

# Birding Tunisia in Winter

## December 10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 2003

Rob Martin<sup>1</sup>, Rich Moores & Mike Hoit

1: [punkbirder@hotmail.com](mailto:punkbirder@hotmail.com)



### Literature used:

#### Logistics:

Lonely Planet: Tunisia. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001. Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, Victoria, Australia. A useful guide. Several restaurants mentioned have closed down, but the accommodation info was accurate.

Michelin National map number 744, Tunisia motoring and tourist map. 1/800000.

Not a great map, but cheap and widely available in Britain.

#### Bird i.d.:

Mullarney, K., Svensson, L., Zetterstrom, D. & Grant, P.J. 1999. Collins Bird Guide. HarperCollins, London.

#### Mammal i.d.

Kingdon, J. The Kingdon guide to African Mammals.

(The guide for mammals in Africa.)

### Trip reports:

Raes, D. 2000. Birding Trip Reports. Tunisia, April 26<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> May 2000.

<http://www.surfbirds.com/Trip%20Reports/tunisia.html>

Hansen, J.H. 2003. Birding trip to Tunisia, winter 2002-2003.

[http://club300.se/resedatabas/filer/Tunesia2003\\_JH.pdf](http://club300.se/resedatabas/filer/Tunesia2003_JH.pdf)

Cameron, C. & Dawson, J. 2002. Tunisia - December 9th - 15th 2002.

<http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/tunisia/tunis4/Tunisia2002.htm>

Oliver, W. 1999. Birding trip to Tunisia, March 7-15, 1999.

<http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/tunisia/tunis1/report.htm>

Selosse, N. 2001. Tunisia March 18th - 24th 2001.

<http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/tunisia/tunis3/report.htm>

Annsi? 1997. A Piece of Land Between Sea and Sand. Trip Report: Tunisia, January 1997.

<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/tripreports/Tunisia97.html>

Thompson, J. 1997. Tunisia, January 25 - February 1, 1997.

<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/tripreports/TunisiaJKS97.html>

### Itinerary:

10/12/2003. Monastir airport - Monastir police station - Tataouine

11/12/2003. Tataouine – Matmata - Douz

12/12/2003. Douz - El Hessai - C105/C210 junction west of El Faouar - Blidette Pools – southern Chott el Jerid -Tozeur

13/12/2003. Selja Gorge - C173 Touiref road nr Jendouba

14/12/2003. C173 Touiref road nr Jendouba - Ain Draham – Tabarka - Cap Serrat - Bechateur

15/12/2003. Bizerte - Lake Ichkeul - Menzel Temime – Kelibia - Korba Pools - Nabeul

16/12/2003. Cap Bon - El Haouaria – Nabeul – Enfida - P2 south - Sebkeht Halk el Menzel - Sousse

17/12/2003. Sousse – Monastir – Kneiss - Monastir airport

### Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December

Flight from London Luton to Monastir with Britannia Airlines (flight BY465: booked through <http://1st2call.com> for £88/person). Arrived about 14:00. Efficient customs & baggage claim. Persuaded the man at the Avis stand to let us have a Renault Clio saloon for TD380 for the week (approx. £172).

Drove out of airport c5km before deciding to have a look at the salt pans. Got arrested. Spent all afternoon in Monastir Police station convincing officers that we were not photographing or videotaping the airport. Released about 17:10, by which time it was dusk. Started heading south then decided to go for it, travelling down the P1 to Medenine then the P19 to the Oued el Goudarab, where we took a track to the west and parked off the road by a junction. Arrived about 23:30, slept in the car.

#### Salt pans at Monastir:

Great Cormorant	Spotted Redshank	Hoopoe
Little Egret	Redshank	Crested Lark
Grey Heron	Kentish Plover	Common Stonechat ( <i>rubicola</i> )
Great Egret 6	Avocet	European Robin
Spoonbill	Black-winged Stilt	Black Redstart
Greater Flamingo	Little Stint	Sardinian Warbler
Common Kestrel	Southern Grey Shrike ( <i>algeriensis</i> )	Common Chiffchaff
Yellow-legged Gull	Spotless Starling	Blackbird
Slender-billed Gull c2000	Italian Sparrow	<b>African Chaffinch</b>
Caspian Tern 15+	Feral Pigeon	European Serin
Greenshank	Laughing Dove	

### Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December

Weather: 5-10°C, 8/8 cloud, NE0-2, rain all day.

07:00 (dawn)-08:20. Around the area we had parked the car.

**Moussier's Redstart 1** male

Spectacled Warbler 2 (pr)

**Red-rumped Wheatear 2** (pr)

Trumpeter Finches c45, giving close views.

**African Desert Warbler 1** (MH only)

Drove to Tataouine for provisions and comedy value. Excellent fruit.

09:00-11:20. Birded the track 23km N of Tataouine, mentioned in Wheatley.

**Bar-tailed Lark 1**

Desert Wheatear 4-5

**Scrub Warbler 1**

**Moussier's Redstart 2**

Thekla Lark 6

Spectacled Warbler 2

**Red-rumped Wheatear 6**

Little Owl (*saharae*) 1

Trumpeter Finch

Drove north to Matmata, which took longer than we had hoped as the heavy rain had made the mountain road impassable. Returned to the P1 and took the road from Mareth to Matmata Nouvelle, then C107 to Matmata.

13:00-13:20. Matmata village.

**House Bunting 1**

**Brown-necked Raven 6**

Drove out along the Douz road (C105) to the bridge at 3km.

**Black Wheatear 2** A pair was present in the wadi to the north of the road, as per Jens Hansen's trip report.

Headed to Douz along the C105. Fantastic and bizarre landscape.

**Brown-necked Raven 6**

**Red-rumped Wheatear 2**

Desert Wheatear 2+

16:45-17:10. Marsh & pools c 5km west of Douz.

Little Grebe 1

Little Stint

Southern Grey Shrike (*elegans*)

Kentish Plover

Spotted Redshank

Chiffchaff

Little Ringed Plover

Wood Sandpiper 2

Black-winged Stilt

Spanish Sparrow <5

Night at the Hotel 20 Mars, TD8pp with breakfast (bread, yoghurt & coffee). Crazy staff. Still raining.

## Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December

Still raining, but began to dry up during breakfast. Brief sunny spell from 09:00-10:00, then dry until dusk, when the rain began again. Max. 17°C, N0-1.

House Bunting in Douz just after breakfast, and a large brief falcon.

09:00-10:20. El Hessai

**Moussier's Redstart 2**

**Fulvous Babbler 7**

**Tristram's Warbler 2+**

Spectacled Warbler 8

Desert Wheatear

Drove west from Douz.

Same pool as yesterday evening, 5km west of Douz.

Marsh Sandpiper 2

Temminck's Stint 1

Green Sandpiper 1

Another Fulvous Babbler was seen from the C105 east of El Faouar.

Ghidma Pools

Coot

Explored the area about 300yds east of the junction of the C105 and the C210 (signed to El Dergine).

Ruddy Shelduck 4, on a dune near a leaking  
water pump

Rock Dove, seemingly genuine

Thekla Lark

**Scrub Warbler 2**

Desert Wheatear 2

Tried slightly further west along the C210.

Dotterel 4 (flyovers)

Desert Wheatear 2

Went back to the junction and stopped rapidly half a mile to the east when a Hoopoe Lark performed its display flight.

**Greater Hoopoe Lark 3**

**Moussier's Redstart 1**

**Mourning Wheatear 1** male

Desert Wheatear 2



Greater Hoopoe Lark

Satisfied, we drove north towards Blidette. Pools between Nouil and Blidette:

Ruddy Shelduck 2

Marsh Harrier 2

**Brown-necked Raven 2**

For Blidette Lake turn right into Blidette village from the main road to Kebili and go through the village. The lake is about a kilometre and a half further. Nothing present.

We then made a ridiculous journey back down to the C210 and west along the southern edge of the Chott el Jerid in a vain attempt to see sandgrouse. Worth a go, anyway. No birds seen.

The rain returned at dark, as we cruised back north, then across the Chott on the P16 to Tozeur. Stayed at the Hotel Essalem (TD7pp).

### Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December

14°C, clear and dry. Very gusty, N1-5. 2/8 cloud cover.

07:00-09:40, 10:30-17:40. Selja Gorge area.

Bonelli's Eagle 2

**Lanner 1**, flew to cliff at dusk

**Desert Lark 30+**

**Thick-billed Lark**, stony desert north of the junction of the road to Magrou and the track to the Gorge mouth. 1 flyover (R Moores), 2 briefly on ground (MH).

Thekla Lark 8+

**Moussier's Redstart 3**

**White-crowned Wheatear 10+**

**Mourning Wheatear 10+**

Blue Rock Thrush 1 male

**Scrub Warbler 4**

**Tristram's Warbler 1**

Spectacled Warbler, common

Trumpeter Finch 40+

**House Bunting 10**



Desert Lark



White-crowned Wheatear

After dark stormed up the P17 almost all the way to Jendouba, turning onto the C173 to Touiref to find a spot to park up. Another night in the car.

