

Rare birds in Morocco: report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (2007–09)

Patrick Bergier^a, Jacques Franchimont^b, Michel Thévenot^c and the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee^d

Les oiseaux rares au Maroc : rapport de la Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (2007–09). Après les quatre premières synthèses triennales parues dans le Bulletin de l'African Bird Club (Bergier *et al.* 2000b, 2002b, 2005b, 2009c), ce nouveau rapport détaille les 252 données analysées entre 2007 et 2009, dont 222 ont été acceptées soit un taux d'acceptation de 88%. Les rapports annuels correspondants ont été publiés dans *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2008, 2009b, 2010a).

Quinze espèces / sous-espèces ont été signalées pour la première fois au Maroc. Il s'agit des taxons suivants : Fou masqué *Sula dactylatra*, Frégate sp. cf. superbe *Fregata sp. cf. magnificens*, Héron pâle *Ardea monicae*, Milan noir d'Egypte *Milvus aegyptius*, Vautour de Rüppell *Gyps rueppelli*, Gravelot de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Alouette de Dunn *Eremalauda dunnii*, Pipit à dos olive *Anthus hodgsoni*, Grive obscure *Turdus obscurus*, Prinia à front écaillé *Spiloptila clamans*, Fauvette de Moltoni *Sylvia (cantillans) moltonii*, Pie-grièche méridionale (sous-espèce nominale) *Lanius m. meridionalis*, Etourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* et Moineau doré *Passer luteus*. A noter que, parmi ces espèces nouvelles, trois se sont avérées être reproductrices dans le sud du pays : le Goéland dominicain s'est installé depuis 2006 sur la côte atlantique, et sa nidification a été prouvée en 2009 à Khnifiss. Les deux autres ont été trouvées dans l'intérieur de la région saharienne d'Oued Ad-Deheb sur la route d'Aousserd : l'Alouette de Dunn dont la nidification a été prouvée dès 2007 et le Prinia à front écaillé dont la reproduction très probable en 2008 a été prouvée en 2009. D'autre part, les mentions du Pipit à dos olive et de grive obscure représentent, quant à elles, les premières données de ces espèces à l'échelle africaine. Nous enregistrons également, au cours de la période considérée, le deuxième Aigle pomarin *Aquila pomarina*, les quatrièmes Pélican blanc *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Gravelot pâtre *Charadrius pecuarius* et Mouette de Franklin *Larus pipixcan*, les sixièmes Bernache cravant *Branta bernicla* (dont le premier individu de la sous-espèce *hrota* à ventre pâle), Océanite frégate *Pelagodroma marina*, Talève d'Allen *Porphyrio alleni*, Mouette atricille *Larus atricilla* et Bouvreuil pivoine *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, les sixième et septième Mouettes à tête grise *Larus cirrocephalus*, enfin les septième et huitième Goélands à ailes blanches *Larus glaucooides*.

The initial four triennial reports of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) appeared in *Bull. ABC* in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2009. This fifth report includes 252 records for 2007–09 (see Table 1). Some 222 were accepted (acceptance rate 88%), including 15 taxa new for Morocco: Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, (Magnificent?) Frigatebird *Fregata sp. cf. magnificens*, Pallid Heron *Ardea (cinerea) monicae*, Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*, Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Kelp (Cape) Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunnii*, Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*, Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia (cantillans) moltonii*, Southern Grey Shrike (nominate race) *Lanius m. meridionalis*, Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* and Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*. Three of these new species have been proven to breed in the south of the country. Kelp Gull has appeared since

2006 along the country's southern Atlantic coast, and breeding was proven at Khnifiss in 2009 (Bergier *et al.* 2009a). The two other species occur inland in the Saharan region of Oued Ad-Deheb on the Aousserd road: breeding by Dunn's Lark was first proven there in 2007 (Copete *et al.* 2008), while Cricket Warbler was considered very likely breeding in 2008 (T. Pettersson *et al.* in Thévenot & Bergier 2008b) and was proven in 2009 (L. G. R. Evans *et al.* in Bergier *et al.* 2010b). On the other hand, Olive-backed Pipit and Eyebrowed Thrush represent the first records in Africa. Also noteworthy are the second Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, the fourth Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* and Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, the sixth Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (including the first mention of the pale-bellied race *hrota*), White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*, Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* and Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula*

pyrrhula, the sixth and seventh Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus*, and the seventh and eighth Iceland Gulls *L. glaucooides*. Annual reports for the period were published in *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2008, 2009b, 2010a).

The updated list of species considered by MRBC is available at <http://www.go-south.org> and includes true vagrants (i.e. species with <30 records) and rare or little-known species whose current status is inadequately known. We strongly urge visiting birdwatchers to submit descriptions of relevant species to the MRBC Secretary: Prof. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas Lemsaaadi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknès V.N., Morocco; e-mail: j.franchimont@menara.ma

Presentation of data

The presentation of data follows the pattern of MRBC reports for 1995–97, 1998–2000, 2001–03 and 2004–06 (Bergier *et al.* 2000b, 2002b, 2005b, 2009c). For all species, the following sequence has been used:

- English and scientific names
- Status according to the following codes:

RB	Resident
MB	Migrant breeder
OB	Occasional breeder
FB	Former breeder
PM	Passage migrant
WV	Winter visitor
OW	Occasional winter visitor, otherwise migrant (MB, PM)
AV	Accidental visitor (<30 records)
F(AV)	Former accidental visitor (not recorded since 1899)
?	Indicates doubt concerning status
- Details of: year, MRBC file number, region (see map), site, number of birds (one unless otherwise stated), age, sex, other data if applicable, date(s) of observation, and recorder(s) name(s)
- Comments

For accidentals, six numbers in brackets follow the status code. The first two indicate the number of records in the files of the Centrale Ornithologique Marocaine prior to the formation of MRBC, and the number of birds involved (except those records subsequently examined by

the MRBC). The second pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC and published in previous triennial reports, and the number of birds involved. The last pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC in 2007–09, and the number of birds involved. For rare or little-known species, only the two last pairs are presented. The systematic list follows the sequence of species for which details are required by MRBC (www.go-south.org/lists/liste_oiseaux_maroc_annexe4.pdf).

List of accepted records

- Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* AV (4/14, 1/1, 4/16)
- 2006** (06/60) **Zaërs**, Salé beach, first-winter, 23–30 November, photo (N. Aransay)
- 2006** (06/62) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, six, 10 March (A. C. Lees & R. D. Moores)
- 2007** (07/62) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, 21 March (T. A. Olsen, K. S. Olsen, H. Hveding & K. Bekkeli)
- 2008** (08/55) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, eight adults, 19 February (T. Pettersson, K. Mild & P. Waern)

There are 12 sightings for Morocco, all but one referring to the dark-bellied race *bernicla*. Record 06/60 refers to pale-bellied *brota*. Radi *et al.* (2009) listed other sightings at Khnifiss in 2007–08, unfortunately not submitted to the MRBC, and presented a synthesis of the occurrence of the species in Morocco. An additional record of a juvenile at Oualidia on 18 December 2007 (Y. Kaiser *et al.*) is not mentioned in Radi *et al.* (2009).

