



MOROCCO

March 08 – March 17 2025

TRIP REPORT



Our group high up in the Atlas Mountains on our way towards the Tizi n'Tichka pass!

Morocco - 2025

08th Feb – 17th March 2025

TOUR SUMMARY:

Our early spring trip to Morocco was underway. Everyone met at the hotel in Marrakech for dinner and then the next day we were on our way to the Atlas Mountains, where we found our 2 main target species the Levallant's Woodpecker and a small group of African Crimson-winged Finches. It was cold and even rained a little but we hoped things would change as we headed towards the desert the following days. Our first full day in the desert was spectacular seeing all our target species including Thick-billed Larks, Temminck's Larks, Red-rumped, Desert and Maghreb Wheatears, Trumpeter Finches, Black-bellied Sandgrouse and Cream-coloured Coursers. We then had a lovely Desert Horned Viper followed by a pair of Pharaoh Eagle Owls with two chicks in a cave. Continuing in the desert we found Tristram's Warbler and Streaked Scrub Warbler, plus Bonelli's Eagles before our next stop beside the mighty sand dunes of the Sahara. Here we were treated to Crowned, Spotted and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse coming into water, and then added Desert Sparrow, African Desert Warbler, Fulvous Chatterer and a very cryptic Egyptian Nightjar to our 100% success rate. We ended our trip on the coast near Agadir where our main target was the endangered Bald Ibis and we got fabulous views of birds feeding among the sand dunes. We added Mediterranean Short-toed Lark, Black-winged Kite and Spectacled Warbler to our list, and beside a river we connected with Brown-throated Martins, noisy Black-crowned Tchagras, a brief Wryneck and some wonderful Moussier's Redstarts. Our hot walk along the river produced not one but two American vagrants as we found a drake Blue-winged Teal followed by a distant Pectoral Sandpiper – amazing! Finally, we added a few shorebirds and a bunch of gulls that included a lone Audouin's Gull plus Mediterranean Gulls and some Slender-billed Gulls. A group of 80 or more Eurasian Spoonbills was an unexpected high count. All in all, we found just about all the target species of the trip, plus a couple of surprises.

HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- African Crimson-winged Finch
- 5 Levallant's Woodpeckers
- Black Wheatear
- Bonelli's Eagle
- Maghreb Lark
- Tristram's Warbler
- Streaked Scrub Warbler
- Cream-coloured Courser
- Lanner Falcon
- Desert Lark
- Spotted Sandgrouse
- Great Grey Shrike
- Black-crowned Tchagra
- Spectacled Warbler
- Brown-throated Martin
- Mediterranean Short-toed Lark
- Blue-winged Teal
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Eurasian Stone Curlew
- Thick-billed Lark
- Moussier's Redstart
- Barbary Partridge
- Maghreb Wheatear
- Pharaoh Eagle Owl & chicks
- Black-bellied Sandgrouse
- Temminck's Lark
- Red-rumped Wheatear
- Maghreb Magpie
- Desert Sparrow
- Crowned Sandgrouse
- Egyptian Nightjar
- Western Orphean Warbler
- Woodchat Shrike
- Little Ringed Plover
- Eurasian Spoonbill
- Pied Avocet
- Ruddy Shelduck
- Black Stork
- Bald Ibis
- Desert Wheatear
- Little Owl
- Sardinian Warbler
- Fulvous Babbler
- Bar-tailed Lark
- Desert Wheatear
- Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
- Greater Flamingos
- African Desert Warbler
- Audouin's Gull
- Barbary Falcon
- Slender-billed Gull
- Rock Sparrow
- Blue Rock Thrush
- Black-winged Kite
- Trumpeter Finch
- White Stork
- Desert Horned Viper

We started our tour in the Atlas Mountains seeing up to 5 Levillant's Woodpeckers, and then up by the snow we eventually found 3 or 4 Crimson-winged Finches. (Atlas) Horned Larks showed well as did White-throated Dipper, Black Wheatears, Black Redstarts, Rock Bunting, Choughs and Grey Wagtails.



