

Ghana

In search of Picathartes

Friday 03 March – Friday 17 March 2017

Principal Leader: Victor Owusu

2017 Cost **£3,899** single room supplement **£340**

Friday 02 March – Friday 16 March 2018

Principal Leader: Victor Owusu

2018 Cost **£3,999** single room supplement **£360**



Ornitholidays has been visiting West Africa for many years and our holidays to The Gambia have been enjoyed by hundreds of birdwatchers. We now have an additional tour to a stable country in this region.

Ghana is an independent republic with a democratic government, lying on the Gulf of Guinea. The people are friendly and their main language is English. The country has a great system of National Parks and they have just begun to realise the importance of tourism, and in particular eco-tourism, to add another income stream to their economy. What makes the country special for us is the variety of habitats that it encompasses: there is the coastal wetland zone, the dry Sahelian savannah, the Upper Guinea Forest and some pristine broad-leaved Guinea Woodland. Our 15-day tour gives us the chance to explore these habitats, as well as visiting the famous Kakum canopy walkway. For those who have visited The Gambia there will be many new and exciting species here, such as Yellow-headed Picathartes, Congo Serpent Eagle, Black and Blue-headed Bee-eaters, Pel's Fishing Owl, Standard-winged Nightjar, African Finfoot, Spotted Creeper and Blue Cuckoo-shrike – to name just a few! The birds of this country will not be the only focus of our attention, as the other fauna and flora are excellent. The sheer number of butterfly species to be found here is outstanding. Couple this with a colourful backdrop of Ghanaian life and a visit to some of the coastal forts made infamous during the slave-trading period and you have the basis for a fascinating holiday. Throughout this tour, we will be in the company of Victor Owusu who is one of Ghana's premier birding guides. Join us in Ghana to see why we think this country makes a great addition to the Ornitholidays' suite of African holidays. These will be Ornitholidays' seventh and eighth tours to Ghana.

ITINERARY

Day 1

We take a scheduled direct flight from London to Accra. We arrive in the evening and transfer to our hotel on the coast for the night.

Days 2 to 6

We can begin our West African birding adventure in the hotel's grounds, looking for Double-toothed Barbet, African Thrush, Splendid Sunbird

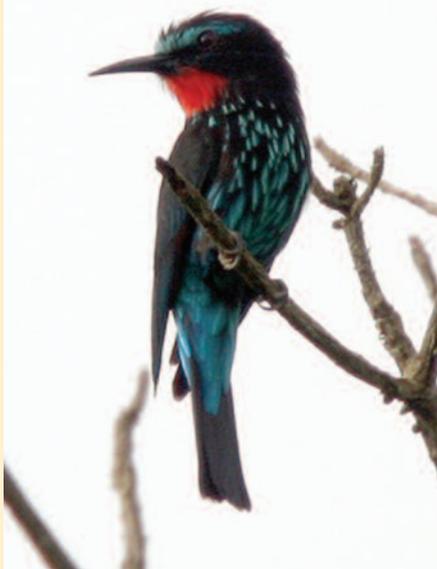
and Ethiopian Swallow. We then head a short distance eastwards to the Sakumona Lagoons where Black Heron, Intermediate Egret, Marsh Sandpiper, African Wattled Plover and many other shorebirds gather to feed. Offshore should be many wintering terns, perhaps being harassed by both Pomarine and Arctic Skuas. Later, we transfer to our hotel near Kakum, for a stay of five nights. We make some early starts over the next few days so we can enter Kakum National Park, where the Kakum canopy walkway gives us a

unique chance to find some amazing rainforest species. Overhead we may hear Grey Parrots shrieking and from the walkway we can look for Red-headed and Red-vented Malimbos, Naked-faced and Hairy-breasted Barbets, White-crested and Black-casqued Hornbills, Yellow-billed Turaco, Sabine's Puffback, Blue Cuckoo-shrike, Sharpe's Apalis, Collared and Olive-bellied Sunbirds and Honeyguide Greenbul. Without a doubt this area will yield many exciting birds for the group. During the heat of the day we can rest,



Yellow-headed Picathartes

Black Bee-eater



but we can return to the walkway during the afternoon as the bird life becomes more active as the heat drops. At Kakum we will also visit the forest trails where we might find Black Bee-eater, Red-billed Dwarf and Piping Hornbills, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Red-fronted Parrot, Olive Sunbird and Levaillant's Cuckoo. Rainforest mammals are not obvious, but we may find various squirrels, Geoffroy's Pied Colobus Monkey, Potto and maybe even an arboreal Pangolin. Both African and Rufous-sided Broadbills are possible in the forest close by, while birds of prey may include African Goshawk, Crowned Eagle and Cassin's Hawk Eagle. Preuss's Swallows are common near some roadside culverts, so we should obtain some good views of this localised species. A small reservoir is home to African Finfoot. We shall also visit the Elmina Slave Fort, built by the Portuguese and run by the Dutch; this was one of the main centres for trade in African slaves and serves as a reminder of the European influence on this inhuman practice. Nearby, we can also visit the Cape Coast Fort, built by the British.

Day 7

After a morning birding in the Kakum area, we drive north and stop in some remnant forest at Aboabo. Here we can look for Black Dwarf Hornbill, Speckled Tinkerbird, Western Nicator, Green Hylia and a suite of greenbuls, including Swamp Palm, Slender-billed and Western Bearded. In the afternoon we reach a village where local guides will take us along a narrow forest track to a nesting site of the enigmatic Yellow-headed Picathartes. Here we sit quietly on rocky outcrops and wait for these strange birds to bound into view. They are not nesting at this time of year but return here to roost. Hopefully, we shall see three or more birds as they perch nearby – so far, nobody has ever missed seeing this species here! This is a truly magical experience. Later, we retrace our steps back to the village and drive to Kumasi, where we stay overnight.

Days 8 to 11

We head northwards towards Mole National Park today and pass into a new habitat. The drive will take most of the day and we arrive at our lodge in the late afternoon, where we stay for four nights. The park is large and covers an area of 4,840 sq km of undulating terrain with steep escarpments. The vegetation is pristine Guinea savanna woodland with gallery forests along the rivers and

streams. Most of our time will be spent relatively close to the lodge as the vast majority of the bird species we are looking for occur here. The park boasts some mammal species and we should see Elephant, Kob, Bushbuck, Waterbuck, Warthogs, Patas and Green Monkeys, Olive Baboons and perhaps Roan Antelope. We plan to be out early and then return to relax during the heat of the day before venturing out again as the day cools off. Birds of prey are a feature here and we can look for Grasshopper, Lizard and Red-necked Buzzards, Lanner Falcon, Bateleur, Martial, Long-crested and Short-toed Eagles, Brown Snake and Ayres' Hawk and African Hawk Eagles. Seedeaters are common and we look for Yellow-fronted Canary, Orange-cheeked and Lavender Waxbills, Bar-breasted and Red-billed Firefinches and Red-winged Pytilia. The woodlands here hold many colourful species and we shall look for Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Violet Turaco, Scarlet-chested and Splendid Sunbirds, African Blue Flycatcher, Broad-billed, Abyssinian, Rufous-crowned and Blue-bellied Rollers, African Golden Oriole, Red-headed Weaver and Oriole Warbler to name a few. More sombre birds include Stone Partridge, Double-spurred Francolin, African Thrush and Northern Black Flycatcher. Specialities we shall look for include Pel's Fishing Owl, Standard-winged Nightjar, Greyish Eagle Owl, Forbes's Plover and Spotted Creeper. The lodge has a lovely pool for cooling off during the heat of the day.

Day 12

After breakfast we leave Mole and can visit the 500 year old mosque at Larabanga. Later, we head southwards, stopping en route to look for any savannah birds we may have missed. We will also pay a short visit to the scenic Kintampo Waterfall, near to our lunch stop. We stay overnight in Kumasi.

Day 13

We spend the morning in Bobiri which is famous for its abundance of butterflies and birds. Along the forest paths we will look for specialities including Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, African Piculet, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Red-chested Goshawk, Narina's Trogon, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Afep Pigeon, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher and Red-billed Helmet-shrike. In the afternoon we drive to a small clearing at the foot of the Atewa range and bird around some cultivated fields and streams. Here we look for African Hobby, White-spotted Flufftail, Buff-spotted Woodpecker and the tiny Tit-hylia. We stay overnight near Koforidua.

Days 14 & 15

In the morning we visit the Atewa Mountains where we can bird along the cool forest trails here, looking for Blue-headed Bee-eaters, this being the only place in Ghana where they are found. We hope to see many of the following birds: Blue-headed Wood Dove, Yellow-billed Turaco, Yellowbill, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, Red-tailed, Icterine and Spotted Greenbuls, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Black-and-white Flycatcher, Grey Longbill, Western Black-headed Oriole, Maxwell's Black, Yellow-mantled and Grosbeak Weavers, Crested, Red-vented and Red-headed Malimbos, Grey-headed and White-breasted Negrofinsches, White-tailed Ant Thrush and Forest Robin. After lunch, we return to our hotel for packing and then leave for the drive to Accra. After dinner, we drive to the airport to catch our direct return flight to London which arrive into the UK the next morning.

Oriole Warbler



Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Fly to Accra
Days 2-6	Kakum National Park
Day 7	Kumasi
Days 8-11	Mole National Park
Day 12	Kumasi
Day 13	Koforidua
Day 14	Depart Accra
Day 15	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients (two leaders with more than six clients).

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms with private facilities.

Transport

By coach and minivan.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

 Good

 340

 Hot

 Low

 Special

 Moderate

 Good

 Moderate

 Scheduled



Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill