

Western Sahara 27-30 Dec 2017

Introduction

3 nights along the Aousserd road in Western Sahara with the main goal of catching up my 14th species of cat, namely Sand cat.

I also tried an off road area along the old Paris-dakar pist. Mainly for the chance of seeing Dorca gazelle but also to mix it up a little and see more of the area.

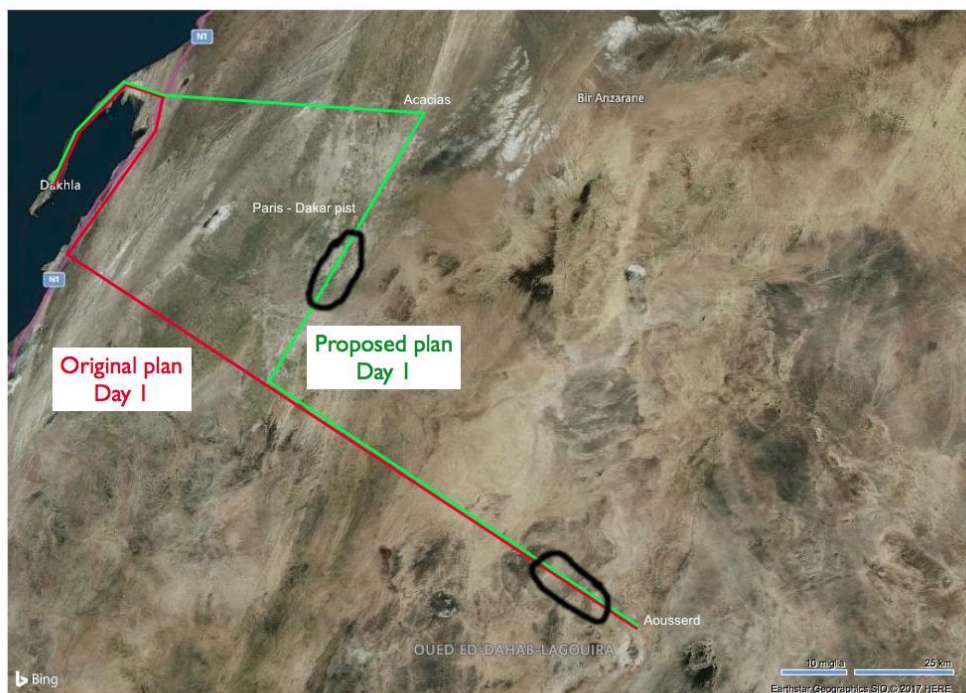
I spent 3 days/nights for this. First night off road in a tent and then the other two in a house in Aousserd. A huge advantage to stay in Aousserd close to the Sand cat area.

No problem with the military/police. They checked my passport in Aousserd which is a military base, and was questioned why we were there. Then no problem at all.

Excursions during daytime in this fantastic beautiful area and then spotlighting a couple of hours until midnight was our agenda.

My trip was organized very good by Chris Townend on <http://www.wisebirding.co.uk/> and are you curious about the area, please contact him and I am sure you will be satisfied.

Here you can see the areas I did spotlighting. I had a choice between doing the red line or the green and I chose the latter.



Please note that it is impossible and dangerous to go along the green line off road on your own as it is a mined area and you must have knowledge where to go.

I managed to see 7 species and this was what I saw.

1. **African Savanna hare** --- 7 of them on my first night off road during spotlighting. Very abundant in this area. Not a single one along the Aousserd road.
2. **Ruppels fox** --- 7-8 individuals in total is my appreciation. Present in both areas. Very, very skittish and they all ran away from me and my camera. Therefore sometimes hard to identify from Fennecs. All of them during spotlighting.
3. **Fennec fox** --- 3-4 individuals in total is my appreciation. Identified only along the road. Like the Ruppels very skittish and hard to come close. All of them during spotlighting.
4. **African golden wolf** --- One in off road area seen very well during spotlighting. Another eyeshine more than likely from this species in the same area. Well, it's a debate if it is a Golden jackal or not. So do your own conclusion 😊
5. **Desert hedgehog** --- One along the road just minutes before quit spotlighting on my last night.
6. **Lesser Egyptian Jerboa** --- Totally 7 individuals seeing on all three nights
7. **Sand cat** --- Highlight and the whole goal of the trip! A fantastic sighting around 21:30 on my last night. Not a single eyeshine from anything for 1½ hour and Just when I started to think when to come back for it... then BOOOM, just beside the road 50km from Aousserd. It stayed perfectly visible for around one minute before it decided that enough is enough and the cat ran away. We followed it a bit off road and had some more glimpse of this elusive cat thru bushes when it tried to hide. My 14th species of cat was now a fact!
 - **Domestic cats** --- Be aware of domestic cats. I found 4 of them during spotlighting as far away as 45km from Aousserd. Very irritating to spend time to identify possible cat-eyeshine when it turned out to be domestic cats.

Stuff I missed

Dorca gazelle --- Well, no "Dorca's" for me. They are in very low numbers in the off road area but they use to see them from time to time.

Saharan striped polecat --- Not lucky with them.

Not a single Gerbil which was very weird. A few different species use to be very abundant but nothing. Cold weather could be the answer with down to 12C (53F) in the night.

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African Savanna hare





African golden wolf



Sand cat



Lesser Egyptian Jerboa



Desert hedgehog



One of this annoying domestic cats



Domestic camels in typical Western Sahara landscape



This is where I saw the Sand cat



Another desert dwellers – Sudan mastigure