

Trip Report Western (Moroccan) Sahara

28th Oct-5th Nov 2018



Our team : T. Perrier, S. Durand, J.M. Bompar, E. Durand and Mr. Sand Cat in the tree

Notes

Hight spots : the most interesting areas are 1-) the road to Aousserd between the start of the Bougouffa trail (N 23.242133 – W 15.153445) and Aousserd, 2-) the Bougouffa trail itself.

There is no reason to drive south along the coast to Mauritania but other than to try to see a wandering Monk Seal.

Landmines : There is no mine at all on the road sides from Dakhla to Aousserd. Nor are there mines along the first 20 kilometers of the Bougouffa trail (starting at N 23.242133 – W 15.153445). In fact there are many herds of camels and goats in these areas. A few kilometers before Aousserd, there is just a restricted and closed area north of the road (landmines and/or military area ?). The Laglate and Deramman mountain ranges were cleared of landmines (lot of herds of camels and goats, several nomadic settlements, several 4 wheel drives tracks, and some houses occupied by shepherd's families).

Weather: We had strong wind, especially at the end of the day. Erecting our tents often looked like Kite Surf training ! Night temperatures were low (for Mediterranean guys.... 18 to 20°C) and it was necessary to wear warm wind-proof clothes for the night drives. Between 11am and 3pm, temperatures were better (around 25-30°C).

Info :

Dakhla : everything you need ; several gas stations just North of the town

Aousserd : one gas station, one grocery

Bir Gandouz (N 22.054 – W 16.784) : groceries, hotels, gas stations, mechanic

Bougouffa trail start : N 23.242133 – W 15.153445

Laglate mountain range trail start: N 22.659724 – W 14.467120

Derramane mountain range trail start : N 22.680059 – W 14.495218

Some references

Aulagnier S., Cuzin F., Thévenot M. ; 2017. *Mammifères sauvages du Maroc : Peuplement, Répartition, Ecologie*. Société Française pour l'Etude et la Protection des Mammifères, 339 p.

Bons J., Geniez P. ; 1996. *Amphibiens and Reptiles du Maroc (Sahara Occidental compris) ; Atlas biogéographique*. Asociacion Herpetologica Espanola, 319 p.

Médail F., Quézel P. ; 2018. *Biogéographie de la Flore du Sahara*. IRD Editions,

Svenson L. ; 2010. *Le guide ornitho*. Delachaux & Niestlé, 446 p.

Mammals observed

Desert Hedgehog *Paraechinus aethiopicus*

NB : Commonly observed in the same area in December 2017,

- 02-11-2018 : only 1 on Bougouffa trail (N 23.081668 – W 15.238155).
- Two dried skins : 29-10-2018 (N 22.678242 – W 14.490660), 30-10-2018 (N 22.639689 – W 14.493441)



Lesser mouse-tailed Bat *Rhinopoma cystops*

- 29-10-2018 : 4 into a small cave, Laglat mountains range (N 22.614190 – W 14.478978)
- 03-11-2018 : nearly 30 into a rock fault, Deramman mountains range (N 22.658680 – W 14.520922)



African wild Cat *Felis libyca*

- 29-10-2018 : 1 à (N 22.797622 – W 14.616390)

NB : soon after, 700m apart, we observed a feral Cat (*Felis domesticus*) (N 22.790226 – W 14.606870) with large black and white patches, 40km from the closest human settlement (Aousserd) !

- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.164722 – W 15.177881)
- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.077230 – W 15.232067)



Sand Cat *Felis margarita*

- 29-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.791561 – W 14.608787) moving through bushes
- 29-10-2018 : 1 resting (N 23.014353 – W 14.847149)
- 30-10-2018 : 1 resting (N 23.08022 – W 15.23044)
- 31-10-2018 : 1 resting (N 23.09558 – W 15.22740)



African golden Wolf *Canis anthus*

- 27-10-2018 : 1 (N 23.160256 – W 14.020963) + 1 (N 23.160433 – W 15.020869) + 1 (N 23.154563 – W 15.015817)
- 28-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.788385 – W 14.606556)
- 29-10-2018 : 1 (N 23.160249 – W 15.020978) + 1 (N 23.153654 – W 15.014920) + 1 (N 22.788087 – W 14.606553)
- 01-11-2018 : 1 (N 22.578700 – W 16.357608)
- 02-11-2018, Bougouffa trail : 3+2 (N 23.175634 – W 15.168793) during less than 5mn



Common red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

No mentioned as living in this area (Aulaginer & al. 2017). But on 29th-10-2018, in Laglat mountains range (N 22.611472 – W 14.475065) we observed a fox very different from a Ruppell's Fox, darker and bulkier, with middle sized ears, white restricted to the very tip of the tail ... all of that which closely resembled a Red Fox .

Rueppel's Fox *Vulpes rueppellii*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 resting in the shadow of a water tank (N 23.032778 – W 14.861822) + 1 (N 23.113076 – W 14.956487)
- 29-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.735530 – W 14.551954) + 1 (N 22.611477 – W 14.475238)
- 30-10-2018 : 1 (N 23.208393 – W 15.108211) +1 (N 23.189702 – W 15.045444) +1 (N 23.188420 – W 15.043494) +1 (N 23.095960 – W 14.921008)
- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.173683 – W 15.168513)
- 03-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.163346 – W 15.022796) + 1 (N 23.163294 – W 15.022817) + 1 (N 22.940605 – W 14.763574)



Fennek *Vulpes zerda*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.718837 – W 14.531522)
- 30-10-2018 : 1 (N 23.440664 – W 15.189046) + 1 (N 23.034955 – W 14.869937)
- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.149860 – W 15.188057) + 1 (N 23.079265 – W 15.250214) + 1 (N 23.079038 – W 15.252369) + 1 (N 23.177418 – W 15.171888) + 2 burrows

Saharan striped Weasel *Poecilictis libyca*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.739501 – W 14.555271). Stayed for 5mn at the entrance of its burrow before disappearing inside.
- 29-10-2018 : 1 walked on the road side for 10m and disappeared into a burrow (N 22.838237 – W 14.665650)



Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

- 27-10-18 : 2 small groups (3 to 5) off Dakhla west coast (N 23.669199 – W 16.009824)

Maghreb Hares *Lepus mediterraneus*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.730663 – W 14.544398)
- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.085737 – W 15.253079)
- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.102256 – W 15.219391)

Lesser Egyptian Jerboa *Jaculus jaculus* / Desert Jerboa *Jaculus deserti*

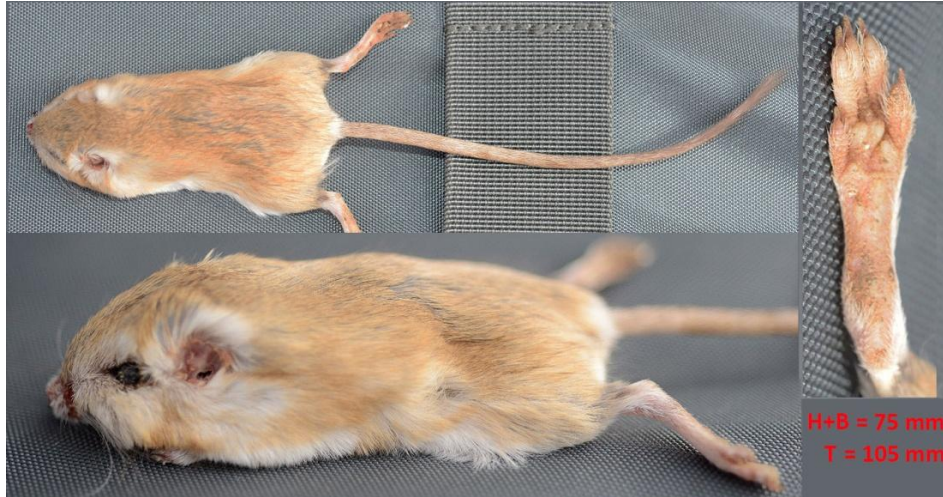
Boratynskii Z., Brito J.C., Mappes T., 2012. The origin of two cryptic species of African desert jerboas (Dipodidae: Jaculus) *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 2012, 105, 435–445.

- Common everywhere along the road to Aousserd and (especially) along the Bougouffa trail



Pleasant Gerbil *Gerbillus amoenus*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 at Oued Djena (N 22.678878 – W 14.422866), died in the trap



Lesser Egyptian Gerbil *Gerbillus gerbillus*

- Common everywhere along the road to Aousserd and the Bougouffa trail ; several caught and released
- 30-10-2018 : 2 ticks collected for analyses



Occidental Gerbil *Gerbillus occidus*

- 02-11-2018 : 1 (N 23.097690 – W 15.211875) caught (external parasites collected) and released



Remarks

When reading previous reports from Western Sahara, all of us were very impressed by the skills with which some observers identify the Gerbils. Although we are all familiar with these species (hundreds of animals observed and caught) and well equipped with tip-top binoculars (Swaro and Leica), we found it very hard to identify the gerbils observed in the wild by sight alone. Measurements and tails tip examination – cross checked against references - was often necessary. We recommend to all observed to be very careful with ID criteria and to be objective (what you see isn't what you want to see) before to claim the specie ID.

Fat-tailed Gerbil *Pachyuromys duprasi*

- 30-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.102466 – W 15.218862)



Libyan Jird *Meriones libycus*

- 28-10-2018 : 1 (N 22.908134 – W 14.738369) caught and released



.... more Wildlife



Alaemon alaudipes



Rhamphocoris clotbey



Eremalauda dunni



Eremophila bilopha



Passer simplex



Spiloptila clamans



Oenanthe leucopyga



Falco biarmicus



Cerastes cerastes 1



Cerastes cerastes 2



Geckonia chazaliae



Tarentola annularis



Stenodactylus mauretanicus



Sphenops sphenopsiformis



Acanthodactylus aureus



Uromastix dispar