



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Morocco 2018**

Sep 10, 2018 to Sep 25, 2018

Jesse Fagan

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*The amazing geology that is Morocco. We studied this strange formation in the Dades Gorge near Boumalne Dades. Bonelli's Eagles breed here. Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.*

We spent the first part of our Moroccan adventure along the north coast just south of Rabat at our oasis by the ocean, Kasbah Skhirat. This was an ideal location for visiting close-by birding sites like the Zaer Hunting Grounds and further afield to the Loukus River near Larache. It was also an excellent spot for scoping Old World shorebirds and enjoying the sunset (but, did we ever really have time for that?). There were some definite highlights from this part of the trip: Barbary Partridges at Zaer, Marsh Owl at Moulay Bouselham (such lovely creatures as they glided above the cattails), and White-headed Ducks and Marbled Teals at Bourhaba Lake.

We then headed east towards Fes, but cut a diagonal line south towards the Jabaa Oak Forest and the Swiss-like village of Ifrane. It was here we found Levaillant's Woodpecker, a very special NW African endemic. The next day was equally successful with nice looks at the pleasant Moussier's Redstart (gotta love all these French bird names!) and singing Wood Lark. A Eurasian Wryneck seemed a bit out of place in this habitat. On our way to Midelt we passed through old-growth cedar trees (*Cedrus atlantica*) and had photo opps with the only primate north of the Sahara, Barbary Macaca. We finished up the day on the high desert valley with good views of Dupont Lark and a dramatic lightning and rain storm over the High Atlas.

We also had a bit of dramatic weather as we entered Merzouga and got our first hazy views of the Sahara. The next morning we watched a thunder and lightning show over the Sahara dunes. What is going on with this weather? Our 4X4 excursion through the orange dunes and flat, rocky desert was a first for many. Some of the landscapes here look a lot like Mars. It was hard to believe that anything lives out here, until we found the lovely Desert Sparrow, a trio of Spotted Sandgrouse, and, of course, will anyone ever forget trying to find the Egyptian Nightjar even when it was full-framed in the scope? We did very well overall in the desert and wrapped up all the specialties nicely including Pharaoh Eagle-Owl, a bird we missed last year. Our race back to the hotel to beat a very large sand/thunder cell was equally exciting as some of the birds. Man, the weather still wouldn't give us a break.

We spent two nights on the high desert plain at the pleasant hilltop hotel in Boumalne Dades. A unique experience of birding the local trash dump was appreciated by all. The wadis had water this year, and Eurasian Dotterel and Trumpeter Finches were coming in to drink. We also managed to find a soaring Bonelli's Eagle in the impressive Dades (dude, man) Gorge while sipping mint tea. We then booked it to the hot and muggy coastal city of Agadir. We made good time and decided to make a run for Northern Bald Ibis in the late evening. It paid off big time, with wonderful looks of soaring and standing birds along the coastal cliffs as the sun set below the Atlantic Ocean. By the way, the ibis were by far the group's favorite bird of the trip followed closely by Egyptian Nightjar and Cream-colored Courser. The next day we sifted through thick fog for pelagic seabirds aboard the Golden Trip. Despite the birding being a bit difficult and slow, we enjoyed the fresh rassa for lunch, and being on the water was a nice change of pace from our desert birding. And then the International Space Station zipped by...

We finished the tour in bustling Marrakesh. We sampled the highlands and seasonal ski resort area of Oukaimeden, near 9000'. No skiers right now, just trekkers, and good birds like choughs, Rock Bunting, and Iberian Chiffchaff. In the afternoon, there was a trip to the intense, but very culturally interesting, Jemaa el-Fnaa, which feels a lot like the cantina scene in the first Star Wars.

Thanks to our local guides and, of course, our driver, Oussama, for all their hard work. It was a pleasure showing you Morocco, and I look forward to more adventures in the future. All the best for birding in 2018 and 2019.

Jesse (aka Motmot) from Lima, Peru

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#### KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl).

