

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



WESTERN SAHARA: Birds & Mammals Tour

Thursday 22nd - Thursday 29th March 2018

5 Wise Birding Clients:

Leaders: Chris Townend & Nico Calcagno (Dakhla Rovers)

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Golden Nightjar: After a number of attempts, we finally succeeded with some very close views of a bird in torchlight on the morning of the 26th at Oued Jenna.

African Dunn's Lark: A key target species seen well on a number of occasions with a particularly confiding bird along the Aousserd road on the 24th.

Sudan Golden Sparrow: A group of 5 birds including 2 males at Oued Jenna.

Cricket Warbler: A speciality of the region with some great views and a minimum count of at least 6 birds in Oued Jenna.

Fennec Fox: Some good views in the spotlight of a single animal on the 26th.

Sand Cat: A good view in the spotlight on the evening of the 24th.

Atlantic Humpback Dolphin: Good views on a flat sea! A total of 2-3 animals in Dakhla Bay seen from the Oyster Farm whilst enjoying our lunch!



Lanner Falcon and Dunn's Lark were just two of the tour highlights

Tour Summary

The Western Sahara is easily accessible with daily flights, it has good accommodation, good food and some impressive desert scenery and coast. This 7 night tour (3 nights in our desert house) targeted the key species of the desert environment with a particular focus on birds that are difficult to find in the Western Palearctic region. A good number of hours were also spent spotlighting for the numerous impressive mammals and reptiles that can be found in this fabulous region of NW Africa. We saw a total of 126 species of bird in the WS, plus an additional 22 species near Casablanca due to a flight delay. All key targets were seen including Golden Nightjar that can often be tricky. We also saw 9 mammal species, including Sand Cat, Fennec Fox and Ruppell's Fox as well as a number of impressive reptiles.

Thursday 22 March: ARRIVE DAKHLA

Unfortunately, due to problems with air traffic control, our Royal Air Maroc flight to Casablanca was delayed resulting in most of the group missing the connecting flight to Dakhla. We therefore spent in a hotel in Casablanca and we missed the first day of the tour in Dakhla. **Overnight Dakhla Hotel / Casablanca Hotel**

Friday 23 March: DAR BOUAZZA WETLAND, CASABLANCA / DAKHLA BAY

For those still in Casablanca, we arranged a taxi to a nearby wetland that despite having been a somewhat impromptu visit, it turned out to be pretty good. Highlights here included Marbled Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Red-crested Pochard and Red-knobbed Coot, Purple Swamphen, Collared Pratincole, Barbary Partridge and Squacco Heron.

In Dakhla, Per had managed to escape the air traffic control issues of the previous day and continued the itinerary as normal with our local guide Nico. They explored the Dakhla Bay and the Ramsar area as well as a visit to Tachktant (Gleb Jdiane). Highlights included a good selection of waders including counts in excess of 100 Grey Plover, Eurasian Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo, plus a single Alpine Swift. A visit to Tachktant revealed Trumpeter Finch, Wryneck, and a Short-toed Eagle. The key target of the day was seen well in the afternoon, a single "African" Royal Tern. The rest of the group arrived on the evening flight into Dakhla.

Overnight Dakhla Hotel

Sat 24 March: DAKHLA BAY WEST - MIJK - GLEB TACHKTANT - AOUSSERD

After breakfast at our Dakhla hotel we soon headed off to the desert. A quick stop in the bay revealed a few waders and Greater Flamingos but the tide was far out so we continued to a private oasis at Mijk. Here we enjoyed a great couple of hours sifting through the numerous migrants that included some exceptionally showy White-spotted Bluethroats, European Pied Flycatcher, Black-eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike, Common Nightingale, Tree Pipit, Common Redstart, Common Cuckoo, European Turtle Dove, Purple Heron, European Bee-Eater and two Gull-billed Terns. After a picnic lunch at the site we headed deeper into the desert and saw both Temminck's Lark and Cream-coloured Courser en route.

Heading to Aousserd we stopped to check for "African" Dunn's Lark and as if by magic one was stood just metres from our vehicle which performed exceptionally! As we continued through the amazing desert landscape, it wasn't long before we reached Oued Jenna where we saw our first Desert Sparrows and Black-crowned Sparrow-lark. After an evening meal at the desert house we then re-traced our route and returned west along the Aousserd road and then did some spotlighting along the road back towards Aousserd. The first couple of hours were quiet and then we hit the jackpot with great views of a Sand Cat as it crossed an open area and then slinked into

vegetation. A little further east along the road a Ruppell's Fox ran across the desert terrain and our final new mammal was a Desert Hedgehog in the middle of the road! Other mammal highlights included African Savannah Hare, Lesser Egyptian Jerboa and a Pygmy Gerbil. Elegant Gecko and a superb Sand Viper were also seen.

Overnight Aousserd House

Sunday 25 March: AOUSSERD - OUED JENNA - DERRAMAN

This morning we were up pre-dawn, which wasn't too brutal except for the clocks moving forward an hour which reduced our rest time somewhat! We arrived at Oued Jenna on high alert for the hoped for Golden Nightjar. However, despite trying at various spots there was no sight nor sound of this often tricky to see species. During the early morning our first Cricket Warbler of the trip showed well along with a roosting flock of European Bee-Eaters, Western Bonelli's Warbler and Fulvous Babbler. Highlight of the morning had to go to the four Lanner Falcons that gave an incredible aerial display just above our heads en route to our accommodation.

After breakfast and some rest at the house we returned to Oued Jenna to try for Sudan Golden Sparrow. Highlights here included Western Olivaceous (Isabelline) Warbler, Cricket Warbler, Western Subalpine Warbler, European Roller and a cracking male Montagu's Harrier. However, it was the large flocks of Desert Sparrows that revealed our prime target species with five Sudan Golden Sparrows in the flock, including three stunning males. Later in the afternoon we explored the impressive Derraman Massif where highlights included a huge flock of 300+ Desert Sparrows, Booted Eagle, another Montagu's Harrier and at dusk, a super Pharaoh Eagle Owl as it peered out across the beautiful desert landscape from its lookout.

At dusk we spent an hour listening and looking for Golden Nightjar at Oued Jenna but again without success. **Overnight Aousserd House**

Monday 26 March: AOUSSERD - OUED JENNA - LEGLAT - OUED ACHAYF

Once again, this morning we were up pre-dawn and the wind seemed to be howling! We arrived at Oued Jenna pre-dawn again and amazingly the wind had dropped. At 07.10hrs a Golden Nightjar began calling nearby and after a little re-positioning we finally managed some very close views in torchlight as it glided past, just a few metres from us! The bird continued calling as the first daylight appeared and we then returned to our house for breakfast to celebrate.

A mid morning visit to the Leglat Massif produced some good views of Bar-tailed Lark and more Dunn's Lark as Nico carefully guided us through the safe route to this site. Highlights once inside the massif area included Booted Eagle, migrating Marsh Harriers and an adult and immature Golden Eagle. Passerines included Western Orphean Warbler, Desert Lark and Blue Rock Thrush. We also enjoyed good views of Pale Rock Martin. En route back to the house for lunch, a *canid* species ran across the road but too distant and quick to identify. It was either a feral dog or African Golden Wolf and despite some further searching we never saw the animal again!

After lunch, we did some birding around the Acacias at Oued Achayf where Black-eared Wheatear and Desert Sparrow were the commonest species before we returned to rest before another spotlighting session along the Aousserd Road. We headed approximately 76Km west of Aousserd where just before dusk a singing African Desert Warbler performed and we then began spotlighting back east. Undoubted highlight of the evening was a Fennec Fox seen shortly after the sun had set. This was soon followed by a very obliging African Wildcat that allowed close approach on foot.

Overnight Aousserd House

Tuesday 27 March: AOUSSERD - OUED JENNA - GLEB TACHKTANT - MIJK

Today we slowly headed back towards the coast with a couple of stops en route. Black Kite numbers had definitely increased with 100+ circling near our accommodation in Aousserd before we headed east. At around 75Km from Aousserd we checked for the African Desert Warbler and had no luck, but a couple of Spectacled Warblers and at least three Dunn's Larks were a very welcome distraction. Cream-coloured Couriers were seen whilst travelling with a total count of 10 birds seen during the drive. A lunch stop at the pool at Tachktant produced another great selection of migrants with Bluethroat, Willow Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, a good candidate for Iberian Chiffchaff, Wryneck, Trumpeter Finch, Tree Pipits, Iberian Yellow Wagtails and best of all, a Spotted Crake! This was presumably the same bird that was found by one of the Wise Birding participants during our February tour.

After lunch, everyone was keen to see what was new at the private oasis at Mijk, so we spent an hour or so birding the area. Similar species from our visit on the 24th, with Bluethroat numbers seeming higher, but the stand out bird was a Eurasian Bittern that flushed from one of the pools. It was a surreal sight as it flew around the desert landscape, landing briefly, before returning to feed in the pool where we left it in peace and returned to Dakhla. **Overnight Dakhla Hotel**

Wed 28 March: DAKHLA BAY - TAOURTA GDNS - OCEAN VAGABOND

After breakfast at the hotel, we headed out to explore Dakhla Bay where we had an enjoyable morning sifting through the hundreds of waders, terns and gulls for which Dakhla Bay is so important. Highlights included exceptionally close views of five "African" Royal Terns sitting on the sand in the company of Sandwich Terns, Caspian Terns and Audouin's Gulls! A great selection of waders included Grey Plover, Sanderling, Red Knot, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Kentish Plover as well as numerous Eurasian Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo. A dark morph Western Reef Egret was a good bird to see and Ospreys fished further out in the bay.

A visit to the Taourta Gardens complex for migrants produced a Black-crowned Night Heron, Western Subalpine Warbler, Common Nightingale and Bluethroat plus Little Swifts overhead before we headed to the Oyster Farm for lunch.

Highlight at the Oyster Farm, other than the fabulous fish meal, were up to three Atlantic Humpback Dolphins that we could watch feeding in the shallow bay from the open-fronted restaurant! It was a great sighting, particularly with the lack of regular reports in recent years. The exceptionally calm seas clearly helped us and we enjoyed some great scope views as they broke the surface every now and again.

Our final birding was further north along the bay at the Ocean Vagabond complex where we enjoyed some beers and more migrants! The week was rounded off nicely with a very tasty meal at one of the local Dakhla restaurants where both Nico and Martina from Dakhla Rovers joined us.

Thursday 29 March: DEPARTURE

An unfortunate delay to our flight leaving Dakhla, resulted in the positive of some more birding! After breakfast we spent some time watching from the open terrace of the hotel and visited a tiny town park. In this tiny area we managed to find two Black-crowned Night Herons, Melodious Warbler, European Pied Flycatcher, Wryneck, Common Redstart, European Pied Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Tree Pipit and *flavissima* Yellow Wagtail! Finally, at around midday we took the short transfer to Dakhla airport and took our flights back to the UK / Europe via Casablanca where the tour concluded.



Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Western Sahara £125 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund.

For the last three years Wise Birding Holidays has been supporting a number of small conservation projects. However, we now believe that to try and make a bigger difference to conservation it seems best to pool the donations from most of our tours into one central fund. Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to around £4,000. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations. Please visit our [Conservation News](#) & [Latest News](#) links to find out more.



Many thanks to tour participant Peter Alfrey for allowing the use of a number of his photos in this report. You can also listen to Peter's sound recording of the Golden Nightjar, by following the link at the end of this report.



European Bee-Eater (above) and White-spotted Bluethroat (below)





Eurasian Wryneck (above) and Western Orphean Warbler (below)





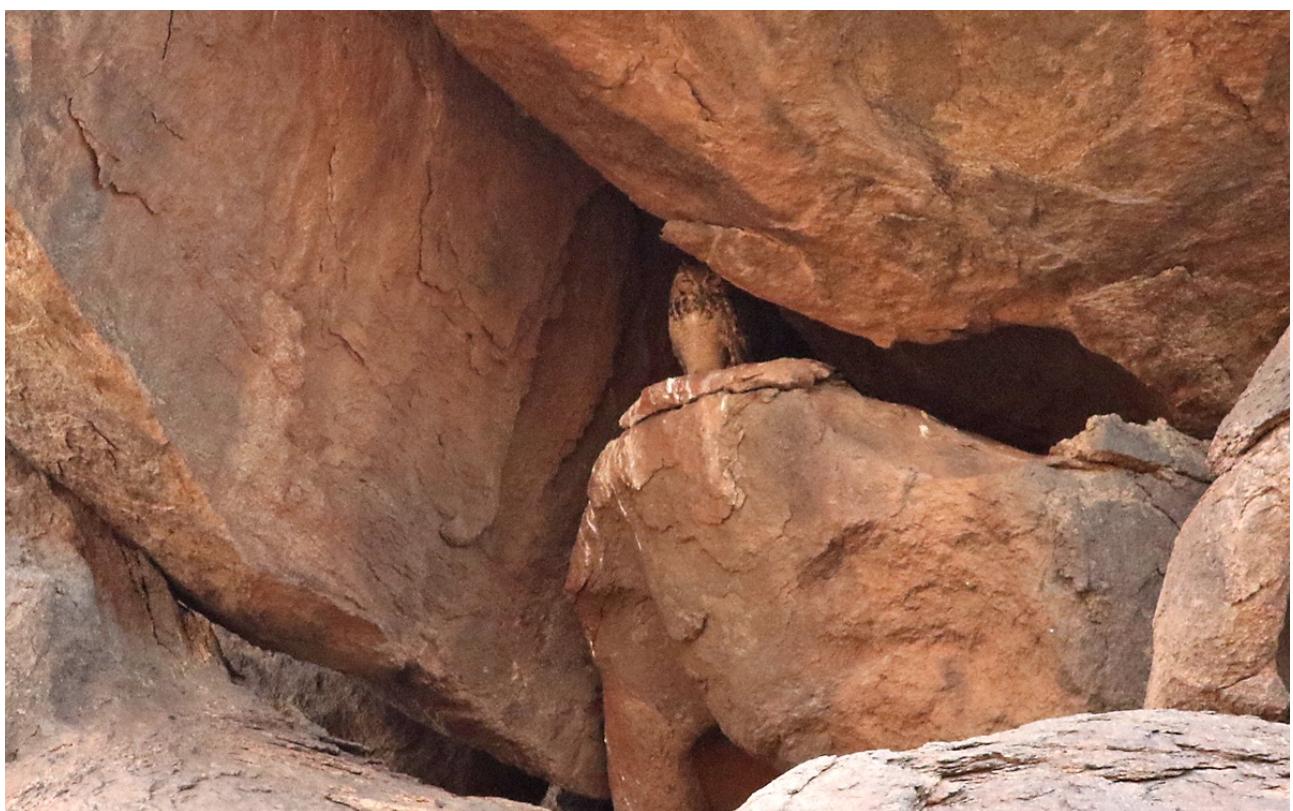
The “African” Dunn’s Lark was a key target (above)
Bar-tailed Lark (below)





The unmistakable male Sudan Golden Sparrow in Oued Jenna





Pharaoh Eagle Owl (above) and migrating Black Kite (below)





Leglat Massif (above) and Spotlighing on the Aousserd Road (below)





Fennec Fox (above) and African Wildcat (below)





Sand Viper (above) Dune Gecko (below)





**Desert Sparrow counts were impressive with
400+ birds in one day!**





The *erlangeri* race of Lanner Falcon gave us an impressive aerial display





Male Black-crowned Sparrow-lark (above) and male Montagu's Harrier (below)





Cricket Warbler (above) Western Olivaceous or Isabelline Warbler (below)





**This Eurasian Bittern in the desert was totally unexpected.
Only the 2nd record for the region!**





Dakhla Bay is an internationally important site for wintering waders





Caspian and Royal Terns (above) Audouin's Gull (below)





Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (above) “White-breasted” Cormorants (below)





Golden Nightjar Sound Recording by Peter Alfrey:

<https://soundcloud.com/peter-alfrey/golden-nightjar-oued-jenna-western-sahara-0318>

More photos from our tours can be viewed on our Flickr site:

www.flickr.com/photos/129663578@N06/albums



Wise Birding Holidays Ltd

3, Moormead, Budleigh Salterton, DEVON, EX9 6QA

Website: www.wisebirding.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/wisebirdingholidays

Email: chris@wisebirding.co.uk

Telephone: 07973 483227

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



WESTERN SAHARA: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians & Butterflies Checklist for 22nd - 29th March 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

NOTE: The 22 species in yellow were seen only due to a flight delay in Casablanca and most of them are not usually recorded on a WS tour.

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Species Notes
1	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1	A single bird was flushed at the private oasis at Mijk on the 24th.
2	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	2	At least 2 birds were seen at the Dar Bouazza wetland near Casablanca on the 23rd.
3	Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	3	Two birds showed well at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
4	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	4	At least 6 birds were present at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
5	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	5	A minimum of 4 birds showed well at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	6	Recorded at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
7	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	7	Recorded at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
8	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	8	Recorded on four days around Dakhla Bay with 100+ birds seen on two days.
9	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	9	Recorded on five days.
10	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	10	Singles recorded on the 24th and the 27th at the private oasis at Mijk.
11	Eurasian Collared-dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	11	Recorded on seven days.
12	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	12	Recorded on five days mostly around Dakhla and at Mijk.
13	Golden Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus eximius</i>	13	Heard calling N & S of the road at Oued Jenna from 07.10 - 07.28hrs and seen well in torchlight on the 26th. A bird was again heard just after 07.05hrs on the 27th but only briefly and not seen. These birds seem completely random in their calling habits and are not easy to find. Persistence and calm conditions are required and pre-dawn may be the best time.
14	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	14	Per had a single bird on the 23rd over Dakhla Bay and 2 birds flew over the private oasis at Mijk on the 24th.
15	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	15	At least 2 birds seen around the coast at Dakhla on the 28th and also on the 29th.
16	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	16	Small numbers recorded on the 23rd, 28th and the 29th.
17	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	17	Recorded on three days with five birds on the 25th.
18	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	18	A bird was heard calling from the private oasis at Mijk on the 24th.
19	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	19	Recorded at the private oasis at Mijk on the 24th and 27th with a max. of two birds on the 24th.
20	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	20	A rarity for the region seen well at Tachktant pool (Gleb Jdiane) on the afternoon of the 27th. Presumably the same bird recorded during our Feb. tour.
21	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	21	At least 2 birds seen at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
22	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	22	Seen at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and also at the private oasis at Mijk on the 27th.
23	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	23	A minimum of 6 birds seen well at the Dar Bouazza wetland near Casablanca on the 23rd.
24	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	24	Recorded in good numbers at the Dar Bouazza wetland near Casablanca on the 23rd.
25	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	25	A single bird was seen near Casablanca airport on the 23rd.
26	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	26	Recorded on three days with a max. count of 100+ birds in Dakhla Bay seen by Per on the 23rd.
27	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	27	A surprise find at the private oasis at Mijk on the afternoon of the 27th. Believed to be only the 2nd record for the Western Sahara region but probably under recorded. The first record wasn't actually "seen" and is known from a satellite tagged bird on 26 October 2010.
28	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	28	A single bird on the 28th at the Taourta Gardens and then 2 birds (1 ad and a 1st Summer) flying over the hotel on the morning of the 29th.
29	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	29	A single bird at the Dar Bouazza wetland near Casablanca on the 23rd.
30	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	30	Per had a single bird on the 23rd near Dakhla and a bird was also seen near Casablanca on the 29th.
31	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	31	Recorded on three days with a count of 20+ by Per on the 23rd around Dakhla Bay.
32	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	32	Singles at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and Mijk on the 24th with 2 birds there on the 27th.
33	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	33	Recorded on three days in small numbers around the Dakhla Bay and Mijk.
34	Western Reef Egret	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	34	A dark morph was seen well in flight near the oyster farm north of Dakhla on the 28th.
35	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	35	A single bird flying along the coast on the 28th.
36	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	36	Both forms (<i>sinensis</i> and the white-breasted form <i>maroccanus</i>) seen on five days around the coast.
37	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	37	Two birds at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and near the hotel in Casablanca on the 29th.
38	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	38	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with at least 60+ birds on the 28th.
39	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	39	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with counts of 3 birds on the 23rd by Per and 2 birds on the 28th.
40	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	40	At least 3 birds at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.

WESTERN SAHARA: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians & Butterflies Checklist for 22nd - 29th March 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

NOTE: The 22 species in yellow were seen only due to a flight delay in Casablanca and most of them are not usually recorded on a WS tour.

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Species Notes
41	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	41	Recorded on three days around Dakhla Bay with a max. count of 100+ by Per on the 23rd.
42	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	42	Recorded around Dakhla Bay on the 28th only.
43	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	43	Recorded on four days around the coast and at Mijk.
44	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	44	Small numbers recorded in Dakhla Bay on the 28th.
45	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	45	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with at least 100+ birds on the 28th.
46	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	46	Singles recorded around Dakhla Bay on three days.
47	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	47	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with 200+ birds on the 28th
48	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	48	At least 1 bird recorded on the 23rd by Per only.
49	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	49	Recorded in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on the 28th.
50	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	50	Recorded in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on the 28th.
51	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	51	Three birds were present in Dakhla Bay on the 23rd by Per only.
52	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	52	Recorded in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on two days.
53	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	53	Recorded in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on three days.
54	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	54	Singles recorded at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and at the private oasis at Mijk on the 27th.
55	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	55	Singles around Dakhla Bay on the 23rd and the 28th.
56	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	56	A single at Mijk on the 24th and 2 birds on the 27th.
57	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	57	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with 15+ on the 28th.
58	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	58	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with 100+ on the 28th.
59	Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	59	Counts of 4 birds near Mijk on the 24th and at least 10 birds along the Aousserd Road on the 27th.
60	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	60	Two birds hawking over the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
61	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	61	Two birds in Dakhla Bay on the 28th.
62	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	62	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay.
63	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	63	Recorded on two days around Dakhla Bay with 30+ on the 28th.
64	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	64	Recorded on five days around Dakhla Bay.
65	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	65	Small numbers picked out amongst the far commoner LBBG on two days around the coast.
66	Common Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	66	Two birds flew low overhead at the private oasis at Mijk on the 24th.
67	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	67	Great views around Dakhla Bay on three days.
68	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	68	Recorded on two days in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on the 23rd and 24th.
69	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	69	Recorded on three days around Dakhla Bay with a max. count of 40+ on the 28th.
70	"African" Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus (albididorsalis)</i>	70	A single bird on the 23rd by Per and then exceptionally close views of 5 birds on the 28th.
71	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	71	A single bird was near the hotel at Casablanca on the evening of the 29th.
72	Pharaoh Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	72	Great scope views of a bird at Derraman on the evening of the 25th.
73	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	73	Recorded in small numbers around Dakhla Bay on three days with at least 5 birds seen by Per on the 23rd.
74	Short-toed Snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	74	The only sighting was a single bird by Per on the 23rd over the Tachktant area.
75	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	75	An adult and an immature bird were seen very well over Leglat Massif on the 26th.
76	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	76	Recorded in the desert on three days with 1 light phase bird on the 25th, 2 light phase birds on the 26th and a single dark phase on the 27th.
77	Western Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	77	A constant migrating presence of 2 - 10 birds during a day and recorded on six days with up to 10+ birds seen on the 24th and 25th.
78	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	78	A male over Oued Jenna on the 24th and then a male and female on the 25th.
79	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	79	Migrating birds recorded on for days building in number from just 4 birds on the 24th to 250+ on the 27th.
80	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	80	Single birds seen in the desert on the 24th and the 26th.
81	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	81	Small numbers recorded on four days mostly in the desert.

WESTERN SAHARA: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians & Butterflies Checklist for 22nd - 29th March 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

NOTE: The 22 species in yellow were seen only due to a flight delay in Casablanca and most of them are not usually recorded on a WS tour.

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Species Notes
82	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	82	Migrating flocks in the desert on four days with groups varying between 20+ and 50+ birds.
83	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	83	A single bird in Oued Jenna was an early migrant.
84	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	84	Between 1-4 birds recorded at various migrant traps on four days.
85	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	85	Mostly 1-2 birds recorded on six days.
86	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	86	Exceptional views of 4 birds giving an amazing aerial display near Aousserd on the 25th and 2 birds recorded on the 27th also.
87	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	87	At least 2 birds recorded on the coast on the 28th most likely of the <i>brookei</i> (coast N Africa) or <i>minor</i> (S of Sahara and into S Morocco) race.
88	Great (Southern) Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	88	Recorded on five days with at least 4 birds on the 24th and presumed to all be of the <i>elegans</i> race. Note: HBW classify as a race of Great Grey Shrike whereas other taxonomy classifies as race of Southern Grey Shrike <i>Lanius meridionalis</i> (known as Iberian Grey Shrike under HBW taxonomy).
89	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	89	A common migrant recorded in small numbers on six days.
90	Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	90	Recorded on four days in the desert areas.
91	Greater Hoopoe-lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	91	Small numbers recorded on at least three days with some excellent views and displaying birds.
92	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>	92	Recorded on three days whilst in the desert with at least 5 birds on the 26th.
93	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	93	Two birds seen at Leglat Massif on the 26th and another 2 birds seen briefly along the Aousserd Road on the 27th in a stony gully.
94	Black-crowned Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	94	Small groups, including some stunning males recorded in the desert on three days.
95	"African" Dunn's Lark	<i>Eremalauda dunni</i>	95	Exceptionally close views of a single bird at 83Km from Aousserd on the 24th. Then 2 birds near Leglat on the 26th and at least 3 birds near 75Km on the 27th.
96	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	96	Two birds near Mijk on the 24th and a single there on the 27th.
97	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	97	Common along the coast and recorded on at least four days.
98	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	98	Seen only at the Dar Bouazza wetland near Casablanca on the 23rd.
99	Cricket Warbler	<i>Spiloptila clamans</i>	99	Excellent views whilst birding Oued Jenna with 6+ birds minimum on the 25th and another 2 birds near Leglat on the 27th.
100	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	100	Recorded only at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
101	Isabelline Warbler	<i>Iduna opaca</i>	101	The alternative name for this species is, Western Olivaceous Warbler and 3 birds showed well in Oued Jenna on the 25th.
102	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	102	A single migrant in the tiny park outside our hotel in Dakhla on the morning of the 29th.
103	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	103	Small numbers of migrants recorded on three days, mostly at Mijk and Tachktant (Gleb Jdiane).
104	Common Reed-warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	104	Small numbers of migrants recorded on four days, mostly at Mijk and Tachktant (Gleb Jdiane).
105	Northern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	105	1-2 birds recorded on five days.
106	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	106	A regular passage of birds over six days.
107	Pale Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne obsoleta</i>	107	Singles at Leglat Massif and Derraman on the 25th and 26th.
108	Collared Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	108	Singles recorded on the 22nd, 23rd and 27th and 2 birds on the 28th.
109	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	109	Singles recorded between the 24th - 27th and 3 birds on the 28th.
110	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	110	Small numbers recorded on six days.
111	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	111	A good candidate was seen well at Tachktant Pool (Gleb Jdiane) but was not heard to call.
112	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	112	Small numbers recorded on five days.
113	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	113	Heard on the 24th at Mijk.
114	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	114	Mostly singles recorded on four days.
115	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>	115	A singing male at dusk showed well around 76Km from Aousserd just before our spotlighting session.
116	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	116	Great views of 3 birds around the Leglat Massif on the 26th.
117	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	117	Small numbers recorded on four days.
118	Western Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	118	Small numbers recorded on five days and none appeared to suggest any other of the possible Subalpine forms.
119	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	119	Singles on the 24th and 25th.
120	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	120	Two birds showed well whilst watching Dunn's Lark on the 27th near 75Km from Aousserd.
121	Fulvous Babbler	<i>Argya fulva</i>	121	Small noisy groups seen well on three days, mostly around Oued Jenna with counts of at least 6+ birds on the 24th.
122	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	122	Only recorded near Casablanca on the 23rd and the 29th.

WESTERN SAHARA: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians & Butterflies Checklist for 22nd - 29th March 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive.

NOTE: The 22 species in yellow were seen only due to a flight delay in Casablanca and most of them are not usually recorded on a WS tour.

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Species Notes
123	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	123	1-2 birds recorded on three days.
124	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	124	Pete and Dave had a single bird at the private oasis at Mijk. An unusual record this far south.
125	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	125	Two birds showed very well at Leglat Masiff on the 26th.
126	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	126	Single birds in Oued Jenna on the 25th and at Mijk on the 27th.
127	Bluethroat	<i>Cyanecula svecica</i>	127	Excellent views and numbers. Counts of 4+ on the 24th, singles on the 25th & 28th & 10+ on the 27th! The highest count was at Mijk and all birds were the white-spotted form.
128	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	128	1-3 birds recorded at various migrant traps on three days.
129	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	129	A single at Mijk on the 24th and a male in the tiny park by our hotel in Dakhla on the 29th.
130	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	130	A very common migrant recorded on six days with at least 10+ birds on some days.
131	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	131	Singles recorded on the 28th at Taourta and the 29th in Dakhla.
132	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	132	A common migrant with small numbers recorded over seven days.
133	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	133	Somewhat overlooked and recorded on the 24th only!
134	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	134	A single at Mijk on the 24th and 3 birds on the 26th near Aousserd.
135	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	135	1-2 birds recorded mostly around the Dakhla Bay area on three days.
136	White-crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	136	Seen well in small numbers over 4 days whilst in the desert.
137	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	137	Recorded on six days.
138	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	138	Recorded whilst in the desert between the 24th - 26th with an incredible total day count of 400+ on the 25th!
139	Sudan Golden Sparrow	<i>Passer luteus</i>	139	A total of 5 birds (including 2 males) seen well in Oued Jenna on the 25th associating with a large Desert Sparrow flock.
140	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	140	A common migrant in small numbers recorded on five days from the coast to the desert.
141	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	141	A single at Mijk on the 24th and 2 birds on the coast at Dakhla on the 28th.
142	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flavissima</i>	142	A nice mix of Blue-headed (<i>flava</i>), Spanish (<i>Iberiae</i>) and <i>flavissima</i> over six days. All in small groups of 1-3 birds.
143	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	143	Recorded in small numbers from the coast to the desert on five days.
144	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	144	The <i>africana</i> subspecies was seen only near our hotel in Casablanca on the 29th.
145	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	145	Small numbers seen at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and near our hotel in Casablanca on the 29th.
146	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	146	Small numbers seen at the Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd and near our hotel in Casablanca on the 29th.
147	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	147	Two birds seen well at Tachktant Pool (Gleb Jdiane) on the 23rd by Per and again on the 27th.
148	House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>	148	A singing male from the hotel in Dakhla on the morning of the 29th.

MAMMALS

1	Desert Hedgehog	<i>Paraechinus aethiopicus</i>	1	A single animal whilst spotlighting the Aousserd Road on the evening of the 24th.
2	African Golden Wolf	<i>Canis anthus</i>	2	This species or a feral dog ran across the road during late morning on the 26th. Unfortunately, it was too distant and brief to know for sure.
3	Ruppell's Fox	<i>Vulpes rueppelli</i>	3	A single animal was seen in the spotlight on the evening of the 24th from the Aousserd Road approx. 20Km west of Oued Jenna.
4	Fennec Fox	<i>Vulpes zerda</i>	4	A single animal was seen just after dusk on the evening of the 26th approx. 70Km from Aousserd.
5	Sand Cat	<i>Felis margarita</i>	5	A close view in the spotlight on the 24th from the Aousserd Road approx. 30Km W of Oued Jenna. It slowly walked across an open area before disappearing into cover.
6	African Wildcat	<i>Felis lybica</i>	6	A great view of an animal on the evening of the 26th from the Aousserd Road which allowed close approach on foot.
7	African Savannah Hare	<i>Lepus microtis</i>	7	Recorded on three nights with counts of 1-2 animals on the 24th, 25th and 26th.
8	Lesser Egyptian Jerboa	<i>Jaculus jaculus</i>	8	Very low numbers presumably due to cooler temperatures with 1-3 animals on the nights of the 24th and 26th.
9	Pygmy Gerbil	<i>Gerbillus henleyi</i>	9	A single animal seen running across the road on the evening of the 24th.
10	Lesser Egyptian Gerbil	<i>Gerbillus gerbillus</i>	10	Two animals seen on the evening of the 26th.

WESTERN SAHARA: Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians & Butterflies Checklist for 22nd - 29th March 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

NOTE: The 22 species in yellow were seen only due to a flight delay in Casablanca and most of them are not usually recorded on a WS tour.

#	Common name	Scientific name	#	Species Notes
REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS				
1	Brongersma's Toad	<i>Pseudepidalea brongersmai</i>	1	Tiny toadlets at the Tachktant Pool (Gleb Jdiane) were presumed to be this species.
2	Elegant Gecko	<i>Stenodactylus stenodactylus</i>	2	A single seen on the night of the 24th.
3	Dune Gecko / Egyptian Sand Gecko	<i>Stenodactylus petrii</i>	3	At least one recorded during our spotlighting sessions.
4	Dumeril's Fringe-toed	<i>Acanthodactylus dumerilii</i>	4	Recorded on the 24th and 25th whilst birding the desert areas.
5	Sudan Mastigure / Spiny-tailed Lizard	<i>Uromastyx dispar</i>	5	Some great views whilst in the desert on three days.
6	Sand Viper	<i>Cerastes vipera</i>	6	At least 2 individuals on the Aousserd Road at night on the 24th.
7	Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>	7	A few seen at Dar Bouazza wetland on the 23rd.
CETACEANS				
1	Atlantic Humpback Dolphin	<i>Sousa teuszii</i>	1	One of the unexpected highlights was watching 2-3 animals from the Oyster Farm on the afternoon of the 28th! This species appears to have been seen far less regularly by visiting groups in recent years. A great sighting enjoyed through scopes for around 30 minutes on and off.
BUTTERFLIES				
Acacia Blue Sp.				
-				
Moroccan Orange Tip				
<i>Colotis evagore</i>				
Crimson Speckled Moth				
<i>Utetheisa pulchella</i>				
OTHER				
Egyptian Flower Mantis				
<i>Blepharopsis mendica</i>				
One found at our accommodation in Aousserd.				

Wise Birding Holidays
Bird and mammal watching tours

