

Birding Trip to the Bay of Dakhla and Aousserd region

By Javi Elorriaga and Yeray Seminario / Birding The Strait

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The immense Bay of Dakhla is set against tall Sand Dunes that make this place unique

In autumn 2015 we were asked by [Dakhla Attitude Hotel](#), to scout the area and assess the possibilities to accommodate birding and nature enthusiasts' groups during trips to the Atlantic Sahara. We scheduled the trip for the middle of February 2016, which is a good time for birding in the area both in terms of phenology and weather.

Following the expansion of the Dakhla airport and the current sociopolitical stability in the area, the interest of Dakhla as an international touristic destination has significantly grown over the last years. Nowadays it constitutes a very popular destination for international surfers. Besides, recent pioneering birding and wildlife trips to the Bay of Dakhla and Aousserd region are increasing, resulting in regular records of new or very scarce species of birds and mammals for the Western Palearctic region, sometimes in unprecedented numbers.

Some of the most significant species include: Sudan Golden Sparrow, Golden Nightjar, Cricket Longtail, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Dunn's Lark, African Royal Tern, Kelp Gull and Namaqua Dove among birds; and African Golden Wolf, Fennec, Sand Cat, Rüppell's Fox, Ratel, Orca and Atlantic Humpbacked dolphin among mammals.

No doubt, the discovery of highly attractive species of wildlife will keep growing in forthcoming years making of the Dakhla region a top destination for international nature enthusiasts.

We visited the area in mid February 2016 and this report summarizes our experience. All the photos illustrating the report were obtained within the framework of the described scouting trip.



Day 1, 13 February: Málaga - Dakhla

We flew to Dakhla from Malaga, via Casablanca, with Royal Air Maroc in an uneventful flight. We passed customary passport and hand-luggage control without any enquiries about our large optics equipment. At the airport, Bruno Muchada, Manager of the Dakhla Attitude, and its staff welcomed us and took us to the hotel and showed us our room after having welcome pastries and Moroccan tea.

This hotel is strategically located on the northern side of Dakhla Bay (35km from the airport), with splendid views to the lagoon and Herne Island (called by some as Dragon Island, because of its similarity in shape to famous dragon in Neverending Story - Fujur!). We went straight to bed in our cozy bungalow to get some rest before the beginning of our scouting trip.



Access to the shore of Dakhla Bay from the hotel and views of Dragon Island

Days 2 & 3, 14 & 15 February: Dakhla Attitude, West Bay of Dakhla and La Sarga Point.

Our first day began before sunrise with the calls of **House Sparrows** out of our cabin. This might not be a remarkable record, except for the fact that this species has only recently colonized the Atlantic Sahara, being the first record of the region in 1988. Another common bird in the hotel grounds was the **Black Wheatear**, which were seen feeding chicks and showing a surprisingly inquisitive behavior.

In our early morning birding session around the hotel we got the only **Mediterranean Gull** of the trip, a 2nd winter individual, over 60 **Greater Flamingos**, groups of *maroccanus* **Great Cormorants** approaching the bay, over 150 **Bar-Tailed Godwits**, 50 **Oystercatchers**, and many **Grey, Kentish** and **Common Ringed Plovers**, 30 **Slender-billed** and 15 **Audouin's Gulls**, and 6 **Royal Terns**.

We realized that the irrigated vegetation in the hotel gives cover to some passerines, such as **White Wagtail**, **Yellow Wagtail** (*ssp. flava*), **Common Chiffchaff**, **Eurasian Blackcap** and **Sardinian Warbler**. We also saw several chiffchaffs in the gardens with a similar appearance to **Iberian Chiffchaff**, and we realized this was the case when we had one of these birds singing in front of us the full typical song.



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Black Wheatear were easily seen at the hotel grounds



Caspian Terns concentrate in good numbers in the Bay of Dakhla

The edge of the bay is just a few feet away from the cabins. Here, we could see good numbers of **Greater Flamingo**, **Eurasian Spoonbill** and **Caspian Tern**, as well as plenty of waders and gulls. A very skilled fisherman was collecting the nets and discarding some of the fish that were immediately caught in the air by the terns.

