

The Reptiles & Amphibians of Morocco

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 18th September 2025



Moroccan Spiny-tailed Lizard



Helmethead Gecko



Sahara Frog



Saw-scaled Viper

Tour report by Gary Powell
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Day 1

Thursday 11th September

After arrival at Agadir and a relaxing lunch at a roadside restaurant, we were soon exploring our first piece of the Moroccan countryside at the coast, within the Souss Massa National Park. Our first herp sighting was one of many Moorish Geckos (*Tarentola mauritanica juliae*), this one sheltering in a cistern at a path edge. Shortly after that, a sharp-eyed member of the team spotted an incredibly well-camouflaged sub-adult Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) walking through some dead leaves. Although we were expecting warm and dry conditions, we were struck by just how hot it was; this was to remain the case throughout our trip, with the coast especially being unusually hot, something that was to affect our opportunities for finding animals.

Our first hotel, in Sidi Ifni, was very pleasant, and we took our first evening meal together in the garden with the sound of the nearby waves in the background. The location we visited for our first evening trip had unfortunately undergone some recent development work: the expected water bodies weren't present and surrounding habitat had been impacted, meaning all we could find was two more Moorish Geckos.

Day 2

Friday 12th September

Our first full day in Morocco! The first find of the day was a beautiful Bibron's Agama (*Agama bibronii*) basking on some rocks, which obliging stayed still long enough for some people to get photos. The sight of a large lake/reservoir in beautiful surroundings in the mountains gave us hope of finding our first amphibians of the trip, and this was indeed the case, with thousands of noisy Sahara Frogs (*Pelophylax saharicus*) in and around the water. As well as the staggering number of animals present, there was also notably wide variation in the colouration and markings of the frogs; green, brown, patterned, uniform, some appearing close to black, and some a remarkable blue. We also found a few young and somewhat nervous Boehme's Agamas (*Trapelus boehmei*) among some rocks and vegetation near the water.



North African Gerbil



Bonelli's Eagle

Other highlights of the morning were fantastic views of a Bonelli's Eagle overhead and several large Whistle Crickets inside a well. The common name for these robust, spiny invertebrates came about is derived from the practice of herdsman removing the legs and using the cricket as a whistle! After an impressively large seafood lunch back in Sidi Ifni market we rested up, before returning to the lake for a night-time survey. As well as the expected vast number of (even noisier at night) Sahara Frogs, we also found juvenile and adult North African Green Toads

(*Bufotes boulengeri*) and a young adult Berber Toad (*Sclerophrys mauritanica*). We found a good-sized but sadly dead Egyptian Cobra (*Naja haje*) being consumed by bugs. Also notable were many large Mole Crickets.

Day 3

Saturday 13th September

We broke our journey today with a visit to an impressive rocky valley, where we got our first wild mammal of the trip, a Barbary Ground Squirrel. We also spotted our first Moroccan Spiny-tailed lizard (*Uromastyx nigriventris*), basking on some rocks at the roadside.

With temperatures building even more as we headed inland, and after stocking up with lunch and supplies at a luxurious and large supermarket near Guelmim, we arrived at our charming and rustic hotel for mint tea and a rest, before heading out to explore some rocky desert habitat. The journey was thrilling in itself as we passed several dust devils whipping through the impressive desert scenery. By late afternoon, we were again searching for wildlife, and found two new lizard species for our trip: Bosk's Fringe-fingered lizard (*Acanthodactylus boskianus*) and Small-spotted lizard (*Mesalina simoni*). After a delicious supper at our hotel, we had one more brief excursion, and added Algerian Dwarf Gecko (*Tropicolotes algericus*) to our list, as well as some stunning spiders.

Day 4

Sunday 14th September

Today, we headed further inland towards Assa, through some awe-inspiring desert environments surrounded by mountain ranges, and the further we went the hotter it got, the temperature eventually reaching around 46°C! Our stop at an oasis didn't quite go to plan as it had almost entirely dried up due to current conditions, and there was only a very small pond left, in which we found a few Sahara Frogs: adults, recent metamorphs and some impressively large tadpoles. In the baking heat we found little else other than another Moorish Gecko (possibly a different sub-species compared with the specimens we'd seen further north: *Tarentola mauritanica pallida*) hiding from the sun in a ruined building.