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December

Birded the chance spot we'd left the car, more to stretch our legs than anything else. Stunningly rewarded though.

**Barbary Falcon**, 1 male, very pale, exceptional views as it rose out of the valley to the north of the road just after 08:00.

**Barbary Partridge** c15 birds seen in flight over the road heading into the valley shortly after the falcon

Continued driving north along the P17 past Jendouba. Shortly after km39 to Tabarka we stopped in a wide layby to the left of the road.

**Long-legged Buzzard (*cirtensis*) 2**

**African Blue Tit 3**

Firecrest

**African Chaffinch**

10:00-12:20. Ain Draham forest. Junction of P17 & road to Ben M'tir, c5km south of Ain Draham.

**Long-legged Buzzard 3**

**Levaillant's Woodpecker 3**, from the main track heading up the hill on the southern side of the Ben M'tir road.

**African Blue Tit**

Coal Tit

Short-toed Treecreeper

Continued north to Tabarka, stopping at a few flooded areas and pools.

Cattle Egret

Mediterranean Gull

Zitting Cisticola

16:30-17:10. Cap Serrat.

**Long-legged Buzzard 4**, 1 en route and 3 over to the east at dusk.

**Audouin's Gull 8** ads on the beach.

Common Bulbul 2. Pulled out of the bag on the cusp of night. Found by piling north along the riverbank from the bridge about 0.5km from the beach.

Cetti's Warbler 1

Spent the night in the car again, near Bechateur.

## Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December

10°C, N1-4, 7/8 cloud cover, dry.

Tried to seavatch along the corniche running north from Bizerte, but it was very windy.

Common Tern 1

Near Tinja the second Lanner of the trip crossed the road in front of the car.

Lake Ichkeul. Too much water, generally rubbish.

Distant common wildfowl including thousands of Greylag.

Crag Martin 10

Drove onto the Cap Bon peninsular. It was slow going through Tunis so it took longer than hoped.

Lake to the southwest of Menzel Temime along the C43.

Ferruginous Duck

**Purple Swamphen 1**

Kelibia

**Yelkouan Shearwater** c8

**Audouin's Gull** 50, (1 1<sup>st</sup> W, rest ads)

**Caspian Gull** 1 1<sup>st</sup> W

Marshy pools near Kelibia harbour

Little Swift 10+

Barn Swallow

Crag Martin

2km south of Kelibia along the C27

**Black-shouldered Kite 1**

Korba Pools

Black-necked Grebe 3

Greater Flamingo

Spoonbill 20

Marbled Duck 4

**Black-shouldered Kite** 1, 12km north of Korba along C27

Mediterranean Gull, hundreds

Stayed the night in Nabeul, at the Auberge de Jeunesse (TD5pp).

## Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December

10°C, 7/8 cloud cover, NW2-4.

Cap Bon Roman caves shortly after dawn

Great Skua 1

**Barbary Partridge** 5 (R Moores)

**Moussier's Redstart** 1

Blue Rock Thrush

West of El Haouaria

**Barbary Partridge** 4

Northern Chaffinch

Brief views of Marmora's/Dartford Warbler

Ad Long-legged Buzzard seen along the C27 back to Nabuel. Carried on south to Enfida, then took P2 towards Kairouan.

Stopped first about 2km from Enfida, due to tremendous weight of crane. Farmland that is actually crawling with birds!

Ruff 1

Crane 500+

Calandra Lark 40+

Skylark

Crested Lark

Corn Bunting 100s

Around km31 from Kairouan there is some good steppe, with several tracks leading up to a ridge.

Spent half an hour here around 14:00.

Merlin 1 male. Seen catching a small passerine at distance.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse 1. Single male seen flying in from distance, eventually passing about 200 metres from our vantage point.

Lesser Short-toed Lark 4 flew over, calling.

Sebkeht Halk el Menzel

Thousands of waders at the northern end, also 2 Marbled Duck.

Several Caspian Tern along the eastern edge.

Night in Sousse, at the Hotel Paris (TD11pp). Recommended.