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna ferruginea*)

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*)

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN)** (*Anas crecca crecca*)

**MARbled TEAL** (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) – We lucked out and saw three birds on the coastal lake Bourhaba north of Rabat.

**WHITE-HEADED DUCK** (*Oxyura leucocephala*) – Good numbers were on Lake Bourhaba including several white-headed males.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).

**BARBARY PARTRIDGE** (*Alectoris barbara*)

**DOUBLE-SPURRED FRANCOLIN** (*Pternistis bicalcaratus ayesha*) [\*]

### Podicipedidae (Grebes).

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** (*Podiceps cristatus*)

### Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos).

**GREATER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

### Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels).

**CORY'S SHEARWATER (BOREALIS)** (*Calonectris diomedea borealis*)

**MANX SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus puffinus*)

### Ciconiidae (Storks).

**WHITE STORK** (*Ciconia ciconia*)

### Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets).

**NORTHERN GANNET** (*Morus bassanus*)

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

**GREAT CORMORANT (NORTH ATLANTIC)** (*Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*)

**GREAT CORMORANT (MOROCCAN)** (*Phalacrocorax carbo maroccanus*)

### Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

**GRAY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*)

**LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*)

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*)

### Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

**NORTHERN BALD IBIS** (*Geronticus eremita*)

**EURASIAN SPOONBILL** (*Platalea leucorodia*)

### Pandionidae (Osprey).

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*)

### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

**EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD** (*Pernis apivorus*)

**SHORT-TOED SNAKE-EAGLE** (*Circaetus gallicus*)

**BOOTED EAGLE** (*Hieraetus pennatus*)

**BONELLI'S EAGLE** (*Aquila fasciata*) – Our wait, and Kathy's wishes, finally paid off as we spotted one soaring along the cliffs in the Dades Gorge.

**EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIER** (*Circus aeruginosus*)

**HEN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*)

**MONTAGU'S HARRIER** (*Circus pygargus*)

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** (*Accipiter nisus*)

**COMMON BUZZARD** (*Buteo buteo*)

**LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD** (*Buteo rufinus*)

### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

**EURASIAN MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

**RED-KNOBBED COOT** (*Fulica cristata*)

**EURASIAN COOT** (*Fulica atra*)

*Burhinidae (Thick-knees)*

**EURASIAN THICK-KNEE** (*Burhinus oedicnemus*)

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** (*Himantopus himantopus*)

**PIED AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)*

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

**KENTISH PLOVER (KENTISH)** (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*)

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius dubius*)

**EURASIAN DOTTEREL** (*Charadrius morinellus*)

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**WHIMBREL (EUROPEAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*)

**EURASIAN CURLEW** (*Numenius arquata*)

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*)

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa limosa*)

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*)

**RED KNOT** (*Calidris canutus*)

**RUFF** (*Calidris pugnax*)

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*)

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*)

**LITTLE STINT** (*Calidris minuta*)

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

**GREEN SANDPIPER** (*Tringa ochropus*)

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** (*Tringa erythropus*)

**COMMON GREENSHANK** (*Tringa nebularia*)

**MARSH SANDPIPER** (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

**WOOD SANDPIPER** (*Tringa glareola*)

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*)

*Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)*

**CREAM-COLORED COURSER** (*Cursorius cursor*)

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**SLENDER-BILLED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus genei*)

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** (*Ichthyaeus melanocephalus*)

**AUDOUIN'S GULL** (*Ichthyaeus audouinii*)

**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** (*Larus michahellis*)

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (INTERMEDIUS)** (*Larus fuscus intermedius*)

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (GRAELLSII)** (*Larus fuscus graellsii*)

**LITTLE TERN** (*Sternula albifrons*)

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

**BLACK TERN** (*Chlidonias niger*)

**COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*)

**SANDWICH TERN** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

**LESSER CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bengalensis*)

*Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)*

**SPOTTED SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles senegallus*) – A two sandgrouse tour is a very good tour. We had nice looks at both Spotted and Crowned, by far the more local and less widespread of the sandgrouse on this tour.