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator WV (-/-, 5/10, 2/2)

- 2007** (07/19) **Souss**, Souss estuary, female, 27 March (D. Watson & E. Allchin)
- 2008** (08/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkh Bou-Areg, adult female, 8 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

That at the Souss estuary was first seen on 16 January (A. Green *in* www.go-south.org) and was then seen by many birdwatchers until 27 March, the latest date for this species on the Atlantic coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

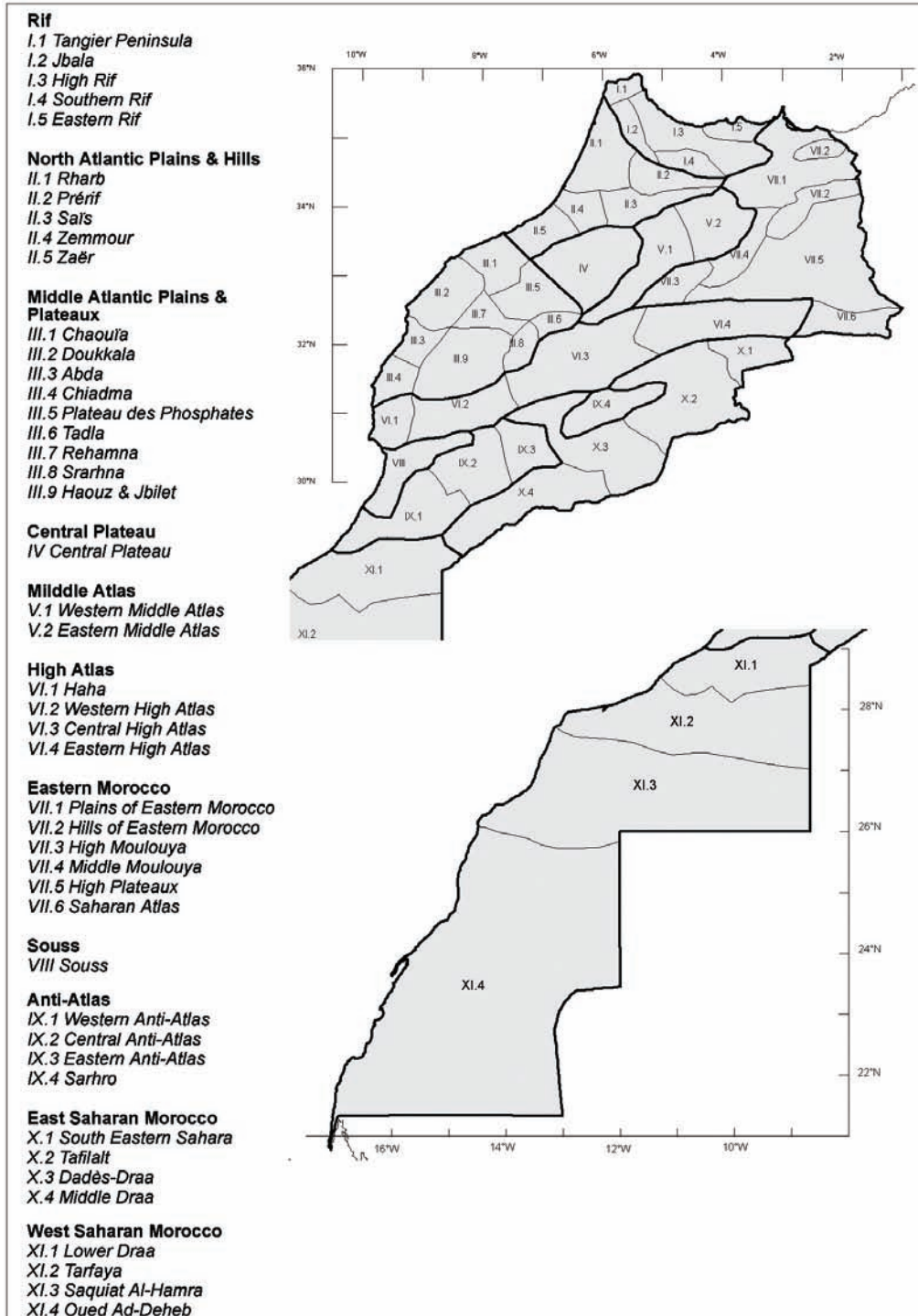


Figure 1. Map showing the regions of Morocco used in this report.
 Carte délimitant les régions du Maroc utilisées dans ce rapport.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* AV (9/13, 10/13, 1/1)

2008 (08/29) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, male, 19 February (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Twentieth record for Morocco, on a date and place consistent with the usual pattern.

Two other records of singles at Smir marsh in May 2007 and February 2008 (K. Bensusan, I. R. Thompson, M. Amezian, C. Perez, J. Cortes) have not been submitted.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* WV, OB, PM? (-/-, 10/19, 8/25)

2004 (04/45) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, juvenile male or female, 26 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2006 (06/33) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, four females and three young, 22 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/42) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, female or juvenile, 5 November (B. Maire)

2007 (07/47) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, female or immature, 18 November, photo (B. Maire)

2008 (08/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult male, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2008 (08/06) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, two adult males, 12 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

2008 (08/40) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhla Fida Ameziane, Nador, one male and three adult females, 9 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2009 (09/07) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, three adult males, 14 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui *et al.*)

2009 (09/44) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, four adult males and one female, 3 April, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

2009 (09/53) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, two adult males, 17 May, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

First record at the Moulouya estuary, where five were still present on 1 November 2006 (V. Schollaert). At Sidi Bou-Rhaba there are only three previous records: two mentioned by Thévenot *et al.* (2003) and one accepted in 2004 (Bergier *et al.* 2007). Future breeding is possible as sightings have recently increased dramatically. In Morocco, White-headed Duck is known to breed only at Douyîet where breeding has occurred almost regularly since 2000.

White-headed × Ruddy Duck *Oxyura*

leucocephala × *O. jamaicensis* (0/0, 5/9, 1/1)

2009 (09/08) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, adult male, 14 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui *et al.*)

The first record of a hybrid since 1998 (Bergier *et al.* 2000a, 2000b).

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* PM, OW (-/-, 2/79+, 2/301+)

2006 (06/59) **Souss**, off Agadir, 300+, 29 December, photo (Avifauna / S. Arvidsson)

2008 (08/11) **Doukkala**, between Azemmour and El Jadida, stranded, 6 January, photo (Mn & Mme Ménahèze *vide* B. Maire)

A record number off Agadir: Manx Shearwater is probably common along the Atlantic coast in late autumn and winter but remains under-recorded. In the same area and year (2006), the species was also seen—albeit in smaller numbers—by A. Blomdahl in November (one in the harbour on 16th and seven offshore on 29th) and by J. Lidster & B. Bland in early December (one offshore on 2nd). In 2007, one was at Cap Rhir on 18 February (S. Sorensen & J. Speich) and 50 off Agadir on 8 November (B. Bland). The bird in Doukkala was found dead after a week of strong winds and rain.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/50) **Souss**, 6 km offshore, north-west of Agadir, adult, 23 August (F. Jiguet)

First record of a Wilson's Storm-petrel for many years and the first analysed by the MRBC. Place and date consistent with the migration of this species, which moves south to its breeding grounds in August to November (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* AV (4/33+, 1/1, 1/3+)

2006 (06/41) **Souss**, off Agadir, at least three, 29 June (P. & C. Crouzet)

Patricia & Claude Crouzet organise fishing tours off Agadir and regularly see these 'grey-backed little birds that walk on the water'. Jiguet (2007) described these records. The only previous record analysed by the MRBC was also off Agadir, on 31 March 1997 (Bergier *et al.* 2000a).

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/26) **Tarfaya**, between Tantan Plage and Oued Chebeika, near-adult, 16 January (R. Baeta *et al.*)

A record of *c.*10 off Oued Ad-Deheb, on 10 May 1947 (Bierman & Voous 1950), was subsequently rejected (Oreel & Voous 1974). Two adults or subadults were reported from a ferry en route between Madeira and Malaga, *c.*300 nautical miles west of Casablanca (Morocco) on 9 November 2002. The nearest colonies are in the West Indies (2,500 pairs) and on islands in the South Atlantic (5,000 pairs: Carboneras 1992). There are just five records of Masked Booby in the Western Palearctic: two in Spain (10 October and 14 December 1986, in Andalucia, near Cadiz and Malaga, perhaps the same bird), and another in French / Spanish waters on 3 September 2003 in the Gulf of Gasgogne / Biscay (http://www.ornithomedia.com/pratique/identif/ident_art37_2.htm; Frémont & CHN 2005, de Juana 2006); these are the only European records. The fifth Western Palearctic record is from the eastern Mediterranean, off Israel (an adult on 16 July 2004: http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/bulletins/bulletin_6/).

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* AV (2/2, 1/1, 1/1)

2003 (03/39) **Tangier Peninsula**, Oued Alian estuary, Tangier, adult, 11 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

This bird had just arrived from Spain and a wild origin is not certain. Great White Pelican is almost annual on the Spanish side of the Strait, either alone or in small groups (up to seven in September 2006), or mixed with White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*.

(Magnificent?) Frigatebird *Fregata* sp. cf. *magnificens* AV? (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2009 (09/54) **Souss**, Massa, adult female, 10 April (A. Siegmund & D. Masur)

First mention of a frigatebird in Morocco. Although Magnificent Frigatebird is the most likely, the description did not permit the MRBC to positively identify the bird to species.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* PM, WV, RB/ BM? (-/-, 4/4, 9/9)

2006 (06/46) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 30 December (D. Bryant)

2007 (07/26) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 15 April (B. Maire & J.-M. Maculet)

2007 (07/29) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 21 March (T. Gullick)

2007 (07/35) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 8 April (I. Cherkaoui & J. del Hoyo)

2007 (07/46) **Rharb**, Tahadart marshes, 8 November (M. Amezian & I. R. Thomson)

2008 (08/13) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 16 March, photo (M. Boumaaza)

2008 (08/30) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 19 February (M. Amezian *et al.*)

2009 (09/02) **Rharb**, Merja Bargha, adult, 27 January (A. Qninba *et al.*)

2009 (09/10) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 30 March (I. Cherkaoui)

Fourth record at Massa, and second in winter there (Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Bergier *et al.* 2004).

Breeding recorded at the Lower Loukkos marshes in the late 19th century (Irby 1895) but the species dramatically declined during the 1970s (Pineau & Giraud-Audine 1979), before recovering during the 1980s and 1990s (Thévenot *et al.* 2003) and there are now at least a dozen booming males (Qninba *et al.* 2008).

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* AV (18/19, 2/2, 2/2)

2009 (09/21) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, 18 April, photo (T. Todorov)

2009 (09/23) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 1 April (P. Dhaluin *et al.*)

These two were of the dark morph.

Great Egret *Egretta alba* WV, PM (-/-, 31/55, 33/65+)

2005 (05/48) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, two adults, 20 March, photo (O. Fontaine & F. Bouzendorff)

2006 (06/29) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 4–10 September, photo (GOMAC)

2006 (06/30) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, four adults, 17 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2006 (06/32) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, adult, 1 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

- 2006 (06/36) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, 5 November, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2006 (06/66) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 26 March (A. B. van den Berg)
- 2007 (07/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, four, 14 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2007 (07/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, four, 21 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2007 (07/11) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 28 January, photo (GOMAC)
- 2007 (07/12) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, 1 March (B. Maire *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/21) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, adult, 31 March (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/22) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, 2 January (O. Bondesson *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/25) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 1–2, 15 April, photo (B. Maire *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/37) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohammed V, seven adults, 30 September, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2007 (07/39) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, two adults, 14 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2007 (07/41) **Rharb**, Larache, five, 21 October, photo (B. Maire *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, two adults, 21 December, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2007 (07/58) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 4+, 14 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/65) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 9 November (I. R. Thompson & M. Amezian)
- 2008 (08/01) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008 (08/02) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkh Bou-Areg, two adults, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008 (08/05) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult, 12 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008 (08/07) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkh Bou-Areg, three adults, 12 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)
- 2008 (08/08) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkh Bou-Areg, adult, 2 January, photo (I. Cherkaoui)
- 2008 (08/12) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, two adults, 20 March, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008 (08/16) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, three, 11 March, photo (H. van Diek)
- 2008 (08/42) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 23 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008 (08/43) **Rharb**, Larache, 7 November (B. Maire)
- 2008 (08/46) **Tafilalt**, Dayet Srij, Merzouga, adult, 19 November, photo (M. Gerber *et al.*)
- 2008 (08/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, adult, 18 December, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2009 (09/01) **Saqui Al Hamra**, Barrage de Layoune, two adults, 6 January (A. Qninba, M. Radi & A. El Idrissi Essougrati)
- 2009 (09/15) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, 31 March (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
- 2009 (09/31) **Doukkala**, Oualidia, adult, 2 January (J. H. Hansen)
- Great Egret is now regular in northern Morocco. Following the synthesis by Thévenot & Bergier (2008a), records to the north of a line El Jadida–Oujda are no longer considered by MRBC (decision of 12 November 2007).
- Sightings in desert areas of Morocco remain scarce. At Barrage de Layoune, two were present in December 2007–January 2008 (Y. Kayser, M. Radi & A. El Idrissi), the southernmost locality where the species has been seen in Morocco to date (Thévenot & Bergier 2008a).
- Pallid Heron** *Ardea (cinerea) monicae* AV (0/0, 0/0, 2/2)
- 2009 (09/43) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Hoja Llamera, Dakhla Bay, 20 February–22 May, photo (<http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?s=6c0cf0e2d4dfcf3b747f1fe1ccdbafb6&t=137850>, P. Vantieghem *et al.*, P. Bergier)
- 2009 (09/49) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss, 23 April (P. Adriaens *et al.*)
- First Moroccan record of this species endemic to the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania.
- Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)
- 2008 (08/20) **Central High Atlas**, Tizi-n'Tichka, 8 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

First record for Morocco and north-west Africa. The bird originated from eastern Africa (*M. a. aegyptius*) rather than from western Africa (*M. a. parasitus*) (per D. Forsman).

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* RB (-/-, 2/2, 7/10)

2007 (07/27) **Western High Atlas**, Sidi Chamarouch, two adults, 29 May (J. Oates)

2007 (07/31) **Western High Atlas**, Jbel Toubkal, June 2007, photo (G. Adellach)

2008 (08/52) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 29 December (M. Tingley)

2009 (09/12) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, pair, 20 April, photo (T. Todorov & R. El Khamlichi)

2009 (09/19) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 6 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/50) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 4 May, photo (A. Mayence)

2009 (09/51) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, pair, 1 May, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

All these records are from the Toubkal–Oukaïmeden area, especially the ski resort of Oukaïmeden. The species is Critically Endangered in Morocco where it survives in just two areas, the Toubkal–Oukaïmeden massif (Western High Atlas) and the Mgoun–Tessaoute massif (Central High Atlas). Numbers are small but seem to have recently increased in the Toubkal–Oukaïmeden massif, where the appearance of new pairs in well-frequented areas, such as the ski resort at Oukaïmeden, has resulted in a large increase in sightings.

Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* AV/IPM? (0/0, 0/0, 2/2)

2002 (02/40) **Tangier Peninsula**, Jbel Moussa, young, 18 June (J. Ramírez Román & S. Solís Gómez)

2006 (06/71) **Tangier Peninsula**, Jbel Moussa, young, 24 August (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

First records submitted to the MRBC. Dies *et al.* (2008) report an immature on 27 May, two others on 29 May and up to five on 15 June 2006, with Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* at Ceuta, waiting for favourable weather to cross the Strait of Gibraltar.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* AV, FB (13/16, 0/0, 1/1)

2003 (03/38) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, young, 5 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

First record accepted by the MRBC. The nearest breeding population, in Spain, is largely sedentary but individuals occasionally wander to Morocco, more exceptionally further south.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* AV (24/30+, 3/3, 2/2)

2008 (08/27) **Oued Ad Deheb**, 50 km north of Dakhla crossroads, adult male, 29 February (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

2009 (09/45) **Tafilalt**, Goulmima, adult male, 23 March, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

Fourth and fifth records analysed by the MRBC on dates consistent with the spring migration pattern through the western Mediterranean. Most sightings refer to males, which are more easily identified than females / immatures.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* RB (-/-, 2/2, 1/1)

2006 (06/47) **Souss**, between Oulad Teima and Taroudant, adult, 31 December (D. Bryant)

Seventh record analysed by the MRBC but only the third to be accepted. All three are from the Souss plain, the unique region where the species possibly still breeds.