<b>33. Lanner</b>				/		/		
<b>34. Barbary Falcon</b>					/			
<b>35. Barbary Partridge</b>					/		/	
36. Moorhen								/
<b>37. Purple Swamphen</b>						/		
38. Coot			/		/	/	/	/
39. Crane							/	
40. Black-winged Stilt	/	/	/			/	/	/
41. Avocet	/					/	/	/
42. Little Ringed Plover		/						
43. Ringed Plover								/
44. Kentish Plover	/	/	/		/	/	/	/
45. Dotterel			/					
46. Golden Plover					/	/	/	
47. Grey Plover	/					/	/	/
48. Lapwing					/	/	/	/
49. Little Stint	/	/	/			/	/	/
50. Temminck's Stint			/					/
51. Dunlin							/	/
52. Ruff							/	/
53. Common Snipe								/
54. Curlew						/	/	/
55. Spotted Redshank	/	/	/			/	/	/
56. Redshank	/		/			/	/	/
57. Marsh Sandpiper			/					/
58. Greenshank	/						/	/
59. Green Sandpiper			/			/		/
60. Wood Sandpiper		/	/				/	/
61. Common Sandpiper							/	/
62. Ruddy Turnstone								/
63. Great Skua							/	
64. Arctic Skua						/		
65. Mediterranean Gull					/	/	/	/
66. Black-headed Gull					/	/	/	/
<b>67. Slender-billed Gull</b>	/					/	/	/
<b>68. Audouin's Gull</b>					/	/		
69. Yellow-legged Gull	/				/	/	/	/
70. Caspian Gull						/		
71. Lesser Black-backed Gull	/				/	/	/	/
72. Common Tern						/		
73. Sandwich Tern						/	/	/
74. Caspian Tern	/						/	/
75. Whiskered Tern								/
76. Black-bellied Sandgrouse							/	
77. Rock Dove	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
78. Woodpigeon					/			
79. Collared Dove					/	/	/	
80. Laughing Dove	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
81. Barn Owl				/				
82. Little Owl ( <i>saharae</i> )		/						/
83. Little Swift				/		/		
84. Hoopoe	/					/		
<b>85. Levillant's Green Woodpecker</b>					/			
<b>86. Bar-tailed Lark</b>		/						
<b>87. Desert Lark</b>				/				
<b>88. Hoopoe Lark</b>			/					
<b>89. Thick-billed Lark</b>				/				
90. Calandra Lark							/	
<b>91. Lesser Short-toed Lark</b>							/	
92. Crested Lark	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

93. Thekla Lark		/	/	/				
94. Skylark		/		/	/	/	/	
95. Barn Swallow						/		
96. Crag Martin				/		/		
97. Meadow Pipit					/	/		
98. White Wagtail	/	/	/		/	/	/	/
<b>99. Common Bulbul</b>					/		/	
100. Wren							/	
101. Robin	/	/		/	/		/	
102. Black Redstart	/	/		/	/	/	/	
<b>103. Moussier's Redstart</b>		/	/	/			/	
104. Common Stonechat ( <i>rubicola</i> )	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
<b>105. Desert Wheatear</b>		/	/					
<b>106. Red-rumped Wheatear</b>		/						
<b>107. Mourning Wheatear</b>			/	/				
<b>108. White-crowned Wheatear</b>				/				
<b>109. Black Wheatear</b>		/						
110. Blue Rock Thrush				/			/	
111. Blackbird	/	/		/	/	/	/	/
112. Song Thrush	/				/		/	
113. Mistle Thrush					/			
114. Cetti's Warbler					/			
115. Zitting Cisticola					/	/	/	/
<b>116. Scrub Warbler</b>		/	/	/				
<b>117. Tristram's Warbler</b>			/	/				
118. Spectacled Warbler		/	/	/				
119. Sardinian Warbler	/		/		/	/	/	/
120. Blackcap	/							/
121. Common Chiffchaff	/	/	/		/	/	/	/
122. Firecrest					/			
<b>123. Fulvous Babbler</b>			/					
124. Coal Tit <i>Parus ater ledouci</i>					/			
<b>125. African Blue Tit <i>Parus ultramarines</i></b>					/			
126. Great Tit					/			
127. Short-toed Treecreeper					/			
128. Southern Grey Shrike <i>Lanius meridionalis elegans</i>		/	/	/				
<i>L. m. algeriensis</i>	/				/	/	/	/
129. Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius cervicalis</i>					/			
<b>130. Brown-necked Raven</b>		/	/					
131. Northern Raven					/	/	/	
132. European Starling	/							/
133. Spotless Starling	/	/			/	/	/	/
134. House Sparrow (Italian)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
135. Spanish Sparrow		/						
<b>136. African Chaffinch</b>	/				/	/		/
137. Northern Chaffinch							/	
138. European Serin	/				/	/	/	/
139. Greenfinch					/		/	
140. Linnet					/	/	/	
141. Trumpeter Finch		/	/	/				
142. Cirl Bunting					/			
<b>143. House Bunting</b>		/	/	/				
144. Reed Bunting					/			
145. Corn Bunting					/	/	/	
	39	34	41	28	62	76	76	62