

## The song of Golden Nightjar at Oued Jenna

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Disponible en ligne (Available online) : 13 May 2016

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During our birding trip to Atlantic Sahara, we<sup>1</sup> heard an interesting song of a Nightjar near Oued Jenna in the night from 2nd to 3rd March 2016. Unfortunately we did not manage to record it.

The following days, we discussed about the ID of this Nightjar and had Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* in mind. However reference material was limited with just one debated song of Golden Nightjar on Xeno-Canto. At the 25. and the 28. March 2016, one of us (MLS) heard the same song again and succeeded to get a recording ([www.go-south.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/golden\\_nightjar\\_oued\\_jenna\\_160328\\_mls.wav](http://www.go-south.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/golden_nightjar_oued_jenna_160328_mls.wav)) albeit in poor quality.

Back at home, we sent the recording to Ralph Martin, who sent us the following analysis of the recording.

### Analysis

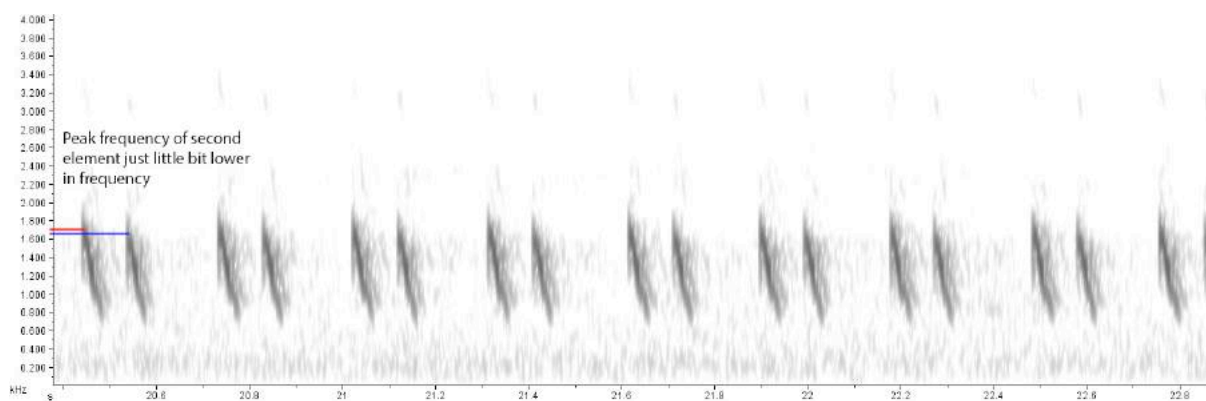
The recording shows a nightjar song, consisting of two repeated main elements. It reminds in this context a Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*. In an analysis of the available song recordings of Red-necked Nightjar (Bergmann 2008, Schulze & Roché 2004, [www.xeno-canto.com](http://www.xeno-canto.com)), I found just one type of song. It consists of two closely spaced elements (but clearly separated), repeated many times. Especially time lag between the repetition seems to be highly variable, probably because of individual variation or difference in mood. Time lag between the two elements is quite variable, too. Both elements start in sonogram with a weak vertical line. From the upper end of this line, there is a fast decrease of frequency. Amplitude is biggest in the beginning but held on a high level during the whole element. There is almost no difference between these two elements, just the second one being about 30 Hz lower in frequency (measured of twelve birds from Spain, taken the mean of five elements of each bird). A few times it was even higher. Highest frequency of the song is about 1500 Hz. However, a reluctant start of the song of Red-necked Nightjar can be more quiet and lower in frequency.

Analysing the only available recording of Red-necked Nightjar from Morocco (cf. XC181839 on <http://www.xeno-canto.org/181839>), there seems to be no obvious geographical difference between North African and Iberian birds. Measurements as well as sound fits well within the variation of Iberian birds (same was true for birds heard in Morocco south of the Atlas in March 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut Pfeifenberger, Mohammed Lamine, Gaby and Klaus Drissner

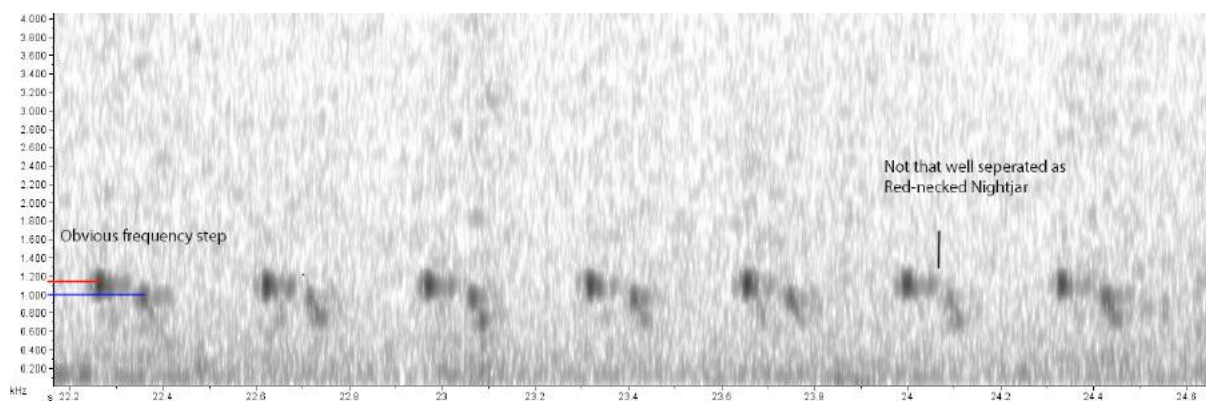
*Song of Golden Nightjar at Oued Jenna*



Red-necked Nightjar (*Caprimulgus ruficollis*), 29 July 2015, Sevilla, Andalucía, Spain © José Carlos Sires, XC265047, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/265047>. The sonogram shows nine repetitions of the two elements. Both elements of each repetition look almost identically.

There is just one recording of Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* available (9 December 2015, Rosso, Trarza, Mauritania © Marius Dussel, XC294918, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/294918>). Although identification of this recording was doubted by few persons, birders (Robert Swan, Peter Stronach and Callan Cohen) visiting Western Sahara in the last months confirmed that Golden Nightjar actually sounds identical to this recording. These reports might be in conflict with the observation of Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2006) of Golden Nightjar uttering a song virtual identical to Plain Nightjar *C. inornatus* in the Sahel of Mali, in June 2004.

The recording of Golden Nightjar on Xeno-Canto shows a song that is not that well separated into two elements as Red-necked Nightjar. When I listen to the recording and look at the sonogram (quite bad thanks to recording quality), I think that the two elements are not that well separated as in Red-necked Nightjar and structure of the two song elements seem to be different. Additionally, the loudest part of the second element is lower than the first with a difference of 147 Hz (measured for ten repetitions). The peak frequency is much lower with just 1093 Hz, too. These values are out of range of the measured values of Red-necked Nightjars (cf. table 1).



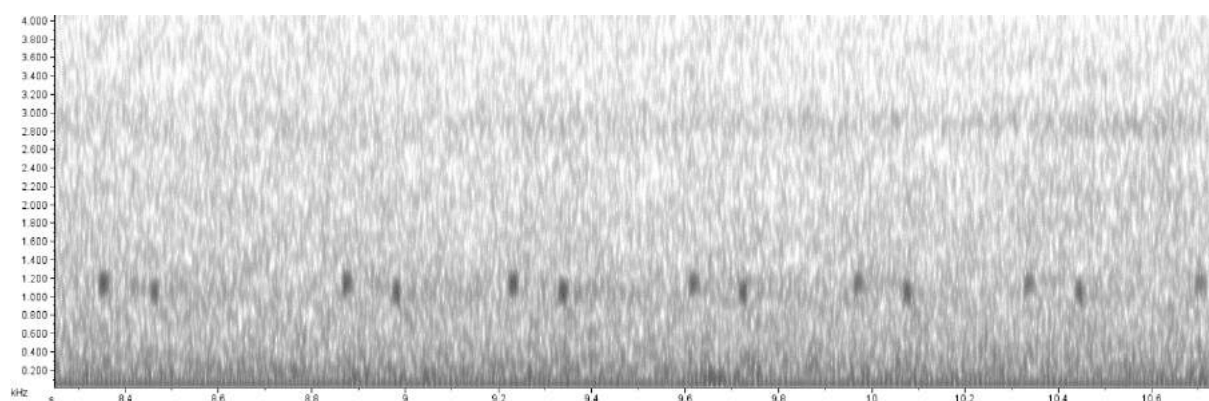
Golden Nightjar, 9 December 2015, Rosso, Trarza, Mauritania © Marius Dussel, XC294918, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/294918>. The loudest part of the song is the beginning of the first element. The beginning of the second element is obviously lower.

The values suggest that additionally to differences in structure of the single elements, song of Golden Nightjar is lower than Red-necked Nightjar with a more pronounced difference in frequency between the two loudest parts of the song.

**Table 1.** Measurements of the song of different Nightjars

	Time lag between the elements [ms]	Peak frequency [Hz]	Frequency difference between 1st and 2nd element [Hz]
Red-necked Nightjar (Spain) n=12	103 ± 11.7 (88 - 133)	1523 ± 98.6 (1345 - 1734)	32 ± 15.9 (10.8 – 53.4)
Red-necked Nighjar (Morocco) n=1	95	1502	32
Golden Nightjar (Mauritania) n=1	93	1093	147
Presumed Golden Nightjar (Oued Jenna)	107.5	1140	110

The recording of Oued Jenna sounds very similar to the Golden Nightjar recording from xeno-canto. The measurements are very close to this recording (cf. table 1), too, and out of range of the measured Red-necked Nightjars. The ID of the bird recorded at Oued Jenna on the 28 march 2016 should therefore be most likely Golden Nightjar.



Presumed Golden Nightjar, 28 March 2016, Oued Jenna © Mohamed Lamine Samlali. Song consists of two repeated elements with the first being higher in frequency than the second.

## References

- Bergmann, H.-H.** 2008. Die Stimmen der Vögel Europas. 474 Vogelportraits mit 914 Rufen und Gesängen auf 2.200 Sonagrammen (m. mp3-DVD)
- Dowsett-Lemaire, F. & Dowsett, R.J.** 2006. First reliable sound recording of Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*, in the rocky hills of central Mali. *African Bird Club Bulletin* 13(1): 49-55.
- Schulze, A. & Roché, J.C.** 2004. Die Vogelstimmen Europas, Nordafrikas und Vorderasiens. 819 Vogelarten auf 17 Audio-CDs, Ample Editon.