**CROWNED SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles coronatus*)

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*)

**COMMON WOOD-PIGEON** (*Columba palumbus*)

**EUROPEAN TURTLE-DOVE** (*Streptopelia turtur*)

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

**LAUGHING DOVE** (*Streptopelia senegalensis*)

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**PHARAOH EAGLE-OWL** (*Bubo ascalaphus*) – Very nice scope looks of an adult on a high cliff somewhere outside of Rissani.

**MARSH OWL** (*Asio capensis*)

*Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)*

**RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus ruficollis*) – Just before we watched the International Space Station zip by!

**EURASIAN NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)

**EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus aegyptius*) – "It's full-frame in the scope." "What do you mean you don't see it?" (Repeat 55 times)

*Apodidae (Swifts)*

**COMMON SWIFT** (*Apus apus*)

**PALLID SWIFT** (*Apus pallidus*)

**LITTLE SWIFT** (*Apus affinis*)

*Upupidae (Hoopoes)*

**EURASIAN HOOPOE** (*Upupa epops*)

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**COMMON KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo atthis*)

*Meropidae (Bee-eaters)*

**BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER** (*Merops persicus*)

**EUROPEAN BEE-EATER** (*Merops apiaster*)

*Coraciidae (Rollers)*

**EUROPEAN ROLLER** (*Coracias garrulus*)

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**EURASIAN WRYNECK** (*Jynx torquilla*)

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (ATLAS)** (*Dendrocopos major numidus*)

**LEVAILLANT'S WOODPECKER** (*Picus vaillantii*) – Caught up with this special woodpecker in the Lakes Region.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**LESSER KESTREL** (*Falco naumanni*)

**EURASIAN KESTREL** (*Falco tinnunculus*)

**PEREGRINE FALCON (BARBARY)** (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*) – One was perched on a telephone poll outside of Merzouga, but it didn't stick around long.

*Malaconotidae (Bushshrikes and Allies)*

**BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA (HOODED)** (*Tchagra senegalus cucullatus*)

*Laniidae (Shrikes)*

**SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (SOUTHERN)** (*Lanius meridionalis algeriensis*)

**SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (SOUTHERN)** (*Lanius meridionalis elegans*)

**WOODCHAT SHRIKE** (*Lanius senator*)

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**EURASIAN JAY** (*Garrulus glandarius*)

**EURASIAN MAGPIE (NORTH AFRICAN)** (*Pica pica mauritanica*)

**RED-BILLED CHOUGH** (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)

**YELLOW-BILLED CHOUGH** (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*)

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** (*Corvus monedula*)

**BROWN-NECKED RAVEN** (*Corvus ruficollis*) – Common in the desert region near Erg Chebbi.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*)

*Alaudidae (Larks)*

**GREATER HOOPOE-LARK** (*Alaemon alaudipes*)

**THICK-BILLED LARK** (*Ramphocoris clotbey*)

**BAR-TAILED LARK** (*Ammomanes cinctura*)

**DESERT LARK** (*Ammomanes deserti*)

**HORNED LARK** (*Eremophila alpestris*)

**TEMMINCK'S LARK** (*Eremophila bilopha*)

**GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK** (*Calandrella brachydactyla*)

**DUPONT'S LARK** (*Chersophilus duponti*) – We found a cooperative bird in the valley between the Middle and High Atlas mountains. Always amazing how they can sneak around without being detected in what appears to be so little cover.

**LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK** (*Alaudala rufescens*)

**WOOD LARK** (*Lullula arborea*)

**THEKLA'S LARK** (*Galerida theklae*)

**CRESTED LARK** (*Galerida cristata*)

**MAGHREB LARK** (*Galerida macrorhyncha randonii*)

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**PLAIN MARTIN** (*Riparia paludicola*)

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*)

**BARN SWALLOW (WHITE-BELLIED)** (*Hirundo rustica rustica*)

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** (*Cecropis daurica*)

**COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN** (*Delichon urbicum*)

*Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**COAL TIT** (*Pariparus ater*)

**AFRICAN BLUE TIT** (*Cyanistes teneriffae*)

**GREAT TIT** (*Parus major*)

*Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**EURASIAN NUTHATCH** (*Sitta europaea*)

*Certhiidae (Treecreepers)*

**SHORT-TOED TREECREEPER** (*Certhia brachydactyla*)

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**EURASIAN WREN** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) [\*]

*Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)*

**COMMON BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus barbatus*)

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**FIRECREST** (*Regulus ignicapilla*)

*Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies)*

**CETTI'S WARBLER** (*Cettia cetti*)

*Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)*

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

**IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF** (*Phylloscopus ibericus*) – We were able to confirm this species by call in the mixed woodlands below Oukaimeden.

*Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and Allies)*

**EASTERN OLIVACEOUS WARBLER** (*Iduna pallida*)

**WESTERN OLIVACEOUS WARBLER** (*Iduna opaca*)

**MELODIOUS WARBLER** (*Hippolais polyglotta*)

**EURASIAN REED WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

*Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)*

**ZITTING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola juncidis*)

*Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)*

**GARDEN WARBLER** (*Sylvia borin*)

**AFRICAN DESERT WARBLER** (*Sylvia deserti*) – It was fun watching a pair foraging in the tumbleweed-like vegetation. Truly amazing that they can survive in that environment.

**TRISTRAM'S WARBLER** (*Sylvia deserticola*)

**SUBALPINE WARBLER** (*Sylvia cantillans*)

**SARDINIAN WARBLER** (*Sylvia melanocephala*)

**GREATER WHITETHROAT** (*Sylvia communis*)

*Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)*

**FULVOUS CHATTERER** (*Turdoides fulva*)

*Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)*

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa striata*)

**EUROPEAN ROBIN** (*Erithacus rubecula*)

**EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

**MOUSSIER'S REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus moussieri*)

**COMMON REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

**BLACK REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

**RUFOUS-TAILED ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola saxatilis*)

**BLUE ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola solitarius*)

**EUROPEAN STONECHAT** (*Saxicola rubicola rubicola*)

**WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe leucopyga*)

**BLACK WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe leucura*)

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR (BLACK-THROATED)** (*Oenanthe oenanthe seebohmi*) – A great tour for wheatears. We saw 6 distinctive taxa.

**MOURNING WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe lugens*)

**RED-RUMPED WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe moesta*)

**BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe hispanica*)

**DESERT WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe deserti*)

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).*

**EURASIAN BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus merula*)

**MISTLE THRUSH** (*Turdus viscivorus*)

*Sturnidae (Starlings).*

**SPOTLESS STARLING** (*Sturnus unicolor*)

*Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits).*

**WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (IBERIAE)** (*Motacilla flava iberiae*)

**WHITE WAGTAIL (MOROCCAN)** (*Motacilla alba subpersonata*)

*Emberizidae (Old World Buntings).*

**CIRL BUNTING** (*Emberiza cirrus*)

**ROCK BUNTING** (*Emberiza cia*)

**HOUSE BUNTING** (*Emberiza sahari*)

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).*

**COMMON CHAFFINCH (AFRICAN)** (*Fringilla coelebs africana*)

**TRUMPETER FINCH** (*Bucanetes githagineus zedlitzi*)

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** (*Chloris chloris*)

**EURASIAN LINNET** (*Linaria cannabina*)

**EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

**EUROPEAN SERIN** (*Serinus serinus*)

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*)

**DESERT SPARROW** (*Passer simplex*) – A very lovely species. So elegantly plumaged in such a difficult environment.

**ROCK PETRONIA** (*Petronia petronia*)

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## MAMMALS

**BARBARY APE** (*Macaca sylvanus*)

**FAT SAND RAT** (*Psammomys obesus*) – Yes!

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 190 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa**