers will step forward to lead a trip for nothing.

For updates on trips, dates, and new trip reports, check the **Ornifolks** website at <http://Ornifolks.org>

Besides serving as a bulletin board and providing its members with safe and economical ways to visit foreign birding destinations, *Ornifolks* offers members:

- ◆ Custom international birding
- ◆ a library of trip reports
- ◆ contacts with ground agents and local guides

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------------------|
| Southern Grey Shrike* | | | | | | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 5 | | 1 | 3 | | <i>Lanius meridionalis</i> |
| Woodchat Shrike | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | <i>Lanius senator</i> |
| Jay | | | | 10 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Garrulus glandarius</i> |
| Magpie | | | 70 | | | | | | | | 3 | 2 | 1 | | <i>Pica pica</i> |
| Alpine Chough | | | | | | | | | | | | | | c | <i>Pyrrhocolax graculus</i> |
| Chough | | | | | 22 | | | | | | | | | 6 | <i>Pyrrhocolax pyrrhocolax</i> |
| Brown-necked Raven | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | <i>Corvus ruficollis</i> |
| Raven | | | 6 | 2 | x | x | 1 | | | | | | 70 | 6 | <i>Corvus corax</i> |
| Spotless Starling | | | | 5 | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | <i>Sturnus unicolor</i> |
| House Sparrow | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | <i>Passer domesticus</i> |
| Spanish Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | 8 | 4 | | | <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i> |
| Desert Sparrow | | | | | | | 8 | | | | | | | | <i>Passer simplex</i> |
| Rock Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | | | c | <i>Petronia petronia</i> |
| Chaffinch | | | c | fc | 80 | x | | | 1 | x | | | | 20 | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> |
| Serin | x | fc | 1 | c | c | x | | | x | | c | c | | | <i>Serinus serinus</i> |
| Greenfinch | x | 1 | fc | 1 | c | 7 | | | 1 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 2 | | <i>Carduelis chloris</i> |
| Goldfinch | | fc | fc | fc | fc | 7 | | 3 | | x | x | x | 1 | 1 | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> |
| Siskin | 3 | | 4 | fc | fc | | | | | | | | | | <i>Carduelis spinus</i> |
| Linnet | | fc | fc | fc | | | 2 | | 1 | | 2 | 8 | 2 | | <i>Carduelis cannabina</i> |
| Common Crossbill | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | <i>Loxia curvirostra</i> |
| Crimson-winged Finch | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 | <i>Rhodopechys sanguinea</i> |
| Trumpeter Finch | | | | | | 7 | 15 | 10 | | | | | | | <i>Bucanetes githagineus</i> |
| Cirl Bunting | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | <i>Emberiza cirlus</i> |
| Rock Bunting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | <i>Emberiza cia</i> |
| House Bunting | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | 4 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 1 | <i>Emberiza striolata</i> |
| Corn Bunting | | c | c | | | | | | | | | 4 | | | <i>Miliaria calandra</i> |

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| White-crowned Black Wheatear | | | | | | 4 | c | c | 1 | x | | | | | <i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i> |
| Black Wheatear | | | | | | 4 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 | <i>Oenanthe leucura</i> |
| Blue Rock Thrush | | | | | | | | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | | | <i>Monticola solitarius</i> |
| Ring Ouzel | | | | | | 30 | | | | | | | | | <i>Turdus torquatus</i> |
| Blackbird | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | <i>Turdus merula</i> |
| Song Thrush | | x | | | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> |
| Mistle Thrush | | | | 2 | 3 | 10 | | | | | | | 2 | | <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> |
| Cetti's Warbler | | h | | | 1 | | h | h | | | 1 | | | | <i>Cettia cetti</i> |
| Fan-tailed Warbler | x | 3 | | | | | | h | | 3 | 10 | | | | <i>Cisticola juncidis</i> |
| Sedge Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> |
| Reed Warbler* | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> |
| Olivaceous Warbler | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | <i>Hippolais pallida</i> |
| Tristram's Warbler | | | | | | | 6 | 1 | | | | | | | <i>Sylvia deserticola</i> |
| Spectacled Warbler | | | | | | 1 | 5 | 10 | 6 | | | | | | <i>Sylvia conspicillata</i> |
| Subalpine Warbler | | | | | | 1 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | | | | <i>Sylvia cantillans</i> |
| Sardinian Warbler | | 1 | 2 | | | | 8 | 1 | 4 | c | c | x | | | <i>Sylvia melanocephala</i> |
| Blackcap | | 2 | 3 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | | | <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> |
| Chiffchaff | x | x | x | | 5 | 15 | | 5 | | h | c | | | | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i> |
| Willow Warbler | | 2 | | | | 3 | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> |
| Firecrest | | | 20 | x | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Regulus ignicapillus</i> |
| Fulvous Babbler | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | <i>Turdoides fulvus</i> |
| Coal Tit | | 4 | x | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Parus ater</i> |
| Blue Tit | | x | x | x | x | | | 2 | | 2 | | | 1 | | <i>Parus caeruleus</i> |
| Great Tit | | 1 | 2 | x | 1 | | | | | | | | h | | <i>Parus major</i> |
| Nuthatch | | | 1 | x | 1 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Sitta europaea</i> |
| Short-toed Treecreeper | | | 3 | x | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Certhia brachydactyla</i> |
| Black-crowned Tchagra | | | | | | | | | | | | 2+h | | | <i>Tchagra senegala</i> |

The Itinerary

- 02-March-01 Arrivals in Casablanca and transfer to Hotel Ourida in Rabat.
- 03-March-01 Morning spent at the Foret de Sidi Bettache. Afternoon spent at Lac de Sidi Bourhaba. Night in Rabat.
- 04-March-01 Morning spent at the Foret de Sidi Bettache. Transfer to Ifrane area. Visit to Dayet Aaoua. Night in Azrou.
- 05-March-01 Morning at Dayet Aaoua. Transfer to Midelt, pausing at Zeida en-route. Night in Midelt.
- 06-March-01 Early morning visit to Zeida. Transfer to Rissani, stopping at Tizi-n-Talrehmt and Er Rachidia en-route. Night at Rissani.
- 07-March-01 Most of day spent in desert near Merzouga. Afternoon sandstorm brought birding to an early close. Night at Rissani.
- 08-March-01 Morning spent in desert south of Erfoud. Transfer to Boumalne du Dades, with stops near Jorf and Gorges du Todra. Night at Boumalne du Dades.
- 09-March-01 Morning and evening spent at the Tagdilt Track. Middle of day spent at the Gorges du Dades. Night at Boumalne du Dades.
- 10-March-01 Day spent travelling to Taroudannt. Stops made at Ouarzazate Barrage lake and Taliouine. Evening birding at Oued Sous on edge of Taroudannt. Night in Taroudannt.
- 11-March-01 Morning birding at Igoudar. Transfer to Agadir and afternoon birding at Oued Sous. Night in Agadir.
- 12-March-01 All day spent at Oued Massa. Night in Agadir.
- 13-March-01 Morning birding at Tamri and Cap Rhir. Then transfer to Marrakech.
- 14-March-01 Morning and early afternoon at Oukaimeden. Afternoon sightseeing in Marrakech.
- 15-March-01 Transfers to Casablanca and flights home.

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| Hoopoe Lark | | | | | | | 10 | fc | 1 | | | | | | <i>Alaemon alaudipes</i> |
| Dupont's Lark | | | | 1+2h | 3+6h | | | | | | | | | | <i>Chersophilus duponti</i> |
| Thick-billed Lark | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | <i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i> |
| Calandra Lark | | | | | | | | | | | | | 9 | | <i>Melanocorypha calandra</i> |
| Short-toed Lark | | | | | 10 | 25 | 10 | | 15 | | 20 | 8 | | | <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i> |
| Lesser Short-toed Lark | | | | 16 | x | x | | fc | x | x | 15 | 2 | x | | <i>Calandrella rufescens</i> |
| Crested Lark | | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | <i>Galerida cristata</i> |
| Thekla Lark | | | | 4 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Galerida theklae</i> |
| Woodlark | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Lullula arborea</i> |
| Skylark | | | | 3 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Alauda arvensis</i> |
| Horned Lark | | | | 10 | | | | | | | | | | 12 | <i>Eremophila alpestris</i> |
| Temminck's Horned Lark | | | | | | 1 | | c | | 1 | | | | | <i>Eremophila bilopha</i> |
| Plain Martin | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | <i>Riparia paludicola</i> |
| Sand Martin | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 20 | | | <i>Riparia riparia</i> |
| Crag Martin | | | | | 20 | 2 | 2 | x | x | x | | | | x | <i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i> |
| Swallow | x | x | x | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | x | x | x | x | 40 | x | x | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> |
| Red-rumped Swallow | | | | | 2 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | <i>Hirundo daurica</i> |
| House Martin | | | | | | | | x | x | | 1 | x | | | <i>Delichon urbica</i> |
| Tawny Pipit | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | | <i>Anthus campestris</i> |
| Meadow Pipit | | | | 10 | 3 | | | | | 2 | | | | | <i>Anthus pratensis</i> |
| Yellow Wagtail* | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 5 | 20 | | | <i>Motacilla (flava) flava</i> |
| Grey Wagtail | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | <i>Motacilla cinerea</i> |
| White Wagtail* | | | 1 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 2 | | 5 | 1 | | <i>Motacilla (alba) alba</i> |
| Common Bulbul | x | | | 6 | 2 | 6 | | h | x | fc | c | c | x | x | <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> |
| Dipper | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | <i>Cinclus cinclus</i> |
| Wren | | | 1 | | | | | h | 1 | | | | | h | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> |
| Alpine Accentor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | <i>Prunella collaris</i> |
| Robin | x | x | x | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> |
| Black Redstart | | | 6 | 2 | 3 | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | 10 | <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i> |
| Moussier's Redstart | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | | 2 | <i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i> |
| Stonechat* | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | 2 | | 3 | | | | <i>Saxicola (torquata) torquata</i> |
| Northern Wheatear | | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | | <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> |
| Black-eared Wheatear | | | | | | fc | fc | | c | fc | | 2 | | | <i>Oenanthe hispanica</i> |
| Desert Wheatear | | | | 1 | 2 | fc | fc | c | 2 | fc | | | | | <i>Oenanthe deserti</i> |
| Red-rumped Wheatear | | | | 3 | | | | | 12 | 2 | | | | | <i>Oenanthe moesta</i> |
| Mourning Wheatear | | | | | | | | | 4 | | | | | | <i>Oenanthe lugens</i> |

Daily Notes

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------------|
| Ruddy Turnstone | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Arenaria interpres</i> |
| Arctic Skua | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i> |
| Mediterranean Gull | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | <i>Larus melanocephalus</i> |
| Black-headed Gull | | x | | | | | | | | 1 | x | x | | | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> |
| Slender-billed Gull | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | <i>Larus genei</i> |
| Audouin's Gull | | | 60 | | | | | | | | 5 | 3 | | | <i>Larus audouinii</i> |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull* | x | x | x | | | | | | | | x | x | x | | <i>Larus (fuscus) graellsii</i> |
| Yellow-legged Gull | x | 2 | | | | | | | | | x | x | x | | <i>Larus michahellis</i> |
| Gull-billed Tern | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | <i>Sterna nilotica</i> |
| Sandwich Tern | | x | | | | | | | | | 200 | 10 | 10 | | <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> |
| Razorbill | | | | | | | | | | | | 6 | | | <i>Alca torda</i> |
| Crowned Sandgrouse | | | | | | | 6 | | | | | | | | <i>Pterocles coronatus</i> |
| Black-bellied Sandgrouse | | | | | 1+3h | | | | | | | | | | <i>Pterocles orientalis</i> |
| Pin-tailed Sandgrouse | | | | | | | | | | 24 | | | | | <i>Pterocles alchata</i> |
| Rock Dove | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | <i>Columba livia</i> |
| Woodpigeon | | 1 | 20 | | | | | | | 1 | 6 | | 6 | | <i>Columba palumbus</i> |
| Collared Dove | x | x | x | x | x | 1 | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> |
| Turtle Dove | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | <i>Streptopelia turtur</i> |
| Laughing Dove | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | | <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i> |
| Cuckoo | | | h | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Cuculus canorus</i> |
| Eagle Owl* | | | | | | | | | h | | | | | | <i>Bubo (bubo) bubo</i> |
| Little Owl | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 | <i>Athene noctua</i> |
| Short-eared Owl | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | <i>Asio flammeus</i> |
| Red-necked Nightjar | | | | | | | | | | h | | | | | <i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i> |
| Alpine Swift | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | | <i>Tachymarptis melba</i> |
| Common Swift | | | | | | | 2 | | | | 12 | | | | <i>Apus apus</i> |
| Pallid Swift | x | x | x | | | | | | | | x | x | x | | <i>Apus pallidus</i> |
| White-rumped Swift | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Apus caffer</i> |
| Little Swift | x | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | x | x | <i>Apus affinis</i> |
| Kingfisher | | | | | | | | | | | | 18 | 1 | | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> |
| European Bee-eater | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | <i>Merops apiaster</i> |
| Hoopoe | | | | | 2 | | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | <i>Upupa epops</i> |
| Wryneck | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | <i>Jynx torquilla</i> |
| Levaillant's Green Woodpecker | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Picus vaillantii</i> |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | | 3 | 2 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Dendrocopos major</i> |
| Bar-tailed Desert Lark | | | | | | | 4 | | | | | | | | <i>Ammomanes cincturus</i> |
| Desert Lark | | | | | 1 | 4 | | 2 | x | | | | | | <i>Ammomanes deserti</i> |

02-March-01 Arrivals in Casablanca and transfer to Rabat.

MD and FM arrive at Casablanca airport in the morning and transfer directly to Rabat. FL, FLo, JH, SM and CGB arrive at Casablanca airport in the early afternoon and are met by our driver. We travel to the seafront in Casablanca to collect the Martin party who had arrived in Morocco by road. We proceed to Rabat, pausing at a service station en-route. A brief period of birding produces the first Chaffinches (of the distinctive North African race *africana*), Goldfinches and a small party of Eurasian Siskin. Arrival in Rabat is just before dusk falls, and our arrival is welcomed by screaming parties of Pallid Swifts and MD/FM. MD/FM have spent the day exploring Rabat and have notched up Common Bulbul, Little Swift (FM at Casablanca Airport) and Zitting Cisticola. A House Bunting is found inside the hotel and most of the group connect before dinner. Night in Hotel Ourida, Rabat.

03-March-01 Foret de Sidi Bettache and Lac de Sidi Bourhaba

A leisurely 6.30am start sees us in the Foret de Sidi Bettache just under an hour later, having paused for a Black-winged Kite en-route. The form here is the nominate *caeruleus* which is treated as a separate species from the forms occurring in Australia and USA, but lumped with the forms occurring elsewhere in Europe, Africa and Asia. Our first stop produces our first Blue Tits, of the race *ultramarinus* considered by some authorities to be a good species, Great Tit, displaying Serins and Wood Pigeons. A calling Quail is typically elusive and gives us the slip. Further stops produce the local form of Magpie - *mauritanica* which could well be a future split - good numbers of White Storks, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, a typically elusive Sardinian Warbler, a group of Lesser Kestrels feeding over an area of arable fields, Stonechat and the first of many Crested Larks. A stop at a small barrage lake produces Grey Wagtail and Little Grebe, plus a concentration of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers.

After a stop to buy provisions for lunch we travel to the Lac de Sidi Bourhaba. Soon after our arrival two of the key target birds here are safely under the belt; Red-knobbed Coot with young and Marbled Duck. There are many other good birds here, with Green Sandpiper, Garganey, Red-crested Pochard, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Marsh Harrier, Black Kite, Purple Swamp-hen and a flock of 60 Audouin's Gulls. A Water Rail squeals from the marsh, but remains out of sight, while Cetti's Warblers taunt us by delivering their loud songs from deep in the heart of dense vegetation. A brief visit to the nearby wadi produces a large flock of Sandwich Terns, several Ruddy Turnstones and a party of Oystercatchers. We remain at the lake until dusk in the hope that a Marsh Owl will appear over the marsh. Unfortunately there is no sign of one and perhaps the strong winds have deterred the birds from hunting this evening. Night in Rabat.

Ornifolks in Morocco

04-March-01 Foret de sisi Bettache. Travel to Dayet Aaoua.

An early start sees us at the Double-spurred Francolin site just before dawn. As we try to locate calling birds it becomes apparent that none are calling and soon it becomes clear that we are not going to find this species this morning. Two small groups of Barbary Partridges are seen and there is plenty of bird activity in the form of Common Bulbul, Blackcap, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Sparrowhawk, Woodlark, Meadow Pipit, Serin, Goldfinch, Linnets and Greenfinch. By mid-morning we give up on the Francolins and return to Rabat for a late breakfast before setting out for the Ifrane area.

The journey to Ifrane is relatively uneventful, but just outside Ifrane we pause to look at a raptor which turns out to be our first Long-legged Buzzard of the trip. We proceed to Dayet Aaoua a good site for Levaillant's Green Woodpecker. We do not find the woodpecker, but are treated to superb views of numerous Firecrests, several Short-toed Treecreepers, Mistle Thrush, and Great Spotted Woodpecker. We try another site for the woodpecker, but despite dipping again we get some consolation in the form of a Nuthatch. Night in Azrou.

05-March-01 Dayet Aaoua. Zeida. Midelt.

We arrive at Dayet Aaoua early in the day and spend the first hour or so searching unsuccessfully for the woodpecker. However a move to a nearby area of deciduous woodland soon results in a calling bird, which is quickly located and superb views are obtained of a pair. Before long digital photographs have been taken and shortly after that a digital image on a laptop is being passed around the bus - the wonders of modern technology! Pleased with our success we travel to a nearby village to purchase lunch supplies. We then begin the journey south to Zeida and Midelt. As we pass over the high plateau near Mischliffen we encounter large flocks of migrant Chaffinches, while a couple of Ruddy Shelducks and a distant Montagu's Harrier are noted. We stop for lunch at a lake where there are quite large numbers of Ruddy Shelducks and Red-billed Choughs feeding nearby. We find a few ducks and Great Crested Grebes on the lake, but the stop is notable for our first good looks at Thekla Lark, pair of which perform very well.

After lunch we travel on to Zeida where we spend the rest of the afternoon searching for the ever-elusive Dupont's Lark. Despite our best efforts, and to the frustration of the rest of the group, only two members of the group get an adequate look at this difficult bird before dusk. However, there are other distractions in the form of flocks of Lesser Short-toed Larks, Red-rumped Wheatear, a surprise Cream-coloured Courser and a superb male Desert Wheatear. Night in Midelt.

Ornifolks in Morocco

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--|
| Bonelli's Eagle | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | <i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i> |
| Osprey | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> |
| Lesser Kestrel | | | 9 | | x | | | | | 1 | | | | | <i>Falco naumanni</i> |
| Kestrel | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | | 1 | 4 | 1 | 20 | 8 | 5 | 2 | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> |
| Peregrine Falcon | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | <i>Falco peregrinus</i> |
| Barbary Falcon | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | <i>Falco pelegrinoides</i> |
| Barbary Partridge | | | 4 | | | | | | | | 3 | | | 7 | <i>Alectoris barbara</i> |
| Quail | | | h | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Coturnix coturnix</i> |
| Water Rail | | | h | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Rallus aquaticus</i> |
| Spotted Crake | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | <i>Porzana porzana</i> |
| Moorhen | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 6 | 7 | | | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> |
| Purple Swamp-hen | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> |
| Coot | | | | x | | | | | | | | x | | | <i>Fulica atra</i> |
| Red-knobbed Coot | | | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Fulica cristata</i> |
| Crane | | | | | | | | | | | | 6 | | | <i>Grus grus</i> |
| Oystercatcher | | | 3 | | | | | | | | 200 | | | | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> |
| Black-winged Stilt | x | | | | | | | | | | 400 | 60 | | | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| Avocet | | | | | | | | | | | 30 | | | | <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> |
| Stone-curlew | | | | | | | | | 8 | 10 | | | | | <i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i> |
| Cream-coloured Courser | | | | 1 | | | | 13 | | | | | | | <i>Cursorius cursor</i> |
| Little Ringed Plover | | | | | | | | | 4 | 10 | 40 | 15 | | | <i>Charadrius dubius</i> |
| Ringed Plover | | | | | | | | | | 10 | 18 | 30 | | | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> |
| Kentish Plover | | | | | | | | | | 12 | 18 | 1 | | | <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> |
| Grey Plover | | x | | | | | | | | 12 | 12 | | | | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> |
| Sanderling | | | | | | | | | | 15 | 15 | | | | <i>Calidris alba</i> |
| Little Stint | | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | 12 | | | | <i>Calidris minuta</i> |
| Curlew Sandpiper | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> |
| Ruff | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> |
| Common Snipe* | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | <i>Gallinago (gallinago) gallinago</i> |
| Black-tailed Godwit | | | | | | | | | | 15 | 15 | 4 | | | <i>Limosa limosa</i> |
| Bar-tailed Godwit | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | | <i>Limosa lapponica</i> |
| Eurasian Curlew | | | | | | | | | | 50 | | | | | <i>Numenius arquata</i> |
| Redshank | | | | | | | | | | 60 | 15 | | | | <i>Tringa totanus</i> |
| Greenshank | | | | | | | | | | 6 | 4 | 15 | | | <i>Tringa nebularia</i> |
| Green Sandpiper | | | 1 | | | | | | | 7 | 8 | | | | <i>Tringa ochropus</i> |
| Common Sandpiper | | | | 2 | | | | | | | 2 | | | | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> |

Ornifolks in Morocco

| | 2-Mar | 3-Mar | 4-Mar | 5-Mar | 6-Mar | 7-Mar | 8-Mar | 9-Mar | 10-Mar | 11-Mar | 12-Mar | 13-Mar | 14-Mar | 15-Mar | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------------|
| Little Grebe | | | x | 1 | | | | | | | | 20 | | | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> |
| Great Crested Grebe | | | 1 | 1 | 6 | | | | | 30 | | | | | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| Black-necked Grebe | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> |
| Cory's Shearwater | | | | | | | | | | | | | 40 | 6 | <i>Calonectris diomedea</i> |
| Gannet | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 40 | <i>Morus bassanus</i> |
| Cormorant | | | x | | | 1 | | | | 20 | 2 | 2 | | | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| Squacco Heron | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 20 | | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i> |
| Cattle Egret | | | x | x | | | | | x | | | | x | x | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> |
| Little Egret | | | fc | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 30 | | | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> |
| Grey Heron | | | 6 | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 15 | 30 | | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> |
| Black Stork | | | | c | 1 | | | | | 10 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | <i>Ciconia nigra</i> |
| White Stork | | | c | c | c | fc | | | 3 | 10 | 1 | 30 | | 5 | <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> |
| Glossy Ibis | | | | | | | | | | | | 30 | | | <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> |
| Bald Ibis | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 | | <i>Geronticus eremita</i> |
| Spoonbill | | | | | | | | | | | 30 | 6 | 6 | | <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> |
| Greater Flamingo | | | | | | | | | | | 300 | 8 | | | <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i> |
| Ruddy Shelduck | | | | | 40 | | | | | | | 2 | | | <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> |
| Gadwall | | | | 6 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Anas strepera</i> |
| Common Teal* | | | | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Anas (crecca) crecca</i> |
| Mallard | | | | x | x | x | | | | 2 | | | | | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> |
| Pintail | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | <i>Anas acuta</i> |
| Garganey | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | <i>Anas querquedula</i> |
| Shoveler | | | | 60 | 1 | | | | | | 4 | 7 | 2 | | <i>Anas clypeata</i> |
| Marbled Duck | | | | 25 | | | | | | | | 30 | | | <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i> |
| Red-crested Pochard | | | | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Netta rufina</i> |
| Pochard | | | | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Aythya ferina</i> |
| Tufted Duck | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | <i>Aythya fuligula</i> |
| Black-winged Kite | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | | 1 | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> |
| Black Kite | | | 1 | | 6 | 1 | | | | 20 | 1 | 12 | 2 | | <i>Milvus migrans</i> |
| Short-toed Eagle | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | <i>Circaetus gallicus</i> |
| Marsh Harrier | | | fc | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | | | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> |
| Montagu's Harrier | | | | | 3 | 1 | | | | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | <i>Circus pygargus</i> |
| Sparrowhawk | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | <i>Accipiter nisus</i> |
| Common Buzzard | | | 2 | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | <i>Buteo buteo</i> |
| Long-legged Buzzard | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 5 | 6 | | | | | <i>Buteo rufinus</i> |
| Golden Eagle | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> |
| Booted Eagle | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | | <i>Hieraetus pennatus</i> |

Ornifolks in Morocco

06-March-01 Zeida. Midelt - Rissani (stops at Tizi-n-Tahlremt Pass and Er Rachidia)

A pre-dawn start finds us listening to Dupont's Larks as the sun rises. As the light increases we find several Dupont's Larks dotted around the plain. However, elusive as ever they are difficult to get to grips with and it is a couple of hours before we locate a more obliging bird and eventually we all get good views of this bird. Overhead a Black-bellied Sandgrouse does a fly by, while en-route back to the hotel for breakfast we note a Hoopoe.

After breakfast we travel south stopping for a Black Wheatear just short of the Tizi-n-Tahlremt pass. At the pass we find good numbers of Ring Ouzels apparently moving through the pass, while Crossbill and a Little Owl are also noted. There is no sign of any Tristram's Warblers, so we assume they are still on wintering grounds further south. A stop at Gorges du Ziz produces Crag Martins, Red-rumped Swallow and some of the group obtain brief views of an ever-elusive Cetti's Warbler. A short roadside stop later produces our first Desert Lark.

At Er Rachidia we take a walk at the local rubbish dump. Here we encounter a small flurry of new birds in the form of Short-toed Lark, Subalpine Warbler, Southern Grey Shrike and Trumpeter Finch. This stop is also notable for large numbers of flies that swarm into the bus and make the subsequent journey a little uncomfortable. As we reach Erfoud we begin to see our first White-crowned Black Wheatears and we reach our hotel in the early evening. Night at Rissani.

07-March-01 Desert south of Erfoud, Erg Chebbi and Merzouga.

We head out in two land rovers, hired locally to ensure maximum flexibility in the rough desert terrain. The morning is very productive with frequent stops to explore isolated patches of vegetation usually producing flurries of bird activity. Common species include regular encounters with Spectacled, Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers. A distant Sandgrouse is seen landing on the ground, so we head in the direction of the bird and soon we are enjoying great looks at a party of 6 Crowned Sandgrouse. Nearby a Hoopoe Lark begins its evocative song while small groups of Short-toed Larks move overhead. An exploration of a wadi produces more Sylvia warblers, including crippling views of Tristram's Warbler, and our first Moussier's Redstart. Desert Wheatears are fairly common and we enjoy crippling views at Trumpeter Finches. We take breakfast at one of the dune cafes and share the restaurant with a pair of breeding White-crowned Black Wheatears. After breakfast we carefully check the cafes for sparrow flocks, but we do not locate the much-desired Desert Sparrow until we reach the last café before Merzouga. A strong wind is blowing now and it is increasingly difficult to bird. Some of the group decides to look at carpets in Merzouga village, while others search the more sheltered cultivated areas for birds. We find little of note, although it is clear that there are plenty of migrants passing

through, mainly in the form of Chiffchaffs. A single Yellow "Spanish" Wagtail is an addition to the trip list. After escaping the winds in the shelter of the village we head out to the dried up lake on the outskirts of Merzouga. Strong winds make birding outside the vehicles virtually impossible and a briefly seen Temminck's Horned Lark gives us the slip. Eventually we have to give up and return to the hotel, since visibility is much reduced by driving sand and it is dangerous to remain in the desert in these conditions. Night at Rissani.

08-March-01 Erg Chebbi, Rissani => Boumalne du Dades (stops at Jorf and Todra Gorge)

A very early start sees us in the sand dunes at Erg Chebbi as the sun rises. We see a very distant Brown-necked Raven before heading back to a wadi to search for Desert Warbler. Unfortunately we do not find this bird, but are treated to great looks at Fulvous Babbler and Bar-tailed Desert Lark. Evidence of migrants moving through is provided by a passage of Barn Swallows, 2 Common Swifts and Tawny Pipit. We also enjoy further looks at a flock of Trumpeter Finches.

We take a late morning breakfast before setting off on the long drive west to Boumalne du Dades. We make a stop at Jorf where Scrub and Desert Warblers have been seen in the past. We see neither, but are compensated by an obliging Hoopoe and a fine male Subalpine Warbler.

Late afternoon finds us at Gorge du Todra, a popular tourist attraction. We spend a productive few hours in this area picking up new birds in the form of Blue Rock Thrush, Bonelli's Eagle, and a hunting falcon that proves to be Barbary. After checking into our hotel, Chris meets Richard Cruse, a colleague from Birdwatching Breaks, in the bar and a useful exchange of information takes place. Night at Boumalne du Dades.

09-March-01 Tagdilt Track, Gorge du Dades

An early start finds us in the desert on the Tagdilt track. Our first key target is soon located and we are quickly enjoying good looks at several Temminck's Horned Larks. Other larks here include Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed, while Red-rumped and Desert Wheatears are also present. Overhead we note a Marsh Harrier and Black Kite. A garbled message from Richard Cruse brings news of a Houbara Bustard and results in strained tensions on the bus, but it soon transpires that the information is nearly a week old and we don't find this difficult bird. Southern Grey Shrike, Desert Lark and a flock of Cream-coloured Coursers are some compensation, while a Booted Eagle puts on a good show just outside Boumalne.

The Bird List

Codes used in the Trip List

hHeard Only
 xQuantities not estimated
 *taxonomy pending

Quantities

1-15 # or u..... (uncommon)
 16-50 fc (fairly common)
 51-150 ... c (common)
 151- up . a (abundant)

Taxonomic status of *Larus (cachinnans) michahellis*

The vexed question of 'Herring' Gull systematics is a continuing headache. The birds in Morocco are the form *michahellis/atlantis*. They are part of the Yellow-legged group usually treated within *Larus cachinnans*. However, *cachinnans* is the form breeding in Central Asia and is usually referred to as Caspian (or Pontic) Gull. This form is likely to be split from the Yellow-legged (*michahellis*) group and thus the birds in Morocco will be a separate species from *cachinnans*. Assuming that this will happen, the Yellow-legged Gull will probably become *Larus michahellis*.

That is probably confusing as hell, so if you wish to follow S&M, change the scientific name to *Larus (cachinnans) michahellis*.

CGB 23Apr2001

The heat of the day is spent exploring the Gorge du Dades. We find Short-toed Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard and Sparrowhawk, while small numbers of Crag Martins are also noted before we head back to the desert for the cooler late afternoon period.

We resume our search of the desert with Thick-billed Lark being our main target. We draw a blank for 30 minutes, before we notice Richard Cruse waving at us. A brisk walk/run* (*delete as appropriate) results in the news that Richard has located our quarry and we all enjoy prolonged views of this amazing bird. The last hour of light is spent looking for an Eagle Owl, which is heard but remains unseen. Night in Boumalne du Dades.

10-March-01 Boumalne du Dades => Taroudannt (stops at Ouarzazate, Taliouine)

The day is spent driving from Boumalne du Dades to Taroudannt. We stop in a wadi about an hour west of Boumalne and we secure several Mourning Wheatears. An overflying flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse is a fortuitous bonus.

We stop at the reservoir near Ouarzazate and Hoover up a few common waterbirds, with new birds including Little Stint and Little Ringed Plover. Migration is evident in the form of a flock of Black Kites and a single Black Stork drifts over.

A leisurely lunch stop at Taliouine produces superb views of Woodchat Shrike, breeding Sardinian Warblers and Long-legged Buzzards at a nest in the cliffs beyond. By early evening we reach Taroudannt and an exploration of the wadi on the edge of town produces excellent looks at Stone Curlew, but whilst we hear Red-necked Nightjar we fail to see one. Night in Taroudannt.

11-March-01 Igoudar. Taroudannt => Agadir: Oued Sous.

The morning is spent in the countryside surrounding the small village of Igoudar. We find our first male Moussier's Redstarts, while other highlights include Cirl Bunting, Hoopoe and Turtle Dove. We spend some time watching for raptors and a good list is quickly accumulated. We record Black-winged Kite, Black Kite, Peregrine, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers. Flocks of Little Swifts are additions to some of the group's list.

On returning to the bus we find that there is a problem starting it. Our resourceful driver soon has it fixed in a typically innovative manner and we drive to nearby Oued Berhil to buy lunch provisions and make further repairs to the vehicle. We proceed onto Agadir arriving at the Oued Sous in the late afternoon.

After spending most of the trip in desert habitats we enjoy concentrations of shorebirds and other waterbirds. Highlights of our visit here include Greater Flamingo, Spoonbill, Garganey, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit and Gull-billed Tern. An efficient gull hoovering exercise results in sightings of Common, Mediterranean, Slender-billed and Audouin's safely in the bag. Overnight at Agadir.

12-March-01 Oued Massa

The entire day is spent leisurely exploring the variety of habitats around the mouth of the Oued Massa. Early highlights include a Squacco Heron, Laughing Dove, Common Crane, Glossy Ibis, Spotted Crake and small numbers of Marbled Duck. We hear several Black-crowned Tchagra before eventually getting good views of this striking species at close range. We find a small party of Spanish Sparrows and as we take a break for lunch we notice Alpine Swifts in the swift flock overhead.

In the mid-afternoon we watch from the bridge over the river and we have a flurry of new species. Sedge Warblers perform well, while 2 Olivaceous Warblers provide an identification challenge. Another identification challenge for the group is posed by a nesting Reed Warbler and provides the leader with some amusement! A Plain Sand Martin patrols the river along with small numbers of Sand Martins and a Wryneck is found in a bush by the reedbed affording wonderful views. A second bird is also found. Close to the village we locate both black-throated and white-throated forms of Black-eared Wheatear, which provide superb views and are the seventh and final species of wheatear seen during the trip. The late afternoon is spent enjoying further looks at the Spotted Crake and we have an early finish to a thoroughly enjoyable day. Night in Agadir.

13-March-01 Agadir => Marrakech (stops at Tamri, Cap Rhir and Chichaoua)

We head north from Agadir with our first target species being Bald Ibis. We see the ibis by the road just north of Tamri, and we obtain superb close views of this characterful if ugly species. We drive south to Cap Rhir, and a sea watch produces 6 Cory's Shearwaters, Razorbill, Northern Gannet and Parasitic Jaeger. A lonely Kentish Plover soon becomes a meal for a Peregrine, while a Short-eared Owl is an addition to the trip list.

We continue our journey and make a stop for a Montagu's Harrier near Chichaoua. Nearby we realise that there are larks singing and we soon locate several Calandra Larks - the final lark of the trip and bringing the total to 14 species. Those members of the group who missed the bird earlier in the trip welcome a Little Owl.

A pair of Booted Eagles on the nest outside our hotel facing the park heralds our arrival in Marrakech around 1630hrs. The rest of the day is free to explore the city. Night in Marrakech (where it is swifts a-go-go).

14-March-01 Oukaimeden

The first part of the day is spent in the mountains around the small village of Oukaimeden. On the journey up the mountain we are treated to excellent views of Rock Bunting, while our arrival at Oukaimeden is heralded by large numbers of Alpine Choughs. We find flocks of migrant *coelebs* Chaffinches, while Rock Sparrows are common and Black Redstarts breed around the buildings. Exploration of the scree slopes and alpine meadows produces several Horned Larks and eventually a small party of Crimson-winged Finches. A little further on and we find 2 Alpine Accentors that initially perform well but soon move higher up on the mountain. After a refreshing coffee break we move down the mountain, finding Dipper on the way and then we enjoy a rather cold lunch break searching for Lammergeier. Unfortunately this species fails to show, but we do see a Golden Eagle before snow showers induced us to give up and elect to spend the afternoon exploring Marrakech. Overnight Marrakech.

15-March-01 Marrakech => Casablanca

The morning is spent driving from Marrakech to Casablanca. Few birds are seen en-route although a few Calandra Larks fly across the road and Southern Grey Shrikes dot the telegraph wires. The trip ends with some participants catching international flights out of Casablanca and others rejoining their own ground transportation for their onward departure from Morocco.

Conservation Status of Moroccan Birds Seen

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Marbled Teal | <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i> | Vulnerable |
| Audouin's Gull | <i>Larus audouinii</i> | Conservation Dependent |
| Lesser Kestrel | <i>Falco naumanni</i> | Vulnerable |
| Waldrapp (Bald Ibis).... | <i>Geronticus eremita</i> | Critical |