After seeking shelter and cold drinks in Assa we spent the late afternoon searching a dry riverbed (wadi), and the team had great views of another Moroccan Spiny-tailed Lizard (this one basking on a branch) and a Wryneck in a nearby tree. After watching the sun set over the desert and mountains, with camels visible in the distance, we started our search for today's main target being the Saw-scaled Viper (*Echis pyramidum leucogaster*). During a good few hours scouring the cracked surface of the riverbed, we found a North African Gerbil, a large and lightning quick Camel Spider and multiple scorpions; these iconic desert invertebrates are a prey item for the viper, which gave us reason to be hopeful. But there was no viper...until we were walking back towards the van to call it a night, and we finally found our species, a beautiful juvenile curled among rocks! After a long and exhausting day when everyone had worked incredibly hard, the lift in our spirits was immediate, and made for a van full of contented clients on the long drive back to the hotel!

Day 5

Monday 15th September

Our first reptile of the day today was before we'd even got to the supermarket to buy our supplies for the journey: a Moroccan Spiny-tailed Lizard darted across the road in front of us. More Bibron's Agamas were also spotted roadside as we moved towards Tantan. After the drive to the north-western edge of the Sahara, and a leisurely

lunch in town, we explored a spot nearby and found a beautifully delicate Harris's Gecko (*Saurodactylus harrisii*), as well as tracks and burrows of North African Sengi (or Elephant-shrew).

In the evening, with a sudden cold wind picking up lots of sand, we cruised nearby roads looking for suitable areas, and were delighted to find a lovely Helmethead Gecko (*Tarentola chazaliae*) in the middle of the road. These animals are incredibly photogenic, and if a reptile were ever to be considered 'cute' by the general public, this would be the one! We also found another Harris's Gecko, this one even more fragile-looking than the first. There was plenty of invertebrate activity as well, with many beetles, scorpions and spiders. The most striking of the spiders we found was a distinctive black-and-white patterned specimen that, at the time of writing and following discussion with experts, we think is an undescribed species of *Adonea*.



Duméril's Wedge-snouted Skink



Red-necked Nightjar



Mediterranean Chameleon



Scorpion under ultraviolet light

Day 6

Tuesday 16th September

Our destination today was Akhfennir and the nearby Khenifiss National Park. Our first stop was at a stunning coastal lagoon, with large sand dunes nearby. We had great views of Osprey, Common Kestrel, Glossy Ibis and Greater Flamingo, and managed to track down a large Mediterranean Chameleon by following its tracks through the sand to the scrub in which it was sheltering. We then needed to prepare ourselves for a late-night excursion to another part of the park, for which we employed the services of a local guide. We searched for a long time for vipers, but they proved elusive. We did find many more Helmethead Geckos, some impressively large spiders, and right at the end of the search, in the early hours of the morning, our first skink: Dumeril's Wedge-snouted Skink (*Chalcides sphenopsiformis*), at the base of a sand dune.

Day 7

Wednesday 17th September

After a very long day yesterday, and with the expedition drawing to a close, we travelled north, stopping at Sidi Ifni for lunch, before arriving at our stunning hotel in an amazing coastal location near Mirleft. We received a warm welcome here, and immediately found a large Moorish Gecko just outside in the beautiful hotel gardens, as well as a Swallowtail butterfly. Either side of our last supper together, we took trips to nearby destinations with the weather suddenly becoming incredibly humid, and at the very end of the night we even had some rain. We didn't have enough time to explore the area as much as we wanted, with an early start needed tomorrow, but we ended the trip at a series of pools in the hills, where we found an adult Berber Toad.

Day 8

Thursday 18th September

With an early flight back to the UK we had no opportunity to look for wildlife today; we arrived at the airport in Agadir just after sunrise. Herping in Morocco isn't always straightforward, and conditions had been somewhat against us during our time here; this view was reinforced by talking with other 'herpers' in the country at the same time, who had also found conditions challenging. As is always the case with reptiles, this situation can change very quickly, and a certain amount of luck is required! We had to put in a lot of work, and we had found some stunning reptiles and amphibians, as well as abundant birds and invertebrates, and the scenery in the desert and scrub environments was stunning. I would certainly relish the thought of a return to Morocco, further to unlock the secrets of its herpetofauna.

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Species lists

Amphibians

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025						
		11	12	13	14	15	16	17
North African Green Toad	<i>Bufoetes boulengeri</i>		✓					
Berber Toad	<i>Sclerophrys mauritanica</i>		✓					
Sahara Frog	<i>Pelophylax saharicus</i>		✓		✓			

Reptiles

E=Endemic, D=Dead		September 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa saharica</i>		✓					
Harris's Gecko - E	<i>Saurodactylus harrisii</i>					✓		
Northern Elegant Gecko	<i>Stenodactylus mauritanicus</i>					✓		
Algerian Dwarf Gecko	<i>Tropicolotes algericus</i>			✓	✓			
Helmethead Gecko	<i>Tarentola chazaliae</i>					✓	✓	
Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica juliae</i>	✓	✓					✓
Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica pallida</i>				✓			
Duméril's Wedge-snouted Skink	<i>Chalcides sphenopsiformis</i>						✓	
Golden Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus aureus</i>						✓	
Bosk's Fringe-fingered Lizard	<i>Acanthodactylus boskianus</i>			✓				
Small-spotted Lizard	<i>Mesalina guttulata</i>			✓				
Bibron's Agama	<i>Agama bibronii</i>		✓			✓		
Böhme's Agama	<i>Trapelus boehmei</i>		✓					
Moroccan Spiny-tailed Lizard	<i>Uromastix nigriventris</i>			✓		✓		
Mediterranean Chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo chamaeleon</i>	✓					✓	
Egyptian Cobra	<i>Naja haje</i>		D					
Saw-scaled Viper	<i>Echis pyramidum leucogaster</i>				✓			

Birds

N=Near-endemic		September 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				✓			
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>		✓					
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			✓				
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	✓						
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			✓				
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>				✓			
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>			✓				
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓		✓			
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓					
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓					✓	
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>						✓	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				✓	✓		
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>						✓	

N=Near-endemic		September 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>						✓	
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>						✓	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>						✓	
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>						✓	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					✓	✓	
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>		✓				✓	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Northern Bald Ibis - N	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>	✓						
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>						✓	
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓						
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>		✓					
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			✓			✓	
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		✓					
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓				✓		
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>						✓	
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>		✓					
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓						
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>		✓	✓				
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>			✓				
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>				✓			
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓					✓	
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>							
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>				✓		✓	
Maghreb Magpie - N	<i>Pica mauritanica</i>	✓	✓					
Greater Hoopoe-Lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>				✓			
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓	✓			
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			✓	✓			✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓						
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>						✓	
Western Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna opaca</i>		✓					
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>		✓					✓
Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Curruca hortensis</i>		✓					
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>		✓					
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						✓	
Moussier's Redstart - N	<i>Phoenicurus moussieri</i>	✓		✓				
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>						✓	
Atlas Wheatear - N	<i>Oenanthe seebohmi</i>							
Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>						✓	
House Bunting	<i>Emberiza sahari</i>			✓	✓			

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025						
		11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>						✓	
North African Gerbil	<i>Dipodillus campestris</i>				✓			
Barbary Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i>			✓				
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓					

Invertebrates

		September 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Moths								
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>			✓				
Crickets								
Whistle Cricket	<i>Eugaster spinulosa</i>		✓					
a mole cricket	Gryllotalpidae sp.		✓					
Spiders								
Lobed Argiope	<i>Argiope lobata</i>			✓				
a camel spider	Solifugae sp.							
Huntsman spider	<i>Eusparrassus oraniensis</i>		✓	✓	✓			
Scorpions								
Beautiful Scorpion	<i>Buthus bonito</i>						✓	
Moroccan Fat-tailed scorpion	<i>Androctonus maroccanus</i>				✓	✓		
a scorpion	<i>Hottentotta</i> sp.				✓	✓		