We also made two visits to La Sarga, the southernmost tip of the Dakhla peninsula, and Oum El Bouir, which is a hotspot for seawatching. We saw, among others, **Northern Gannet**, **Great Skua**, **Arctic Skua**, **Sandwich Tern**, around 400 **Audouin's gulls** and probably more than 2500 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in every visit. We managed to read over 50 color rings, including a remarkable **Baltic Gull** (*Larus fuscus fuscus*) from Norway, probably the first confirmed record in Dakhla and the whole Atlantic Sahara!

Caspian Tern deserves special mention due both to its large flocks (often over 100) and their proximity to the road, providing excellent opportunities for photography. At the tip of La Sarga, there are hundreds of colorful fishing boats lying on the sand, which provide shelter from the wind to flocks of **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Kentish Plover**, **Dunlin** and **Sanderling**.

Back at the hotel we had an excellent Tajine and made a toast with a "Stork", Moroccan premium lager!



We got to see good numbers of Royal Terns, with flocks of up to 18 individuals



The surroundings of Dakhla Attitude provide excellent photography opportunities for Caspian Tern

Day 4, 16 February: Sebket Imlily wetland

Following the recommendations from Dakhla Attitude staff, we went to explore the Sebka Imlily wetland, 80km south from our hotel. This is a unique ecosystem consisting on a group of deep saltwater ponds, which was surveyed by scientists for the first time in 2009 and where a relict population of **Guinea Tilapia** had been found.

After an hour drive in a 4X4 throughout the desert we arrived to Imlily. This is indeed a true Oasis. Several ponds of crystal-clear water, filled with tilapias, lay on a wide plain surrounded by white-sand dunes, conforming an unreal and unique sight. The origin of this relict population and the hydrogeology of the wetland remain largely unknown.

Surrounding the ponds, there are reedbeds that attract migrants, dragonflies and other insects. This could be a particularly interesting place for migratory birds. Our friends from Association Nature Initiative mentioned that in previous visits they found dead raptors around the ponds. This is probably a natural ecological trap, as the waters of these ponds are highly concentrated in salt, so exhausted birds and other animals in need of water might get sick and die after drinking from the pools. In fact, it didn't take long until we found the skeletons of three **Short-toed Eagles**.



One of the ponds at Imlily, where the relict population of Guinea Tilapia can be found



Little Owl of the *saharae* subspecies near Imlily

It's worth mentioning that we also found tracks and scat of **Rüppell's Fox**. A night drive and hike would surely provide remarkable mammals sightings.

Exploring one of the many caves present in the vicinity of Imlily, we were delighted to find a strikingly pale **Little Owl** of the *saharae* subspecies. This is the southernmost limit of the species range, and the local phenotype differs from those found in northern Morocco.

In our way back to Dakhla, we saw some movement in a bush by the side of the road, we stopped to check it out, and to our surprise, a **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, up to 4 **hoopoes** and 2 **northern wheatears** took off. Some of the other birds in the area were a family group of **Cream-colored Courser**, **Kentish Plover**, **Southern Grey Shrike elegans** and **Desert Wheatear**.

All in all, we can say that Imlily is a unique, fascinating place that surely will bring more interesting sightings in the future.

Back in the Hotel, within the last hours of the day and with an excellent light, we went to the nearby northern side of the Bay of Dakhla, to contemplate the spectacle of thousands of waders feeding in the mudflats.

Day 5, 17 February: Pointe de l'Or beach and West Bay of Dakhla

We woke up before sunset and directly walked from our room to the shore of the bay with the very first light for a birding session before breakfast. We added **Pied Avocets** and a group of 11 **Northern Pintails** to the trip list and found good numbers of **Oystercatchers, Grey and Kentish Plovers, Eurasian Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwits** and **Sanderlings** all around. Over 50 **Greater Flamingos**, a further similar number of **maroccanus Great Cormorants** and a dozen of **Northern Gannets** were present as well. Within a group of **Slender-billed Gulls** and **Caspian Terns** we soon came through one of our most wanted species, two magnificent adult **Royal Terns**.

Next we spend a couple of hours seawatching into the Atlantic from the nearby Pointe de l'Or. Here, in the absolute solitude of a never ending unspoiled beach, we scanned a large group of 150 **Lesser Black-backed**, 10 **Yellow-legged** and 150 **Audouin's Gulls** and got some additional color rings. A confiding group of 120 **Caspian Terns** and a few **Sandwich Terns** were roosting on the beach and greatly inspired us for a photo session.

We found a perfect vantage point for seawatching in the top of a large flat rock. In a little time, up to 6 **Atlantic Storm-Petrels** flew southwards over the surf break while 3 **Great Skuas** and plenty of **Northern Gannets** passed north in the distance. Driving in a sandy trail back to the main road we saw a large raptor landing on the dunes which turned out to be a migrant **Short-toed Eagle**.

At lunch time we visited the Dakhla Oyster Farm. With the rising tide thousands of gulls and waders concentrated in the sand banks. Within a group of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** we rapidly noticed the presence of a bulky adult individual with blackish mantle and similar size to the **Great Cormorants** standing by its side. Inevitably we thought it might well be an adult **Kelp Gull**, as the species has been repeatedly reported in the area in recent years. However, the distance and strong sunlight did not allow definite views. Moreover, we still had in our mind the adult **Great Black-backed Gulls** we had seen the previous winter at Khnifiss Lagoon and, therefore, did not feel in a position to reliably discern between both species. We had a nice time observing up to 12 Royal Terns and the cooperative feeding of **Little Egrets** and **Spoonbills**. Meanwhile, two **Ospreys** flew overhead contact-calling "pyep!".

On our way back to the hotel, we spotted three **Laughing Doves** in courtship display and a group of **Little Swifts**.

Day 6 , 18 February - Aousserd Road & Oued Jenna

After breakfast we met with Taoufik El Balla and Mohamed Samlali from ANI, who had kindly shorted out a visit to the Oued Jenna and Aousserd region for us. We jumped into their Landrover Defender which was loaded with everything we would need for our expedition in the Sahara. We left behind the famous Gled Jidanne and headed East along the mythical Aousserd road. In our first stop we walked to the top of a rocky hill where Mohamed showed us an amazing archeological site with numerous rock engravings depicting intriguing circles, mammals, humans and what we interpreted as a chameleon! In the sand we found recent footprints of a **Sand Cat**. Nearby we saw a family party of 6 **Brown-necked Ravens** and **Black, Desert, Red-rumped** and **White-crowned** (or White-tailed) **Wheatears**.

As we drove East, the landscape progressively shifted from a hamada rocky desert (reg) to a Sahel savanna landscape with increasingly abundant Acacia trees and large tussocks of grass. At midday we stopped under the shade of an acacia in a forested Oued, also known as Grara, and birded around while Mohamed prepared a delicious lunch upon coals in the sand. We couldn't believe our eyes when we realized that the group of birds in an opening of the acacias were no less than 25 **Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks**.



A beautiful male Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark



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We could see several individuals of Saharan Dunn's Lark, one of the bird specialties of the region

We took our time to admire and photograph this Western Palearctic highlight before checking the nearby trees. This produced 2 **Northern Wheatears**, 2 **Subalpine**, 3 **Spectacled** and 1 **Sardinian Warbler**, plenty of **Common Chiffchaffs**, several **Southern Grey Shrikes** and **Eurasian Collared Doves**, 1 **Eurasian Hoopoe**, etc. Overhead 2 **Common Kestrels** chased an adult **Long-legged Buzzard** and higher up in the sky several groups of migrant hirundines passed by including **Barn Swallows**, **Red-rumped Swallow**, **House Martin** and **Sand Martin**. Back on the road we came through a family group of **Cream-Coloured Coursers**, with three half grown chicks, a few more **Greater Hoopoe-Larks**, **Desert Wheatears**, and two massive **Spiny-tailed Lizards** basking by their burrows.

At a certain point Mohamed stopped the car and told us that that was the place where a few days before a common friend, Bob Swann, observed **Dunn's Larks**. To our delight in less than 5 minutes of search we were lying on the ground to photograph two striking adults and a fledgling **Saharan Dunn's Larks** (Western subspecies of Dunn's Lark, *dunni*, also known as African Dunn's Lark).

Our next spot was a group of acacias where **Desert Sparrows** had built their nests and a noisy group including fledglings was observed.



The Cricket Warbler is a restless and small bird restricted to the Sahel and Western Sahara regions

A few kilometers later we approached a group of dark birds roosting on a plain. These turned out to be hundreds of **Black Kites**, some of them actively preying on a swarm of **African Migratory Locust** while some further hundreds were kettling in a large thermal along with 12 **White Storks**. We estimated a total amount of 1200 kites!

We drove past the Oued Jenna signpost and following Mohamed's indications we first visited the East side of the Oued. Once again, his suggestion proved right and one of the first birds we heard and observed was an outstanding **Cricket Longtail**! The light of the late afternoon was simply perfect and, despite its restless activity, the bird behaved rather collaboratively and showed up well.

A group of noisy **Fulvous Chatterers** joined the scene and were properly registered in our cameras memory cards as well. We could never imagine that finding and satisfactorily photographing **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark**, **Dunn's Lark** and **Cricket Longtail** would be that easy. Unfortunately, we didn't find any **Sudan Golden Sparrow**, something we did not really expect, as no one has reported them in the whole area since the previous year (the first bird of 2016 was recorded in the area by Bob Swan and Peter Stronach on the 20th April).



A spectacular view, hundreds of Black Kites resting in the middle of the desert plains



Fulvous Chatterers do justice to their names, as they are vocal and loud in the acacia savanna

The scenario was breathtaking, including a Saharai shepherd in his characteristic blue clothing and turban, the grassy savanna and the black rocky slopes of Leglat Derraman mountains, its color intensified by the sunset light.

Ah the end of the day we walked across the acacias towards the road. We flushed a **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, 2 **Eurasian Hoopoes**, 5 **Eurasian Collared Doves**, 1 **African Savanna Hare** and observed one large Falcon and a Nightjar in the twilight, which we couldn't identify. In retrospective, recent sightings of **Golden Nightjar** in the region makes us think that we might have seen this extraordinarily interesting and new species for the Western Palearctic. Something to see during our next visit!

Fully satisfied with an outstanding birding day, we drove about 5 kilometers off-road to reach our campsite in an inner valley of Leglat Derraman mountains where we set our campsite. While cooking stewed Camel on an open fire, Taoufik and Mohamed illustrated us with the interesting history and lifestyle of the region and the many nature conservation activities that Association Nature Initiative is undertaking.

One more surprise was still in store for us. As we were getting ready to get into our tents a Nighthjar flew around us over the sand. Luckily enough we had our torches in hand and spotlighted the bird. We could determine it was a pale sandy colored nightjar lacking obvious light patches, an **Egyptian Nightjar** indeed!



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Aousserd Region: Leglat Derraman and Oued Jenna surroundings

Day 7, 19 February: Leglat Derraman and Aousserd Road

During the night we all could hear the calls of the **Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** and **Little Owl**. A little before breakfast we jumped out of our tents and found out that the breakfast was almost ready thanks to Mohamed. We wanted to take a walk, and we decided to explore Leglat Derraman. This is a magnificent place, with a few disperse acacias, sand dunes leaning against the massive dark rocks and surprising fresh water springs in the desert! In the wet sand we came through well marked tracks and excrements of a medium sized canid, an **African Golden Wolf** (*Canis anthus*)! Very recent genetic studies has revealed that the formerly considered Golden Jackal population inhabiting northern Africa is actual a new previously unknown variety of Wolf.

White-crowned Wheatears, quite common in the area, were singing loudly and resonating in the narrow valleys, while dozens of **Black Kites** were already soaring up to continue their way up north. When we climbed some of the rocks we started to see some other birds: **Lanner Falcon**, **Laughing Dove**, **Trumpeter Finch** and the only **Desert Lark** of the trip, among them.



An individual of Desert Lark from the subspecies *payni*, that can be found in Southern Morocco



From Leglat Derraman we could enjoy some of the best views of the Saharan steppes and savanna

When climbing a bit higher, we had excellent views of the low mountains around us and the town of Aousserd, where we would be headed later in the day. We heard the familiar call of the **Long-legged Buzzard**, and we just needed to rise our glance slightly to see one pair; that was, we came to realize later, very close to their nest. From the top, we could see some passing hirundines, including **House Martin**, **Barn Swallow** and **Red-rumped Swallow**. Amongst these, some pale grey birds caught our eye. They looked like Eurasian Crag Martins but paler, plainer, and the white “windows” on their tails were barely visible... they were **Rock Martins**! We suspected that they could be here, but we weren't aware of any recent reports of this species in the area. Indeed, very few birding expeditions have been conducted in this area in recent years, so we were quite happy to add them to the list.

We started the easy descent and stopped occasionally beside the acacias, which held some other passerines: **Subalpine Warblers**, **Common Chiffchaff** and **Southern Grey Shrike**. Then, we went back to the landcover to continue our way to Aousserd.



Another special bird of the region and a must-see: African Desert Warbler



Male Desert Sparrow near Oued Jenna



One of our definite favorites of the trip: the striking Thick-billed Lark

When we were already on the desert plains, a few larks passed by nearby, so we stopped immediately. The first bird we saw, was a **Dunn's Lark**, which we didn't expect to see here, but suddenly a larger bird called our attention: a **Thick-billed Lark!** We also saw a single **Bar-tailed Lark** that was another species for our list.

We stopped in Aousserd to have lunch and visited the works for the future environmental visitors center that will be managed by Association Nature Initiative, which aims to be a reference location for researchers and nature enthusiasts of the region.

On our drive back to Dakhla in the afternoon we took a short walk near Aousserd that produced some **Desert Sparrows**, **Eurasian Hoopoe** and **Southern Grey Shrike**. We continued until the Km 175, where we wanted to give a try to one of the specialties that had eluded us until then, the **African Desert Warbler**, a lovely, restless little bird that breeds in semi-deserts. To our surprise, it didn't take two minutes to find one singing from the top of a bush! Not only that, but we found at least two more individuals in the area, along with **Dunn's Lark**, **Greater Hoopoe-Lark** and **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark**. In less than 20 minutes we were already back in the car and on our way to Dakhla Attitude to rest.

Day 8, 20 February: Bay of Dakhla by boat

The day broke clear and calm, so we decided that we would dedicate it to navigate the Bay of Dakhla on a boat provided by Dakhla Attitude hotel..

We did two trips, the first one in the morning which lasted three hours, and the second one, two hours long, in the afternoon. We weren't sure what we would find or where to go, as there were no reports of birding boat trips in the bay, so we planned these trips according to what we've learned on previous days, going to the places where we had seen more birds and that were inaccessible from land. In addition, we programmed the survey of the NE end of the Bay where a few days later a male Orca was photographed close to the shore by some guests of Dakhla Attitude Hotel. Despite the poor existing information, it is know that **Orcas**, **Bottlenose** and **Atlantic Humpback Dolphins** do regularly occur within the Bay.

The morning was good in terms of seeing high numbers of birds and adding two species to our list: **Pomarine Skua** and **Razorbill**. It's remarkable how some pelagic species can be seen here inside the bay, and not far from the coastline. Aside from the aforementioned species, we could see several **European Storm-Petrels**, **Northern Gannets** and **Royal Terns**.



The morning boat trip produced some close views of seabirds like this Pomarine Skua



The boat trip was excellent to get pictures of gulls, terns and cormorants in flight against the dunes



Some birds, like this Osprey, are easier to be approach from a boat



Royal Tern, Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls in the Bay of Dakhla

The afternoon was very successful regarding photography opportunities. We enjoyed a beautiful afternoon light spreading over hundreds of birds on the shore, against a desert, sand-dune background. Some birds would fly right in front of our boat, and others just walk or sit on the shore, at a short distance from us. There were more than 60 **Slender-billed** and 200 **Audouin's Gulls**, as well as **Caspian** and **Royal** Terns, hundreds of waders, spoonbills and flamingos.

At the end of the day the boat docked in front of the hotel and we walked to our rooms enjoying a beautiful sunset.

Day 9, 21 February: East Bay of Dakhla, Duna Blanca & Gleb Jdiane

In our last day we visited some of the best birding spots in the region. The first one, Duna Blanca, we already visited before, but now we wanted to explore the full possibilities of the place and surroundings with low tide, which is the best time to see waders and other waterbirds. This turned out to be a good decision, as we witnessed one of the largest concentrations of birds of the trip.

We started driving on the sand towards the white dune and jumped out of the car to climb to the top and set our scopes. From there we got to see good numbers of waders, a few thousands, but they were distant, so we decided to move around the lagoon to a more advantageous point, closer to the birds. We had quite some work to do scanning thousands of birds, including: more than 150 **Greater Flamingos**, 150 **Great Cormorants**, 110 **Eurasian Spoonbills**, 1500 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 1000 **Dunlins**, 200 **Grey Plovers** and 200 **Eurasian Curlews**, amongst others. In full excitement, Javi announced to have found one of the two **Western Reef-Herons** that had been reported recently in the area. That was a good bird to find, and added a good portion of enjoyment to an already amazing and beautiful place with hundreds of birds around.

We continued to explore the shoreline as the tide was rising. Not far from the observation point, where most of the waders were, we found an **Osprey** resting peacefully on a rusty sign in the water, and a little bit further, a flock of terns, which included 18 **Royal Terns**. Interested as we were to take good pictures of these birds for further documentation on future sightings in the Strait of Gibraltar, we approached the flock carefully and got some pics with the **Caspian, Sandwich** and **Royal Terns** against the beautiful Duna Blanca.



Birding in front of Duna Blanca, where we found thousands of waders and one Western Reef Heron



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Spectacular numbers of waders (only a fraction could be framed in the picture) at Duna Blanca



Javi Elorriaga / Birding The Strait

Royal and Caspian Terns with Duna Blanca in the background



A juvenile of Allen's Gallinule, a rare bird for the region, could be seen at Gleb Jdiane for a few days

In the afternoon we headed out to Gleb Jdiane, a small well located on the Dakhla-Aousserd road where an Allen's Gallinule had been reported only a few days before by Mohamed Mediani. Coincidentally, Mohamed was at the place looking for the bird and we had a pleasant time chatting with him. With our hopes put on the Gallinule, we started to inspect the area. There were some passerines around, including several **Chiffchaffs**, **Spectacled Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Trumpeter Finch**, while the Stone Curlews called nearby. It didn't pass long when a juvenile **Allen's Gallinule** came out of the small patch of reeds into the small remaining puddle of water, very close to us! We could fully enjoy the bird for a long time, and then we decided it was time to explore a wadi, 5 Km to the east of Gleb Jdiane, and look for more desert specialties.

We inspected the desert plains and found some good birds, including **Temminck's Lark**, which had eluded us until then, along with **Greater Hoopoe-Lark**, **Bar-tailed Lark** and **Thekla Lark** from the subspecies *ruficolor*.

After a beautiful and satisfactory day we went back to Dakhla Attitude to pack for our early flight back to Spain next morning and celebrate a much rewarding scouting trip with an excellent dinner.



Thekla Lark from the *ruficolor* subspecies seen at Gleb Jdiane



Male and female Greater Hoopoe-Lark showed very well near Gleb Jdiane

Summary

The Dakhla-Aousserd region is certainly an ultimate destination within the Western Palearctic region. The combination of marine ecosystems and marshes of the Bay with the Sahelian savanna and the rocky outcrops at the edge of the Sahara desert results in a region of unparalleled diversity and beauty. It does not only hold some extremely attractive species that can be difficult to find anywhere else in the Palearctic region, but it is a place of great beauty. The landscape plays a predominant role here - seeing these birds in this setting, adds an incredible value to the experience.

We believe that this region is worth exploring for nature enthusiasts interested, not only in birds, but plants, reptiles, mammals, landscape, ethnography and photography.

A visit to Aousserd is indispensable, either during a day-trip or, even better, spending one night camping in the desert. The road Dakhla-Aousserd is currently in excellent condition and there are numerous trails that can be used for exploring.

This is a quiet area with friendly locals and vast extensions of land to explore, with no signs of people, other than a few nomadic shepherds. We weren't stopped at any of the police checkpoints, which might have had something to do with the fact that we were using Dakhla Attitude vehicles, but it's important to note that we were carrying scopes, tripods and several tele-lenses with cameras, as usual, and that this was never a problem with the authorities nor were we asked about the purpose of such equipment.

Dakhla Attitude Hotel offers a perfect accommodation and all inclusive services for independent birders and groups visiting the area. The Hotel has a solid and well deserved reputation among European customers and tour-operators. It is strategically placed in the northern shore of the bay and the resort should be considered a birding hotspot itself. Moreover, it greatly facilitates the visits to both the West and East shores of the Bay and Gled Jdiane (55km approx). Remarkably, the hotel has its own boats, which are very useful for birding visits in the bay.



Acknowledgments

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First and Foremost, Bruno Muchada and Eva Pineda from Dakhla Attitude, who made this trip possible and devoted themselves to make our experience easy, comfortable and fully enjoyable. Many thanks! We would like to extend our gratitude to all the staff from Dakhla Attitude for their warmth and professionalism.

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As always we are very grateful to Vortex Optics for providing excellent equipment for our expeditions.

We eagerly recommend visiting the specialized [Go-south website](#) for updated information about the most relevant ornithological information of the region.



The scouting team to Aousserd. From left to right: Javi Elorriaga (BTS), Taoufik El Balla (ANI), Bruno Muchada (Dakhla Attitude), Mohamed Samlali (ANI) and Yeray Seminario (BTS).

Bird List Dakhla-Aousserd Region

13 - 21 February 2016

1. Northern Pintail - *Anas acuta*
2. Greater Flamingo - *Phoenicopterus roseus*
3. European Storm-Petrel - *Hydrobates pelagicus*
4. White Stork - *Ciconia ciconia*
5. Northern Gannet - *Morus bassanus*
6. Great Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax carbo*
7. Gray Heron - *Ardea cinerea*
8. Little Egret - *Egretta garzetta*
9. Western Reef-Heron - *Egretta gularis*
10. Eurasian Spoonbill - *Platalea leucorodia*
11. Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus*
12. Short-toed Snake-Eagle - *Circaetus gallicus*
13. Black Kite - *Milvus migrans*
14. Long-legged Buzzard - *Buteo rufinus*
15. Allen's Gallinule - *Porphyrio alleni*
16. Eurasian Thick-knee - *Burhinus oedicnemus*
17. Pied Avocet - *Recurvirostra avosetta*
18. Eurasian Oystercatcher - *Haematopus ostralegus*
19. Black-bellied Plover - *Pluvialis squatarola*
20. Kentish Plover - *Charadrius alexandrinus*
21. Common Ringed Plover - *Charadrius hiaticula*
22. Common Sandpiper - *Actitis hypoleucos*
23. Common Greenshank - *Tringa nebularia*
24. Common Redshank - *Tringa totanus*
25. Whimbrel - *Numenius phaeopus*
26. Eurasian Curlew - *Numenius arquata*
27. Bar-tailed Godwit - *Limosa lapponica*
28. Ruddy Turnstone - *Arenaria interpres*
29. Red Knot - *Calidris canutus*
30. Sanderling - *Calidris alba*
31. Dunlin - *Calidris alpina*
32. Cream-colored Courser - *Cursorius cursor*
33. Great Skua - *Stercorarius skua*
34. Pomarine Jaeger - *Stercorarius pomarinus*
35. Parasitic Jaeger - *Stercorarius parasiticus*
36. Razorbill - *Alca torda*
37. Slender-billed Gull - *Chroicocephalus genei*
38. Mediterranean Gull - *Ichthyophaga melanocephala*
39. Audouin's Gull - *Ichthyophaga audouinii*
40. Yellow-legged Gull - *Larus michahellis*
41. Lesser Black-backed Gull - *Larus fuscus*
42. Little Tern - *Sternula albifrons*
43. Caspian Tern - *Hydroprogne caspia*
44. Royal Tern - *Thalasseus maximus*
45. Sandwich Tern - *Thalasseus sandvicensis*
46. Rock Pigeon - *Columba livia*
47. Eurasian Collared-Dove - *Streptopelia decaocto*
48. Laughing Dove - *Streptopelia senegalensis*
49. Great Spotted Cuckoo - *Clamator glandarius*
50. Pharaoh Eagle-Owl - *Bubo ascalaphus*
51. Little Owl - *Athene noctua*
52. Egyptian Nightjar - *Caprimulgus aegyptius*
53. Little Swift - *Apus affinis*
54. Eurasian Hoopoe - *Upupa epops*
55. Eurasian Kestrel - *Falco tinnunculus*
56. Lanner Falcon - *Falco biarmicus*
57. Southern Gray Shrike - *Lanius meridionalis*
58. Woodchat Shrike - *Lanius senator*
59. Brown-necked Raven - *Corvus ruficollis*
60. Greater Hoopoe-Lark - *Alaemon alaudipes*
61. Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark - *Eremopterix nigriceps*
62. Bar-tailed Lark - *Ammomanes cinctura*
63. Desert Lark - *Ammomanes deserti*
64. Thick-billed Lark - *Ramphocoris clotbey*
65. Dunn's Lark - *Eremalauda dunnii*
66. Thekla Lark - *Galerida theklae*
67. Temminck's Lark - *Eremophila bilopha*
68. Bank Swallow - *Riparia riparia*
69. Rock Martin - *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*
70. Barn Swallow - *Hirundo rustica*
71. Red-rumped Swallow - *Cecropis daurica*
72. Common House-Martin - *Delichon urbicum*
73. Common Chiffchaff - *Phylloscopus collybita*
74. Iberian Chiffchaff - *Phylloscopus ibericus*
75. Sedge Warbler - *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
76. Cricket Longtail - *Spiloptila clamans*
77. Eurasian Blackcap - *Sylvia atricapilla*
78. African Desert Warbler - *Sylvia deserti*
79. Subalpine Warbler - *Sylvia cantillans*
80. Sardinian Warbler - *Sylvia melanocephala*
81. Spectacled Warbler - *Sylvia conspicillata*
82. Fulvous Chatterer - *Turdoides fulva*
83. Blue Rock-Thrush - *Monticola solitarius*
84. White-crowned Wheatear - *Oenanthe leucopyga*
85. Black Wheatear - *Oenanthe leucura*
86. Northern Wheatear - *Oenanthe oenanthe*
87. Red-rumped Wheatear - *Oenanthe moesta*
88. Desert Wheatear - *Oenanthe deserti*
89. Western Yellow Wagtail - *Motacilla flava*
90. White Wagtail - *Motacilla alba*
91. Trumpeter Finch - *Bucanetes githagineus*
92. House Sparrow - *Passer domesticus*
93. Desert Sparrow - *Passer simplex*

All our records, including locations, numbers of birds and other details, can be found on [eBird](#)

A larger set of pictures on higher definition [can be found here](#)