It took a while but eventually we found 3 or 4 confiding African Crimson-winged Finches. A target bird in the mountains



There were up to 30 Horned Larks moving around and feeding close to the snowy edges



One of our targets for the mountains was easily found on the way up, the Levillant's Woodpecker, with our first posing nicely on a telephone pole. We ended up see 5 different individuals today.

The beautiful but cold setting in the Atlas Mountains on our first full day's birding.



And here in the mountains we enjoyed a hot Tajine lunch up at the ski resort. All our target birds were seen so we relaxed with this hot traditional and very tasty lunch



We had great looks at White-throated Dippers on the tiny



Several Sardinian Warblers put on a nice show for us.



As we left the mountains and headed towards open dry scrub, we stopped and found 4 very nice Barbary Partridges



The Maghreb Magpie shows a bright blue patch of skin around the eye, making it look very smart



So much incredible scenery and culture everywhere you looked

We stopped beside a large lake and got superb views of a pair of Maghreb Larks.



Looking down on 4 Barbary Partridge's



The White-crowned Wheatear became the most regularly seen of the wheatears.

The famous Tagdilt Track where larks are order of the day and the habitat endless. The most sought after is the Thick-billed Lark and after an hour or so searching we eventually found 2 confiding birds.



And here he is – the much sought after Thick-billed Lark. We had fantastic views!



One of our trip highlights was watching this Greater Hoopoe Lark displaying right in front of us.



The Red-rumped Wheatear here in its favoured habitat



A nice male Desert Wheatear, a common bird through much of our tour



Another shot of our favourite Greater Hoopoe Lark – by Gina Nichol



We saw a few Temminck's Larks and they were very confiding

Still in the desert we were privileged to see a pair of Pharoah Eagle Owls beside their nest in a cave where two big fluffy chicks could be seen. A wonderful sighting!



And what was hiding under this rock? A very nice Desert Horned Viper!



Another target species is the Maghreb Wheatear and this one did not disappoint



Trumpeter Finches can often be elusive, but we had great looks at a pair – Photo by Hamid

The Dades Gorge was very scenic and we found our target Tristram's Warbler plus Bonelli's Eagles, Crag Martins and real Rock Doves



The stunning Dades Gorge



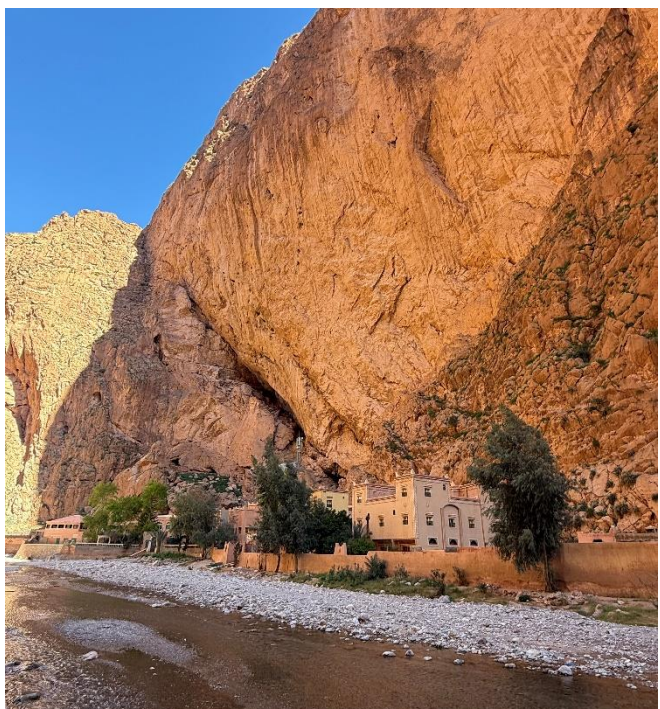
The Tristram's Warbler was a target and we got great looks at this one – photo Gina Nichol



The Moroccan Wagtail is a sub-species of White Wagtail which is distributed in western Morocco.

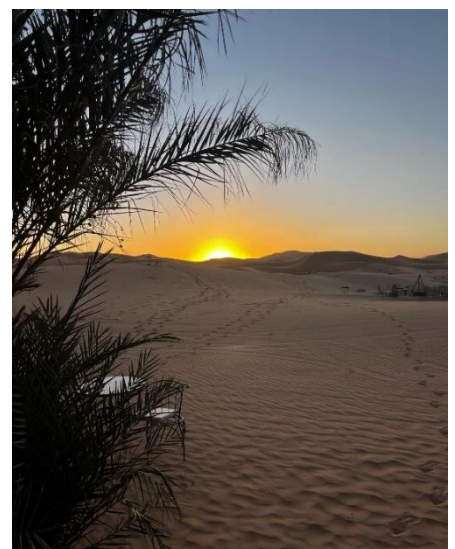


Its tea-time in front of the Dades Gorge!



And another beautiful gorge the Todra Gorge

And then it was onto to the edge of the real Sahara Desert and our hotel right beside the huge sand dunes



Views from our hotel across the dunes – Gina Nichol



And the intrepid ones in our group setting off on a camel ride into the setting sun!

Our early morning visit to a drinking hole for sandgrouse was nothing short of spectacular. Over 100 sandgrouse of 3 species were watched from the comfort of our 4x4's. What an incredible experience!



Crowned Sandgrouse coming in to drink and also soak their breast feathers to take back to their chicks!



A female Spotted Sandgrouse



Beautiful male Pin-tailed Sandgrouse – Gina Nichol



3 Spotted and a male Pin-tailed Sandgrouse



A pair of Spotted Sandgrouse

Male and female Crowned Sandgrouse followed by a male Spotted Sandgrouse



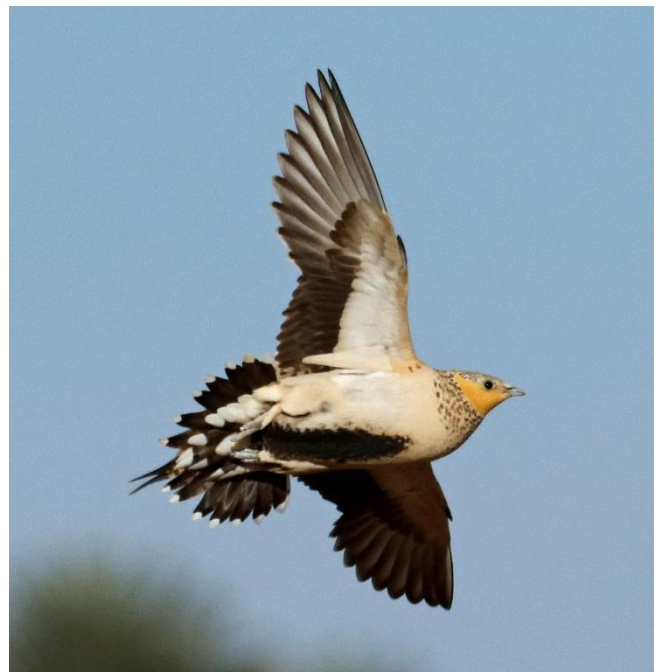
Male Spotted Sandgrouse with Pin-tailed Sandgrouse



A pair of Crowned Sandgrouse by Gina Nichol



A group of Spotted and Crowned Sandgrouse



Male Spotted Sandgrouse and a female Spotted Sandgrouse



Pin-tailed Sandgrouse



A pair of Spotted Sandgrouse



This was a very showy African Desert Warbler



Driving around we found a pair of Cream-coloured Coursers

With the help of a local guide, we got superb looks at a roosting Egyptian Nightjar. What camouflage!



Both the Fulvous Chatterer and the pale looking Desert Sparrow were seen in a locals desert garden



The habitat for many of these desert birds – Gina Nichol

Time to move on towards the coast. We made roadside stops to break up the long drive



This Western Orphean Warbler showed well



A pair of Barbary Partridge running around



Birding along the Souss Massa we were surprised to find 2 American vagrants – a drone Blue-winged Teal and a Pectoral Sandpiper! Both seen in the scopes but a bit too far for photographs!



The Moussier's Redstart was plentiful here and several birds showed well



And the Black-crowned Tchagra was also fairly common with 6 seen here



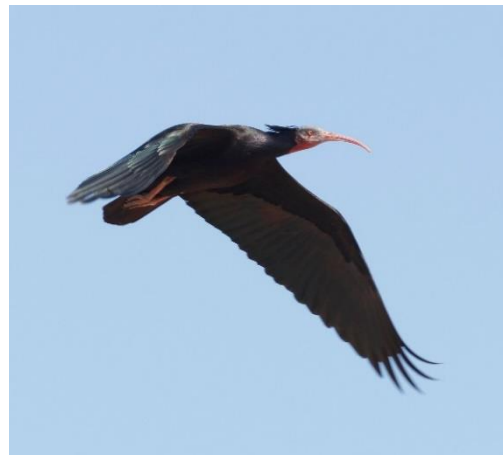
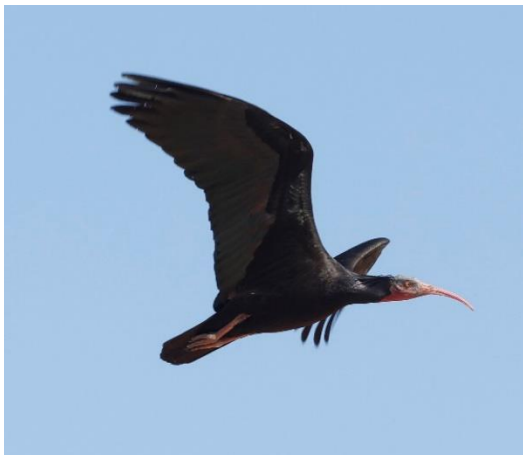
In one rocky area we counted 6 Barbary Ground Squirrels



Chris spotted this Eurasian Stone-Curlew motionless in a barren rocky field



In the sand dunes right along the coast we found around 40 endangered Bald Ibis – photo Gina Nichol



We had groups of up to 14 Bald Ibis flying over before we found them feeding beside the coast



This was the most important bird for us to see along the coast – the endangered Northern Bald Ibis, with most of the world population confined to the Souss-Massa National Park in Morocco



There were a few smaller birds along the coast such as this Subalpine Warbler by Linda and this showy Spectacled Warbler. We also found Black-winged Kite and Mediterranean Short-toed Lark



A small fishing boat along the shore - by Ann



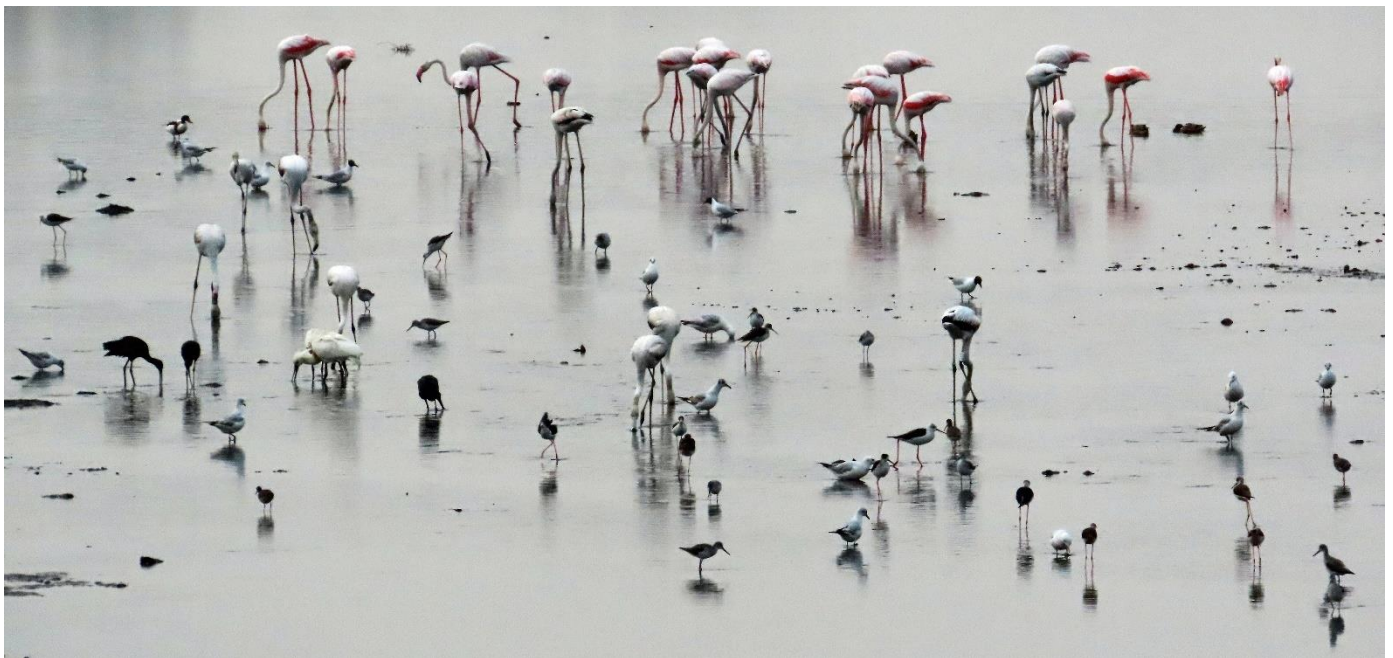
Greater Flamingos – by Linda



A lovely sunrise on our last day – by Pat



Birding along the coast – by Thera



Our final morning birding the estuary – Flamingos, spoonbills, ibis, gulls and shorebirds!!! – by Gina Nichol



Our lovely group enjoying another fabulous dinner at our last hotel – this is just a starter! By Thera

WILDLIFE LIST for Morocco 2025

A = Number of species recorded on tour

B = Number of days out of 8 recorded C = Highest daily count

H = Heard Only with highest number heard in () N/C = No Count C=Common

This list is in line with IOC WORLD BIRD LIST v(13.2) and as such names may be different than some of the field guides and other taxonomy's – any additional notes see appendix *

A	BIRD SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1	H (1)
2	Barbary Partridge	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>	2	4
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	2	5
4	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	3	30
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	2	9
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	3	6
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	1	40
8	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	1	1
9	Egyptian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	1	1
10	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	1	4
11	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	4	6
12	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	1	1
13	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>	1	2
14	Spotted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles senegallus</i>	1	80
15	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	1	8
16	Crowned Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles coronatus</i>	1	40
17	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	8	N/C
18	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	5	8
19	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	8	10
20	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	2	3
21	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1	3
22	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	1	3
23	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	1	1
24	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	2	120
25	Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	1	2
26	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	2	50
27	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	2	30
28	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	6	4
29	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	3	15
30	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1	1
31	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	1	6
32	Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	1	1
33	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1	3
34	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2	2
35	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	2	5
36	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	1	2
37	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	2	20
38	Cream-colored Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	2	2
39	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	2	8
40	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	2	50
41	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga melanocephala</i>	2	4
42	Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga audouinii</i>	1	1
43	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1	4
44	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	4	30

45	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	2	4
46	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	1	1
47	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	1	1
48	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	6	8
49	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus/maroccanus</i>	2	4
50	Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	1	40
51	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	1	30
52	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	1	80
53	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	7	50
54	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	4	4
55	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	4	2
56	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	1
57	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	1	1
58	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	4	2
59	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	1	1
60	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	1	1
61	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus cirtensis</i>	2	2
62	Pharaoh Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	1	4
63	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	3	2
64	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	3	2
65	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	1	2
66	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	1	1
67	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1	1
68	Levaillant's Woodpecker	<i>Picus vaillantii</i>	1	5
69	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	8	4
70	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	1	1
71	Barbary Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides</i>	1	1
72	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1	1
73	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	2	6
74	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor elegans</i>	2	4
	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor algeriensis</i>	2	6
75	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	2	2
76	Maghreb Magpie	<i>Pica mauritanica</i>	4	10
77	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	1	125
78	Yellow-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	1	6
79	Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	4	4
80	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	1	3
81	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>	1	1
82	African Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>	3	6
83	Greater Hoopoe-Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	2	12
84	Thick-billed Lark	<i>Ramphocoris clotbey</i>	1	2
85	Desert Lark	<i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	3	3
86	Bar-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes cinctura</i>	4	5
87	Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	3	2
88	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	4	8
89	Maghreb Lark	<i>Galerida macrorhyncha</i>	1	2
90	(Atlas) Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris atlas</i>	1	1
91	Temminck's Lark	<i>Eremophila bilopha</i>	2	6
92	Mediterranean Short-toed Lark	<i>Alaudala rufescens</i>	1	2
93	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	8	6
94	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	1	2
95	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	6	12
96	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	2	6

97	Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	2	4
98	European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	3	10
99	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	3	H
100	Streaked Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	1	1
101	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	1	1
102	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1	2
103	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	5	3
104	Western Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna opaca</i>	1	1
105	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	2	2
106	Fulvous Chatterer	<i>Argya fulva</i>	3	3
107	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	5	4
108	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	2	1
109	African Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserti</i>	1	2
110	Tristram's Warbler	<i>Sylvia deserticola</i>	1	1
111	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	1	1
112	Western Subalpine Warbler	<i>Curruca iberiae</i>	2	2
113	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	5	4
114	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	5	8
115	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	7	8
116	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1	2
117	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	1
118	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	3	6
119	Moussier's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	3	5
120	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	3	2
121	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	1	6
122	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2	2
123	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	3	4
124	Western Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	2	1
125	Red-rumped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe moesta</i>	1	4
126	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	1	8
127	White-crowned Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucopyga</i>	5	6
128	Maghreb Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe halophila</i>	2	3
129	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	1	6
130	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	8	N/C
131	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	1	1
132	Desert Sparrow	<i>Passer simplex</i>	1	2
133	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	1	12
134	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	3	10
135	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	2	4
136	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	4	6
	White Wagtail (Moroccan)	<i>Motacilla alba subpersonata</i>	1	1
137	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	2	10
138	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	2	4
139	African Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla spodiogenys</i>	5	8
140	African Crimson-winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys alienus</i>	1	5
141	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	1	4
142	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	4	4
143	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	4	4
144	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	1	3
145	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	6	6
146	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	1	1
147	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	1	2
148	House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>	4	2

A	OTHER SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Barbary Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i>	3	6
2	Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	1	1
3	Moroccan Spiny-tailed Lizard	<i>Uromastyx nigriventris</i>	1	1
4	Bosk's Fringe-toed Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus boskianus</i>	1	1
5	Dumeril's Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus dumerilii</i>	1	1
6	Common Wall Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>	1	1
7	Small-spotted Lizard (Desert Lacerta)	<i>Mesalina guttulata</i>	1	1
8	Moroccan Plain Agama	<i>Trapelus boehmei</i>	1	1
9	Ocellated Bronze Skink	<i>Chalcides ocellatus</i>	1	1
10	Desert (Saharan) Horned Viper	<i>Cerastes cerastes</i>	1	1
11	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	5	20
12	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	4	10
13	Plain Tiger Butterfly	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	4	8
14	Greenish Black-tip	<i>Elphinstonia charltonia</i>	2	2
15	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	1	1
16	Striped Hawk Moth	<i>Hyles livornica</i>	1	1
17	Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>	4	3
18	Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	1	2
19	Orange-winged Dropwing	<i>Trithemis kirbyi</i>	1	2
20	Violet Cistanche	<i>Cistanche violacea</i>	2	10
21	Desert Hyacinth	<i>Cistanche tubulosa</i>	2	100
22	Sad Stock	<i>Matthiola fruticulosa</i>	2	4
23	Spiny Zilla	<i>Zilla spinosa</i>	5	Lots
24	Ispod sp	<i>Porcellio saharaiensis</i>	1	1
25	Garden Locust	<i>Acanthacris ruficornis ssp. citrina</i>	1	2
26	Desert Sand Grasshopper	<i>Sphingonotus rubescens</i>	1	2



Desert Hyacinth (*Cistanche tubulosa*)
parasitizes the many Athel Tamarisk
(*Tamarix aphylla*) trees found in the desert.



The Violet Cistanche (*Cistanche violacea*)
is another plant that parasitizes Tamarisk