In spring 2007, a team of five Spanish birders thoroughly searched for the species in the Souss but failed to find it (J. L. Copete *et al.*).

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* RB (-/-, 10/11, 2/2)

2006 (06/27) **Tarfaya**, 15 km south of Tantan Plage, third- or fourth-year, 18 January, photo (R. Baeta *et al.*)

2006 (06/38) **Souss**, Massa estuary, juvenile or second-year, 28 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

Typical records of immatures on post-breeding dispersal.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* AV (0/0, 1/1, 1/1)

2007 (07/68) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, adult / subadult, 14 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

Second Moroccan record following that at Merzouga in 1996 (Bergier *et al.* 1997). In 2008, very small numbers in spring and autumn, were detected on the Spanish side of the Strait of Gibraltar (Onrubia *et al.* 2009a).

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* AV, FB, OB (-/-, 0/0, 2/2)

2006 (06/63) **Lower Draa**, 11 km west-northwest of Tantan, second-year, 16 December 2006 and 8 February 2007, photo (C. Batty *et al.*, M. Lopez *et al.*)

2007 (07/67) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, first-year, 14 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

Spanish Imperial Eagle is largely sedentary but a few immatures cross the Strait and occasionally migrate as far south as tropical West Africa (González & Oria 2004).

First records accepted by the MRBC. The Lower Draa sighting is the southernmost certain record in Morocco; many previous sightings in desert areas were not accepted by Thevenot *et al.* (2003) due to the possibility of confusion with young Tawny Eagle which recalls young Spanish Imperial Eagle.



Figure 2. Second-year Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*, near Tantan, 8 February 2007 (M. Read). The southernmost certain record in Morocco.

Aigle ibérique *Aquila adalberti* de deuxième année, près de Tantan, 8 février 2007 (M. Read). La donnée la plus méridionale au Maroc.

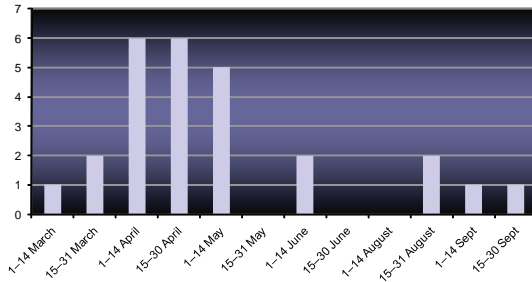
Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* AV

(18/c.29, 4/5, 1/5)

2006 (06/40) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, three adult males and two females, 16 April (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

Six other possible Red-footed Falcons accompanied these birds but could not be identified with certainty.

Most of the 26 Moroccan records (including three not submitted to the MRBC) are from April and early May. The earliest is from 17 March. Only four are from autumn.



Number of records of Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* in Morocco by fortnight ($n=26$)

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* RB poorly known (-/-, 60/70+, 22/23)

2004 (04/46) **Doukkala**, Cap Beddouza, adult, 27 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2004 (04/47) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 28 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2004 (04/48) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 7 November, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2006 (06/39a) **Souss**, Agadir Kasbah, adult, 23 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

2006 (06/39b) **Haha**, Paradise Valley, Immouzer Ida-Ou-Tanane, adult, 27 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

2006 (06/51) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Saïdia, adult, 2 November, photo (V. Adriaens, V. Schollaert *et al.*)

2006 (06/65) **Dadès-Draa**, east of Ouarzazate, immature, 23 January, photo (W. Price)

2007 (07/01) **Souss**, near Aoulouz, adult, 2 January (D. Bryant)

2007 (07/05) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult female, 16 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/09) **Tafilalt**, Erfoud, adult, 17 February, photo (M. Altieri *et al.*)

2007 (07/17) **Dadès-Draa**, Oued Izerki near Ouarzazate, adult, 2 January, photo (O. Bondeson, I. Sandahl *et al.*)

2007 (07/20) **Haha**, Tamri, adult male, 1 April (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

2007 (07/53) **Dadès-Draa**, Boumalne du Dadès, adult, 23 November, photo (P. Komi)

2007 (07/54) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 2 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/21) **Tafilalt**, Jorf, 25 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/38) **Haha**, Tamri, adult and immature, 10 October, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

- 2008 (08/39a) **Eastern High Atlas**, gorges du Ziz, adult, 3 March, photo (F. Jiguet)
- 2008 (08/39b) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 6 March, photo (F. Jiguet)
- 2008 (08/44) **Souss**, Massa, immature, 3 November, photo (J. M. Fenerole)
- 2008 (08/45) **Souss**, Arazane, adult, 16 November, photo (M. Gerber *et al.*)
- 2009 (09/14) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 15 April (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
- 2009 (09/37) **Oued Ad-Dehab**, Taourta, juvenile, 20 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

On the Mediterranean coast near Melilla, Barbary Falcon occurs in sympatry with Peregrine *Falco peregrinus brookei*.

Andalusian Hemipode (Common Buttonquail)

Turnix sylvaticus RB (-/-, 1/1, 2/2)

- 2007 (07/33) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, 16 September, photo (P. Dupuis, J. Franchimont & B. Maire)
- 2007 (07/45) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, dead (probably a road casualty), late November (D. Ledan), photo (J. Franchimont)

That on 16 September was very tame and was discovered in a fallow field, 1 km from the ocean.



Figure 3. Andalusian Hemipode / Turnix d'Andalousie *Turnix sylvaticus*, near Oualidia, Doukkala, 16 September 2007 (B. Maire)

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* PM, OW (-/-, 8/16+, 5/8)

- 2007 (07/56) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, singing male, 13 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/59) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, two on 14 March, three on 15 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)

- 2008 (08/14) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, two adults, 30 March (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)
- 2008 (08/31) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, 2 April, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
- 2008 (08/32) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 12 March, mist-netted, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Spotted Crake is a regular passage migrant (albeit much rarer in the autumn) and an occasional winter visitor. MRBC has decided to remove Spotted Crake from the list of species considered from 1 January 2009 (decision 16 November 2008).

Little Crake *Porzana parva* PM (-/-, 3/16+, 5/5)

- 2007 (07/08) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, adult male, 20 February (M. Altieri *et al.*)
- 2007 (07/16) **Tangier Peninsula**, Smir marshes, female, 26 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
- 2007 (07/18) **Souss**, Aoulouz, 16 March, photo (D. Watson)
- 2007 (07/63) **Souss**, Massa estuary, male, 22 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
- 2009 (09/16) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, singing male, 31 March (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2007 was a very good year for this rare spring migrant. In addition to the records listed in Thévenot *et al.* (2003) and the three already analysed by the MRBC, we are aware of only a few other sightings since 2000: Oued Ziz, north of Erfoud: female on 12 April 2000 (J. Fonderflick) and another on 12 February 2003 (H. Dufourny); Aoulouz: female on 14 March 2005 (A. Binns), two females on 15 March 2007 (A. Wilson) and one on 12 April 2007 (A. Impey); Barrage Mansour Eddahbi: one (perhaps two) on 18 March 2007 (S. Bird *et al.*); and at Massa: one on 14 April 2007 (A. Impey *et al.*). Breeding of this secretive species has been reported in Algeria in the 19th century (*cf.* Isenmann & Moali 2000), but has never been proved in Morocco, although occasional instances seem likely at suitable sites (*cf.* singing male at Barrage Mansour Eddahbi).

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* PM, BM, OW (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)

- 2008 (08/59) **Rharb**, Larache, adult, 30 March, photo (C. Zumalacárregui *et al.*)

The bird was mist-netted (Ramírez 2009). It is only the second record analysed by the MRBC.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* AV (5/5, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/57) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, juvenile, 21 November, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

All five previous records were from the Atlantic coast between Merja Zerga in the north and Massa in the south, all in December–January except one in April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). This is the first analysed by the MRBC.

The bird hit a window in Melilla. It was very emaciated and dehydrated, with some feathers in good condition and others moulting; it was taken to the rehabilitation center 'Centro de Recuperación de Fauna El Quinto' where it died six days later.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* RB, WV (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/24) **Zaër**, Sidi Bettache, adult female, 13 April (S. Nawfel & I. Cherkaoui)

Stangely, this is the first record analysed by the MRBC. The bird was in a clearing within cork-oak forest; I. Cherkaoui had previously seen three in another cork-oak forest (Mamora, 16 November 2005).

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* RB (-/-, 0/0, 2/2)

2009 (09/17) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, male, 30 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/18) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, male, 10 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Breeding in captivity has now been mastered, especially at the Emirates Centre for Wildlife Propagation at Missouri. Many are released each year in eastern Morocco and Tafilalt, and in consequence Houbara should be observed more frequently in these areas.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* AV (2/5, 1/1, 1/1)

2008 (08/37) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 18 April, photo (D. Young)

Fourth Moroccan record of this species from sub-Saharan Africa. This is the latest in spring and the first on the Atlantic coast. The three previous

records were all inland in south-eastern pre-desert regions (Dadès-Draa and Tafilalt).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/52) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 13 March, video (P. van Rooij *et al.*)

First Moroccan record of this eastern species, which breeds from Turkey to western China. Another sighting (Middle Atlas, 28 April 1979) is unconfirmed (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* AV (8/12, 3/4, 2/2)

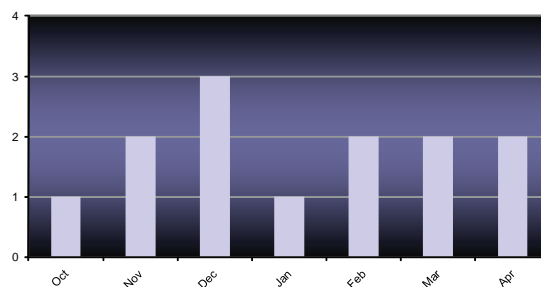
2008 (08/23) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, 2 March, photo (H. van Diek)

2009 (09/22) **Tangier Peninsula**, Asilah, 24 April, photo (J. Elorriaga & C. Feijt)

Twelfth and 13th records of this accidental winter visitor: 24 April is the latest known date for Morocco.



Figure 4. Purple Sandpiper / Bécasseau violet *Calidris maritima*, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 March 2008 (H. van Diek)



Number of records of Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* in Morocco per month ($n=13$)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* AV (8/12, 4/7, 2/2)

2007 (07/64) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 22 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)

(07/15) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 23 March, photo (S. Bird *et al.*)

These two records probably involve the same bird. Eight of the 13 Moroccan records are from the Souss estuary. Broad-billed Sandpiper is more often observed during spring migration (eight records: 23 March–18 May) than during autumn (four records: 27 July–22 September). There are also two winter records, in January.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* PM, OW (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)

2007 (07/49) **Saïs**, near Meknès, 16 December (J. Franchimont)

First record since 1999. Great Snipe is a very rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Morocco.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* AV (9/9, 1/1, 2/2)

2007 (07/36) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, young, stranded, 17 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/44) **Tarfaya**, Cape Juby, adult or third-year, 19 October (F. X. Macià Valverde & K. M. Van Enkhuizen)

Eleventh and 12th records for Morocco, and first verified record on the Mediterranean coast.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* AV (0/0, 3/3, 1/1)

2004 (04/49) **Saquiati Al Hamra**, Layoune, corpse, 20 January (M. van Leeuwen)

DNA analyses performed on the rotten corpse permitted identification to species level (P. de Knijff *vide* A. B. van den Berg). The three previous Moroccan records are from the Souss region (Bergier *et al.* 1996, 2007).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* PM, OW (-/-, 3/8, 2/35+)

2009 (09/04) **Rharb**, Merja Bargha, c.15, 27 January (A. Qninba *et al.*)

2009 (09/05) **Zaërs**, Oued El-Maleh estuary, Mohammedia, c.20, 11 February (A. Qninba & A. El Idrissi Essougrati)

Exceptional influx of birds stranded ashore after severe storms with strong westerly gales during winter 2008–09.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* AV (1/1, 4/4, 1/1)

2007 (07/40) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, Point Sarga, 17 October, photo (F. X. Macià Valverde & K. M. Van Enkhuizen)

Sixth record for Morocco, the southernmost to date, and the first in autumn (there was previously an unconfirmed record from September: Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* AV (22/22, 14/18, 6/6)

2006 (06/28) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, first-winter, 18–20 January, photo (R. Baeta *et al.*)

2007 (07/61) **Souss**, Agadir harbour, second-year, 19 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)

2007 (07/71) **Haha**, Anza, first-winter, 16–21 January, photo (A. Green *et al.*)

2007 (07/72) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, second-winter, 19 January (A. Green)

2008 (08/25) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, adult winter, 24 February (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

2008 (08/26) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, adult summer, 23 February, photo (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

The Khnifiss record is the southernmost to date. Approximately at the same latitude, there are some 20 records on the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001, Clarke 2006, de Juana 2006) and Ring-billed Gull has also been reported from Mauritania (Lamarche 1988) and Senegal (Baillon 1991).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* AV (3/3, 2/2, 2/3)

2006 (06/37) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 24 October (D. Walsh & A. Gregory)

2009 (09/52) **Souss**, Souss estuary, two adults, 19–21 May, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

Sixth and seventh records for Morocco and third at the Souss estuary. The data do not permit a clear view of the temporal pattern of this species, which has been recorded in February (one), April (one), May (three), October (one) and November (one). There are two records in Algeria (April 1981 and April 1982: Le Fur 1984, Johnson *et al.* 1990), two in Tunisia (July 1988 and August 1988: Isenmann *et al.* 2005), one in continental

Spain (Marismas of Guadalquivir, 30 June–15 August 1971: de Juana 2006) and one on the Canaries (2 February 2005: de Juana 2006, Dies *et al.* 2007). The nearest breeding colony is at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, where there are only a few dozen pairs. Grey-headed Gull is the commonest gull in Senegal (race *poiocephalus*) and also breeds in southern South America (race *cirrocephalus*).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* AV (3/3, 3/2, 3/2)

- 2008** (08/35) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, second-year, 4 March, photo (P. Lampila *et al.*)
2008 (08/58) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, first-winter, 2 March, photo (M. Hornman *et al.*)
2009 (09/36) **Souss**, Souss estuary, first-summer, 18 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

The two records at Essaouira certainly involve the same bird.



Figure 5. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 March 2008 (M. Hornman)

Goéland arctique *Larus glaucooides* de premier hiver, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 mars 2008 (M. Hornman)

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* WV (-/-, 2/3, 2/2)

- 2006** (06/49) **Souss**, Agadir, subadult, 28 August (F. Jiguet)
2007 (07/51) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, third-winter / adult, 30 December (D. Bryant)

28 August is one of the earliest dates ever in Morocco. There is just one previous record at Khnifiss lagoon (P. Rock *in Thévenot et al.* 2003), the southernmost Moroccan record to date, but Herring Gull has been reported from the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania (Isenmann 2006).

Kelp (Cape) Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula* AV, OB (0/0, 0/0, 3/15)

- 2006** (06/44) **Souss**, Agadir, adult, 28 August (F. Jiguet)
2008 (08/56) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, four adults, 19 February, photo (T. Pettersson, K. Mild & P. Waern)
2009 (09/47) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, ten adults, 23 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First Moroccan records for this Southern Hemisphere gull which breeds in southern Africa, from Namibia to Cape Province and in southern Madagascar, and on southern coasts of South America, in south Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and on subantarctic islands. Five subspecies are recognised (Jiguet 2002) with *L. d. vetula* that in southern Africa.

In the Americas, *L. d. dominicanus* has spread north and now breeds in Louisiana, USA. In Africa, *L. d. vetula* has also expanded north since the 1980s, with three breeding records in Senegal in 1980–89, and a long-stayer, paired with a Yellow-legged Gull *L. michabellis*, at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, in 1997–2007 at least (Pineau *et al.* 2001, Isenmann 2006). An adult (the first for the Western Palearctic) was in Paris, France, in January 1995 (Jiguet & Defos du Rau 2004), and another adult was at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, in April 2001 (de Juana 2006).

The four seen at Khnifiss lagoon on 19 February 2008 formed two pairs and were displaying; three were still present five days later (Bergier & Thévenot 2008). Finally, following several records in 2009, breeding was proven in May (Bergier *et al.* 2009a).



Figure 6. Kelp (Cape) Gull / Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Khnifiss lagoon, Tarfaya, 20 May 2009 (P. Bergier)

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* WV (-/-, 5/6, 5/5)

- 2006** (06/48) **Souss**, Massa estuary, first-winter, 29 December (D. Bryant)
- 2007** (07/48) **Souss**, Anza, first-year, 2 December, photo (A. Talamelli *et al.*)
- 2009** (09/33) **Haha**, Anza, second-winter, 5 January (J. H. Hansen)
- 2009** (09/34) **Haha**, Anza, third-winter, 5–6 January (J. H. Hansen)
- 2009** (09/38) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, first-summer, 20 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

With only ten records received by the MRBC in 1997–2009, Great Black-backed Gull is definitely a rare winter visitor to Morocco. Taking into account the sightings listed by Thévenot *et al.* (2003), the species is mainly observed in the Souss region, especially at the Souss and Massa estuaries (12+ and 6+ records respectively).

Regarding the Dakhla bird on 20 April, P. Vantieghem reported: ‘Oddly, this bird already had six new primaries, which is extremely advanced. The most advanced second-cycle bird I have seen in Europe, showed two new inner primaries on 13 April, so this Moroccan bird is well ahead of schedule. Coincidentally though, I received photographs of another second-cycle Great Black-backed Gull at Dakhla, taken by D. López Velasco in early April 2007. This bird showed four new primaries already. Perhaps the desert climate is responsible for the unusually rapid moult in these birds, which are probably not used to such hot, sunny and windy conditions’.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* PM, OW (-/-, 2/2, 1/1)

- 2006** (06/35) **Souss**, Souss estuary, juvenile, 14 October (P. Kennerley, A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Arctic Tern is a rare migrant along the Moroccan Atlantic coast and is more frequent during autumn passage (32 records in late July–early November) than spring (18 records in late March–late May). Nevertheless, the species is undoubtedly under-recorded and probably less rare than shore-based observations suggest.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* PM (-/-, 3/5, 1/58)

- 2006** (06/64) **Haha**, Agadir Imoucha, 58 adults, 12 April (T. Pettersson & M. Rehnberg)

This is one of the largest groups recorded in Morocco, with *c.*50 recorded by R. de Naurois on Virginia islet off the Oued Ad-Deheb region on 30 May 1960, and the exceptional count of *c.*1,000, probably overwintering, on the same islet by the same observer on 3 August 1965 (de Naurois 1969).

Sooty / Bridled Tern *Sterna fuscata* / *S. anaethetus*

- 2005** (05/51) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 25 November (R. Moss)

This bird was submitted as *S. fuscata* but the MRBC considered that doubt remains concerning the specific identification (either *S. fuscata* or *S. anaethetus*). No recent sightings of either species are available in Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2009** (09/09) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult, 24 March, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

This bird was obviously an escape but it is interesting to monitor the future of such ‘exotics’ to see whether they become permanently established or not. This is the case for Rose-ringed Parakeet in Morocco (see below) but also for other lovebirds, e.g. in the Alpes-Maritimes, France (Dubois 2007, Jiguet & the CAF 2007).

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* AV / RB? (3+/5+, 3/6, 3/5)

- 2006** (06/45) **Chaouia**, Casablanca, adult male, 18 November (I. Cherkaoui)
- 2008** (08/17) **Zaër**, Rabat, adult male, 30 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui)
- 2009** (09/26) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, one pair and a male, 29 April, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

At Casablanca, there was a small population in the 1990s but no recent data are available from there. At Rabat, the record submitted by I. Cherkaoui is his fourth in that city. At Melilla, where two previous records in 2004 were accepted by the MRBC (Bergier *et al.* 2005a, 2006), breeding probably

occurred in 2009. The pair reported on 29 April 2009 settled at 20 m height, in the hole of a wall of a tall building near a public garden. During one hour, the male made six visits to the hole, remaining there 4–5 minutes each time. The female was only seen twice. No young were seen. A second male came close to the hole but was swiftly evicted by the female.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* WV, PM (-/-, 6/10, 5/5)

- 2006** (06/61) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 26 October (B. Maire & M. Hamdouch)
- 2007** (07/13) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 11 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2008** (08/47) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 14 November (M. Gerber *et al.*)
- 2008** (08/48) **Tafilalt**, Erg Chebbi, Merzouga, 19 November (M. Gerber *et al.*)
- 2008** (08/51) **Sarhro**, Iknioun, adult, 27 December (M. Tingley & P. Blumenshine)

First winter sighting and the only recent record in Eastern Morocco where the three previous records were also at the Moulouya estuary, in April (Brosset 1961).

There are very few records in desert areas, making the two late autumn / winter records in Tafilalt and in Sarhro remarkable: the bird at Merzouga was sheltering under a tamarisk amid tall sand dunes, and that at Iknioun was in steppe.

Black-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* RB/BM? (0/0, 1/16, 3/216+)

- 2007** (07/06) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, especially near Aousserd, 56+, 17 January, photo (L. G. R. Evans *et al.*)
- 2009** (09/28) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, c.60, 14–16 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)
- 2009** (09/40) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, numerous (100+), 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

Black-crowned Sparrow Lark is probably common in the savannahs that develop following rainfall in the Dakhla hinterland, especially near Aousserd. The first record analysed by MRBC was from September 1999 (Bergier *et al.* 2000c). In 2007, L. G. R. Evans *et al.* found this lark along the Aousserd road beyond km 181, then at Oued

Jenna, and in increasing numbers close to Aousserd (with a group of 25+ just before the town). It was common in spring 2009. P. Vantieghem *et al.* noted: ‘even more numerous than Dunn’s Lark; probably well over 100 seen, between km 110 and 186 along the Dakhla–Aousserd road. Every stop produced about 5–10 birds, and some were even seen from the car while driving’.

Dunn’s Lark *Eremalauda dunnii* RB/BM? (0/0, 0/0, 6/100s)

- 2006** (06/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, three, 12 March, photo (A. C. Lees & R. D. Moores)
- 2007** (07/07) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, two pairs at km 96, one pair at km 124, 16 January, photo (L. G. R. Evans *et al.*)
- 2007** (07/69) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, several hundreds, 9–11 April and 30 April, photo (R. Armada *et al.*)
- 2009** (09/27) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, four adults and a young, 14–15 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)
- 2009** (09/30) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, 20 April, photo (P. Olsson)
- 2009** (09/39) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, several dozen, 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First documented records for Morocco (a previous observation on 29 April 2001 at Aousserd was not accepted by MRBC: Bergier *et al.* 2002a).

In 2006, three birds, including a male in song, were found at 22°79’N 14°61’W in a Saharo-Sahelian environment, dominated by tussocks of *Andropogon*, *Aristida*, *Lasiurus* and *Panicum*, and sparse *Acacia*, with Black-crowned Finch Larks (numerous, breeding) and Desert Sparrows *Passer simplex*. This record was described in detail by Lees & Moores (2006).

The two records in 2007 definitely proved breeding in the region. That in April 2007 involving large numbers of breeders was thoroughly detailed by Copete *et al.* (2008). The status of Dunn’s Lark in Oued Ad-Deheb requires confirmation. It is probably not an accidental visitor but a localised though regular resident breeder, or an erratic breeder that keys its reproduction to rainfall, occurring only in wet years and wandering in search of more favourable areas elsewhere in Western Sahara? In any case, the breeding period may be prolonged as young

were noted as early as mid January and until 21 April in 2009. Dunn's Lark is also known in the Zemmour, Mauritania (de Naurois 1974).

African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* RB, BM (-/-, 9/83+, 3/5)

2007 (07/24) **Sarhro**, gorges north of Agdz, two, 30 March, photo (B. Maire & P. Dupuis)

2007 (07/32) **Saharan Atlas**, near Bouarfa, 20 May, photo (V. Liéron)

2008 (08/28) **Oued Ad Deheb**, El Argoub, two, 27 February (P. Bergier & M. Thévenot)

The breeding distribution, ecological requirements and movements of African Rock Martin remain poorly known in Morocco (Bergier 2007).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* WV (-/-, 7/24, 1/9)

2008 (08/41) **Souss**, Massa, nine, 31 October, photo (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

Between 1995 and 2008, H. Dufourny made five records of Richard's Pipit at Massa, all in cultivation at Sidi Wassai, upstream of the estuary.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2007 (07/43) **Souss**, Agadir, 8–9 November, photo (T. Berger & G. Holm)

First Moroccan and African record. The subspecies *yunnanensis* winters in southern Asia and is a rare vagrant to Western Europe. It breeds from north Russia (east of the Urals) to northern Asia, and then to Mongolia, Manchuria (China), Tibet and north-east India in the south. European records are mostly in autumn, from late September to November, concentrated in central Europe (Germany, Poland, Denmark), Fennoscandia and the British Isles. By 2005, there were only 12 French records (2 October–10 November: Dubois *et al.* 2008), three in Spain, including one in Andalucía (10 October–25 December: de Juana 2006) and one in Portugal (Algarve, 16 November: *Ardeola* 43: 115).

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis* WV (-/-, 2/3, 1/1)

2008 (08/09) **Zaers**, Rabat, adult, 2 January, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

Typical date and locality for this rare winter visitor; this is only the third record analysed by the MRBC. I. Cherkaoui also saw one on

24 December 2006 in the Mamora forest near Kenitra.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* PM, OW?, OB? (21/25, 5/5+)

2006 (06/53) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, km 60, 1–2, 29 October (G. van Vlierden)

2006 (06/56) **Lower Draa**, 32 km south-west of Goulimine, 16 December, photo (S. Piner *et al.*)

2007 (07/14) **Tafilalt**, Derkaoua, 18 February, photo (M. Altieri, A. Vezzani *et al.*)

2009 (09/06) **Western Anti-Atlas**, Tafraoute, 15 February (S. Bot & J. Ouwehand)

2009 (09/46) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, adult male, 20 March, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

First records in autumn. Do they concern passage migrants or winter visitors? It is also worth mentioning that two records are from the Atlantic Sahara, as this wheatear is generally considered an eastern migrant.

Several other data from 2007–09 have not been submitted to the MRBC: three on the Dakhla–Aousserd road (16 January 2007, L. G. R. Evans); a female at Dayet Srij, Merzouga (20 February 2007, J. Fagefors *et al.*); two males at Tagdilt (22 February 2007, J. Fagefors *et al.*); one at Café Yasmina, Merzouga (16–17 March 2007, R. Thorneycroft, H. Hveding *et al.*); one south of Goulimine, marker 'Tantan 100' (20 March 2007, L. G. R. Evans); one at Derkaoua, Merzouga (28 April 2007, N. Redman / Birdquest); ten in the sandy plains south of Goulimine (20 February 2008, T. Pettersson *et al.* in Bergier & Thévenot 2008); one south of Zagora (17 March 2008, P. Jones); one at Merzouga (19 March 2008, P. Jones); and one at Café Yasmina, Merzouga (18 March 2009, S. Lister & P. Jones).

L. G. R. Evans reported a pair feeding fledged young 22 km south of Goulimine on 6 May 2009. If confirmed, this would be the first breeding record for Morocco.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/49) **Tafilalt**, Café Yasmina, Merzouga, first-winter male, 17 December, photo (R. Messemaker *et al.*)

First record for Morocco and Africa. This bird was tame and feeding on bread crumbs and seeds on the terrace of the café, amongst House Sparrows

Passer domesticus. The record was fully detailed by Messemaker (2009).

Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* RB? (0/0, 0/0, 2/5)

2009 (09/29) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, three, 15 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)

2009 (09/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, two singing, 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First records analysed by the MRBC. The previous ones were described in Thévenot & Bergier (2008b).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* PM (-/-, 2/2, 1/4)

2009 (09/11) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, two mist-netted and photographed, 30 March 2008 (one) and 1 April 2008 (one). Two sightings, 31 March 2008 (one) and 2 April 2008 (one) (A. Onrubia *et al. fide* I. Cherkaoui; Ramírez 2009)

This is only the third record analysed by the MRBC. Mist-netting is of tremendous importance to detect this unobtrusive and globally threatened species. The present records resulted from two mist-netting campaigns in the Lower Loukkos marshes by a Spanish team in 2008–09 indicating that the site is probably an important stopover for the species (Onrubia *et al.* 2009b, Ramírez 2009).

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* MB (-/-, 4/7+, 7/17+)

2006 (06/73) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, 4 April, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/15a) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, two, 26–27 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/15b) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, two, 12 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/18) **Tafilalt**, Derkaoua, 3–4, 11 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2009 (09/20) **Dadès-Draa**, Ouarzazate, two, 1 and 12 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/24) **Tafilalt**, Touroug, 5+, 31 March and 9 April, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/48) **Tafilalt**, Aoufous, two singing males, 28 April (P. Adriaens *et al.*)

All documented records are from the south-east desert areas of Morocco: Saharan Atlas and South-Eastern Sahara (Mengoub–Figuig), Tafilalt

(Rissani–Merzouga) and Dadès-Draa (near Ouarzazate). The western limit of this warbler's range requires precise elucidation. Records 08/15a and 08/15b were within 50–100 m of one another and the birds were using old tamarisks within a palmerie. A photo was published in *Dutch Birding* 30: 200. The tape-recordings are consistent with those presented on CD2:60 of Constantine & The Sound Approach (2006).

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* AV/PM? (13/33+, 2/2, 1/1)

2005 (05/53) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 25 May, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Sixteenth record for Morocco, all of them from spring migration (April–May) and fairly easterly (nine east of 05°W). This record was detailed by Amezian *et al.* (2006).

Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia (cantillans) moltonii* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/19) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 26 March, second-year male, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

First Moroccan record. A photo of this bird was published in *Dutch Birding* 30: 194. Gargallo (1994) then Shirihai *et al.* (2001) were first to propose to split this taxon from other taxa in the *Sylvia cantillans* complex. The recent study by Brambilla *et al.* (2008), based on distribution pattern, voice and genetics, confirms that this



Figure 7. Second-year male Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia (cantillans) moltonii*, Merzouga, 26 March 2008 (A. B. van den Berg). The first record for Morocco.

Fauvette de Moltoni *Sylvia (cantillans) moltonii*, mâle de deuxième année, Merzouga, 26 mars 2008 (A. B. van den Berg). La première donnée pour le Maroc.

taxon merits the rank of species: *S. moltonii* (= *S. subalpina*: Baccetti *et al.* 2007). Moltoni's Warbler occurs on Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearics and parts of the Italian Peninsula.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* PM, BM, OW (-/-, 4/5, 8/16+)

- 2006** (06/34) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, 5+, 12 October, photo (A. B. van den Berg)
- 2007** (07/60) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 23 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
- 2007** (07/66) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 25 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
- 2008** (08/33) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 29 June (J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)
- 2008** (08/54) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, 6 September, photo (B. Maire)
- 2009** (09/25) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 5+, 31 March, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
- 2009** (09/55) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 20–21 June, photo (B. Maire, J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)
- 2009** (09/56) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 20 June (B. Maire, J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)

The first bird at Oukaïmeden was identified by its diagnostic call, which was repeated frequently. Up to four similar birds, brightly coloured almost like Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* with whitish fringes to the flight feathers but blackish legs, were also present.

The birds near the Moulay Abdeslam shrine in 2008–09 probably belong to the small Moroccan breeding population. They were in an old cork-oak forest with dense undergrowth of *Arbutus unedo*, *Erica cinerea*, *Cistus* spp., *Pteridium aquilinum* and *Rubus* sp., near a small stream. Iberian Chiffchaff is far from common in this area.

During migration Iberian Chiffchaff has been reported in spring from late February to mid April and in autumn from September to mid October (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Record 08/54 is the earliest autumn record outside the breeding range.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius m. meridionalis*
OW / WV ? (0/0, 0/0, 3/3)

- 2005** (05/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult, 10 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
- 2006** (06/55a and 06/58) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhha Bou-Areg, adult, 2–5

November, photo (V. Schollaert, D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

- 2006** (06/55b) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Cap des Trois Fourches, adult, 3 November (V. Schollaert)

This subspecies had not previously been documented in Morocco. Thévenot *et al.* (2003) stated: 'Birds of the European race (*L. m. meridionalis*?) probably occur in winter as there is a regular, though small, southward passage from Spain across the Straits [*sic*] from Aug to Oct'. D. Jerez Abad and R. Ramírez Espinar explain: 'This taxon occurs sometimes in Eastern Morocco, especially in autumn and winter'. The regularity of winter records and possible occurrence elsewhere in the country require study.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2007** (07/10) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, second-year male, 23 February, photo (P. Ferreira *et al.*)

First record for Morocco. This bird was found among a small flock of Spotless Starlings *Sturnus unicolor*; it then flew onto a wall and started to sing.

Up to 2003, there were 14 records in Portugal and 15 in Spain, including two on the Canaries (de Juana 2006). In North Africa, there are only old records in Algeria (19th century: Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962), in Tunisia (1903: Isenmann *et al.* 2005), and in Libya (1937 and 1969: Bundy 1976).



Figure 8. The Aousserd road. This habitat is excellent for species such as Black-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunnii* and Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* (P. Bergier)

La route d'Aousserd. Cet habitat a attiré des espèces telles que la Moinelette à front blanc *Eremopterix nigriceps*, l'Alouette de Dunn *Eremalauda dunnii* et la Prinia à front écailléux *Spiloptila clamans* (P. Bergier)

Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/7)

2009 (09/41) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Awserd, 21 April, two males and five females / juveniles, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First record of Sudan Golden Sparrow. In Mauritania, this Sahelian species has colonised the Cap Blanc Peninsula since 1978 and is known to wander as far as the border with Morocco (Mahé 1985).

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* AV (4/5, 1/3+, 1/3)

2007 (07/02) **Western High Atlas**, near Arhbalou, one male and two females, 6 January (D. Bryant)

First record since 1987, and the southernmost to date. Eurasian Bullfinch is definitely very rare in Morocco.

Records not accepted

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* 2008 (08/10) Western Middle Atlas, Zerrouka, two males, 18 January, photo. **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* 2007 (07/38) Rharb, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, adult female, 23 September, photo. **Green-backed (Striated) Heron** *Butorides striata* 2007 (07/30) Eastern Anti-Atlas, 26 km south of Tazenakht, adult, 18 April. 2008 (08/36) Central Anti-Atlas, Tata, 30 March. **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* 2006 (06/68) Haha, Oued Igzoulane, Tamri, adult, 9 May. **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* 2007 (07/70) Western High Atlas, Oukaimeden, juvenile, 4 March. **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* 2009 (09/13) Dadès-Draa, Boumalne du Dadès, second-year, 23–24 March. **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* 2007 (07/28) Western Middle Atlas, Dayet Afenourir, 1 July. **Barbary Falcon** *F. pelegrinoides* 2005 (05/49) Tafilalt, Errachidia, 11 March, photo. (05/52) Haha, Vallée du Paradis, pair, 23 November. 2006 (06/69) Western Anti-Atlas, north of Sidi Ifni, two pairs, 7–8 May. 2007. (07/23) Souss, Oulad Berehil, male and female, 1 January. 2008 (08/22) Haha, 10 km north of Tamri, 29 March, photo. **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* 2006 (06/54) Lower Draa, Oued Assaka, adult, 22 October. **Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* 2006 (06/72) Chiadma, Essaouira, 26 February. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* 2009 (09/03) Tarfaya, Khnifiss, 12, 4 January. (09/32) Tarfaya, Tantan

Plage, second-winter, 9 January. **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 2006 (06/70) Oued Ad-Deheb, Bir Gandouz, adult, 24 October. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor* 1997 (97/30) Tarfaya, Tantan, 27 January, photo. 2006 (06/57) Souss, Hôtel Le Tivoli, Agadir, one, 9 November, and two, 10 November. **African Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* 2006 (06/43) South-Eastern Sahara, kasbah Takoumit, Bouanane, 3 December. 2009 (09/35) Dadès-Draa, Tizi-n-Tiniffit, 22 March. **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* 2007 (07/57) Rharb, Merja Zerga, two, 13 March. **African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* 2008 (08/53) Western High Atlas, Ourika, 4 April. **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* 2007 (07/34) Tafilalt, Derkaoua dunes, Rissani, adult, 6 April, video. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* 2007 (07/52) Doukkala, Jorf Lasfar, 16 September. **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius m. meridionalis* 2006 (06/67) Souss, Taroudant, 31 March, photo. **Hooded Crow** *Corvus (c.) cornix* 2005 (05/54) Tangier Peninsula, Mdiq, 18 March. **Citril Finch** *Serinus citrinella* 2007 (07/55) Haha, Ait Chelh, Tamkhar Valley, 6 June. 2008 (08/34) Haha, Tifrit, Tamkhar Valley, adult female, 20 June.

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- ^a 4 Avenue Folco de Baroncelli, 13210 Saint Rémy de Provence, France. E-mail: pbergier@yahoo.fr
- ^b Quartier Abbas Lemsadi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknes V.N., Morocco. E-mail: j.franchimont@menara.ma
- ^c 353 Chemin des Mendrous, 34170 Castelnau-le-Lez, France. E-mail: michelthevenot@wanadoo.fr
- ^d During 2007–09, MRBC included the following members: Patrick Bergier, Imad Cherkaoui, Mostafa Fareh, Ahmed El Ghazi, Jacques Franchimont (Secretary), Diego Jerez Abad (from 2009), Benoît Maire, Christian Pouteau (until 2008), Abdeljebar Qninba (from 2008), Ahmed Sayad, Michel Thévenot, Arnoud B. van den Berg (from 2008) and Gilles Willem.

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