

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO THE GAMBIA
A Taste of West Africa

02 – 16 November 2012



Leader: Simon Boyes

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A Personal Diary

Friday, 2 November

We meet up in Gatwick's South Terminal for the morning Monarch flight to Banjul on a 757, keen to start the Gambian adventure. After a hot lunch served somewhere over North Africa, and some spectacular Sahara scenery, we land six hours after take-off, at 1520. There's no time change from GMT. Immigration is fast but retrieving luggage requires more patience. During the coach journey to the Senegambia Hotel, we are flagged off the road as the presidential cortege passes at high speed, with many jeeps, soldiers and guns fore and aft. Soon we have our rooms in chalets in the gardens, and there is enough time to enjoy the first birds, such as Western Grey Plantain-eater, African Harrier-Hawk, Beautiful Sunbird, Black-necked Weaver and Broad-billed Rollers, to name just a few. The heat is quite a shock after a British autumn, but we will soon get used to it. While I meet our team of Barry (birding guide) and Ali (driver) to discuss the next few days, the others change pounds into *dalasis* and buy extra water. The Western Union bureau outside the hotel gives 49 *dalasis* to the pound – a better rate than the hotel reception's 44 (or Gatwick's 37). The buffet dinner has a British theme tonight, and is taken outside in the courtyard, where a refreshing breeze off the sea is very welcome.

Saturday, 3 November

It's only fully light just before 0700: at which time we are at the same courtyard table, choosing a diversity of dishes from the breakfast buffet. Ali drives us a very short distance to Bijilo Forest Park, with a stop for a Village Indigobird on the way. We have a comfortable air-conditioned mini-coach, with a window seat for each of us. In the woodland we come across Oriole Warbler, Brown Babbler, Shikra and Western Red-billed Hornbill. There is a single Red Colobus Monkey keeping a distance from the many Green Vervet Monkeys. In a clearing a few Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters hawk insects with elegant swoops. Outside the reserve a group of Piapiacs drink at a pool, and follow each other off in single file. The locals call them black magpies. Offshore Royal Terns pass by at some distance, plus one Grey-headed Gull and one Lesser Black-backed Gull. We will find better places for seabirds elsewhere. The rest of the morning we spend acquainting ourselves better with the Senegambia garden, where we enjoy Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Yellow-billed Shrike, Green Wood Hoopoe, and Yellow-fronted Canary among much else. White-crowned Robin-Chats and a single Blue-breasted Kingfisher prove to be obliging subjects for the photographers.

An excellent three-course lunch is brought to us out in the shady courtyard, with plenty of time afterwards to rest or swim through the heat of the afternoon. Four of us take advantage of the quieter of the hotel's two fine pools. At 1600 we have another very short coach trip, this time to the Kotu cycle-track. Here we walk with the sun behind us, with Kotu rice-fields on our left. Senegal Coucal and Long-tailed Glossy Starling start us off, followed by a smart Vinaceous Dove. All too soon its constantly repeated song loses its appeal! A Palm-nut Vulture gives a tantalizing glimpse, but a Lanner Falcon shows well, twice, as it soars with the abundant Hooded Vultures and Yellow-billed Kites. Near the famous Kotu Bridge we start finding several of the heron family, including Western Reef and Great Egrets, Squacco and Striated Herons. Kotu Bridge, over the mangroves and muddy banks of the creek, is where generations of Gambian boys have offered their services as bird-guides to visiting Europeans. Many have gone on to become professional guides. The last half hour of the day is a busy time for us, as there is a constant parade of species to enjoy. White-faced Whistling Duck fly over in flocks, a Blue-breasted Kingfisher joins a Pied Kingfisher on a nearby bush, and the waders are many and varied. They include many Senegal Thick-knees, Wattled and Spur-winged Lapwings, and many migrants familiar to us in the UK. There are brilliant views of one of The Gambia's most scarlet birds: the Yellow-crowned Gonolek, which is a striking bush-shrike. We return to base just after sunset, delighted with what we have found. Tonight's dinner is an extensive barbecue buffet, again enjoyed in the open air.

Sunday, 4 November

We watch Black-necked Weaver and Woodland Kingfisher as we eat breakfast in the courtyard. The drive to Abuko takes 20 minutes, and we are at the gates of the reserve as it opens at 0800. Abuko is the last remnant

of original forest in the crowded Banjul area, and has several species that we will not meet again on our trip. We spend half an hour or more in the raised hide overlooking a small lake. Here Giant Kingfisher, Palm-nut Vulture, Green Turaco and African Jacana are on view. Blue-bellied Rollers attack any Yellow-billed Kites that fly too low over their territory: they must be nesting close to the hide. Continuing our forest walk, Barry finds us a pair of skulking Ahanta Francolins, which try to hide behind a large palm trunk. They walk first left then right, and back again. With patience we all see them well in the end. Next come Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, Yellow-breasted Apalis, and several Red-bellied Paradise Flycatchers. One flies especially close, catching insects just above our heads. The second part of the walk is in more degraded forest, where Swallow-tailed and Little Bee-eaters perch in the clearings. Flowering lantana (an invasive plant native to Mexico) attracts various sunbirds: Variable, Scarlet-chested, Beautiful and one male Copper. A second Green Turaco spreads its magenta wings and gives a second chance to some that missed the first: in a dense forest not everyone sees everything. Three Orange-cheeked Waxbills perform for us all on the track ahead of us, and we finish with an African Thrush in a fruiting fig by the animal orphanage. By now we are beginning to overheat, and are glad of the cold drinks on sale. We are equally glad to see Ali and our air-conditioned coach.

Our previous groups have taken lunch nearby at Lamin Lodge, but recently the place has closed due to a dispute about the non-payment of taxes. So instead we return to the hotel. The drive back is slower as there is more traffic in the bustling streets of Serrekunda town. We still have time for a rest after lunch before setting out again; but Pete stays out and finds a Violet Turaco in the heat of the afternoon.

A short stop where the main road crosses Kotu Creek turns up the little and large of kingfishers: Malachite and Giant together. A single Mourning Dove provides comparison with the more abundant Red-eyed Doves. We spend the rest of the daylight just across the road from Abuko, in the Lamin rice-fields. Here a gentle ramble produces a steady stream of fine sightings. An immature Lizard Buzzard is followed by several Senegal Parrots and Black-billed Wood Doves. One of many fruiting figs has Violet Turacos and later, a Bearded Barbet visiting. A pair of Splendid Sunbirds sip nectar from the mouth of a plastic bottle, placed in the crown of a palm for the liquid that will be fermented into toddy. As well as finding us good birds, Barry shows us the sweet potatoes, cassava and the small hibiscus flowers that are harvested to make the purple *wonjo* juice. A Fine-spotted Woodpecker plays hide and seek in a small mango tree, and here is our first brilliant male Northern Red Bishop, perched in the scopes atop another young mango. Little do we realize how many of these scarlet beauties we are destined to see in the next few days. We head back at dusk, as the many Broad-billed Rollers hawk insects at treetop height. Further into the hotel garden, John and Louise find a pair of African Pied Hornbills coming in to roost. There are many glasses of local Julbrew draught beer to accompany the French buffet.

Monday, 5 November

After breakfast, our route takes us south towards the Senegal border at Marakissa. Among the many Northern Red Bishops are a few Black-winged Red Bishops, equally brightly coloured. Many are perched on the tall reed-mace-like stems of flowering millet. Our first Double-spurred Francolins are perched up on a wall near the road. A walk just beyond the village produces a pair of African Pygmy Kingfishers, displaying to each other and offering us wonderful views. The supporting cast includes Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Brown Babbler, Fork-tailed Drongo and Vitelline Masked Weaver. (Vitelline means the colour of egg-yolk).

Our hosts at the Marakissa River Camp welcome us in mid-morning. The camp is in a picturesque spot overlooking a wetland and surrounded by palm forest. Riverside birds here include Giant and Pied Kingfishers, a pair of Hamerkops adding to their huge nest, and various egrets and herons. Barry leads a walk through the woodland, where all is quiet at first. But in one spot, his whistled imitation of the Pearl-spotted Owlet call attracts Grey-backed Camaroptera, Green-backed (Senegal) Eremomela, Northern Crombec and Splendid Sunbird. A Siffling Cisticola is nearby – alternatively called Short-winged in the new Borrow & Demey field guide on Senegal. The buffet lunch is worth waiting for and includes *domoda*, a local speciality in a peanut sauce. The other main attraction of the river camp is watching the birds coming to drink at various points in the garden: Greater Honeyguide, Purple Glossy Starlings, Black-capped Babblers, and large flocks of entertaining Piapiacs with their red-billed juveniles.

The journey back has several stops, during which we watch Mottled Spinetail, Pin-tailed Whydah, Shikra, Grey Kestrel and Rufous-crowned Rollers. Tonight's buffet has an Italian theme.

Tuesday, 6 November

Brufut is an area of dry scrub and forest a few miles south of the hotel. By 0800 we are out in the field, walking along a dry, sandy track. Soon we are watching Yellow-throated Leafloves in a fruiting fig: these large, distinctive greenbuls make a chortling call as they feed and move about. Also in the tree are a Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher and an African Thrush. There are brief views of Lavender Waxbills at ground level and two African Green Pigeons flying over. Next comes a pair of Green Turacos, chasing each other through the larger canopies and displaying brilliant magenta wings that draw gasps from us all. One of the local birders, Aba, joins us and soon finds us a juvenile Diederik Cuckoo (Didric in the new book!) which we watch for a while. Another juvenile cuckoo joins it which Aba calls a Klaas's; but it disappears too quickly. Luckily Roger's photograph of it confirms the identification. Aba leads us to a superb Long-tailed Nightjar only three metres from us: but such is its camouflage as it lies on the brown leaf-litter that it takes a while for all to see it. A Mottled Spinetail gives a better view than yesterday's, and we stop for cold drinks at the woodland bar. Continuing along the track in the coach, we have Little Bee-eaters, a Pygmy Kingfisher perched and flight views of Double-spurred Francolin and Violet Turaco.

Ali turns the coach round at a river which the local buses are fording – after this year's heavy rains this is hazardous and worth a photograph! One truck is already stranded in the middle. Here are Lizard Buzzard, Bearded Barbet and a Levillant's Cuckoo. On the way back we stop to watch the White-billed Buffalo Weavers displaying by their vast apartment blocks made of sticks. Several pairs nest in each structure.

After lunch, there is time for Roger, Liz, Yvonne and me to enjoy a swim. At 1530 we set out again, for an afternoon of waders and waterbirds. Passing through Bakau, Barry points out the site of the first Portuguese settlement, which centuries later also became the original area of Gambian tourism. Shortly afterwards, our first Abyssinian Roller appears in perfect light: surely a contender for the most beautifully plumaged species anywhere. Nearby is Cape Creek, where a large flock of Caspian Terns and Grey-headed Gulls is joined by a few Whimbrel, Greenshanks, and Black-winged Stilts. Two Pink-backed Pelicans perch on the mangroves behind the terns. Across the road is a lone Bar-tailed Godwit. A little further on many egrets include a lone Black perched on a mangrove, and Western Reef Herons are common. The huge baobabs by the road make this a picturesque spot. We have our first looks at Lesser Blue-eared Starlings on the wires, not far from a second Abyssinian Roller. As usual, there are plenty of Western Grey Plantain-eaters, Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, Western Red-billed Hornbills and Piapiacs. The Bund Road is disappointing since the tide is extremely high; so there is no exposed mud for migrant waders. A few Sandwich Terns are all we can muster here. A pleasant breeze makes these open sites cool enough to enjoy, and we return at sunset after another successful day. The African buffet includes beef *domoda* from The Gambia, as well as tasty dishes from Senegal and Guinea Bissau.

Wednesday, 7 November

While we enjoy various combinations of porridge, yoghurt, eggs, bacon, fruit (and much else) at breakfast, a Palm-nut Vulture with white wings flies over, and a Woodland Kingfisher perches in the courtyard.

Setting out for Faraba Banta, we notice larger numbers of Blue-bellied Rollers than usual. One fine Rufous-crowned Roller also perches on the wires. In Brikama we stop for ice and bananas. Our first birding stop is one that Barry recommends, a new site even for our experienced driver Ali. It is Bonto Forest near Pirang, where a community project is headed by a ranger and birder named Kawsu. He leads us to a beautiful pair of Northern White-faced Owls roosting in a tree. Nearby an African Pied Hornbill feeds on a large fruit, while we watch in the scope. Little Greenbuls and Green Hylas call unseen in the canopy, and after a short walk we return to the coach, since Faraba Banta is our main morning destination. This is an area of scrubland used for pasturing cattle, with dotted cashew trees and many large acacias and other fine trees. It is a renowned raptor site, but quiet for us at first. Later, Dark Chanting Goshawk appear both perched and in flight; and both Wahlberg's and Short-toed Eagles appear. Nearby we watch three Yellow-billed Oxpeckers on a herd of cattle, and call in briefly to another of Barry's favourite areas, Mandinaba. Here a small forest patch is home to an obliging pair of Blue-breasted Kingfishers. Running out of time for any more morning birding, we head west to the coast at Sanyang, passing a fine Long-crested Eagle on the way.

The lunch spot is a café on the beach, where five of us enjoy an Atlantic swim before lunch. The freshly-caught ladyfish, served with chips and salad, is much enjoyed. Some now rest in the shade while the rest of

us explore a lagoon just inland. Here hundreds of Caspian and Royal Terns loaf in the shallows with equally large numbers of Grey-headed Gulls. Among them are various waders including Black-winged Stilts, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone. As we leave in the coach, we stop to scope the north end of the same lagoon, where the tern flocks can still be enjoyed, along with Senegal Thick-knee. A shout from Pete alerts us to a Western Olivaceous Warbler which is singing as if in Spain in May.

We head back earlier than usual to the hotel, where a shower is the first priority after a hot day. An hour's wander in the garden produces most of the expected and now familiar species, with the addition of Red-chested Swallow, African Palm Swift and White-faced Whistling-Ducks flying above. The climax is a virtuoso performance from a Yellow-crowned Gonolek, which offers itself to the photographers as it feeds in the bushes next to us.

Thursday, 8 November

This morning we are out at Tujering and Tanji village. Two Palm-nut Vultures and an Osprey carrying a large fish appear on the journey. Tujering used to be woodland, but is now being cleared for cultivation. A large charcoal pit shows what happened to some of the trees. Here we wander among the tall aromatic *Salvia* weeds and find a surprisingly good selection of birds. There are still enough trees standing for species such as Brubru, Striped Kingfisher, Bearded Barbet, Greater Honeyguide and Green-backed (or Senegal in the new book) Eremomela. Black-crowned Tchagras, Singing Cisticolas and Black-billed Wood Doves feed in the understorey and fly up into the trees to sing. Plain-backed Pipits also use the trees as perches, before dropping to the ground to feed; and three Little Bee-eaters hawk insects together. There are Whinchat and Willow Warbler visiting from Northern Europe. Raptors include a beautiful pair of Lanner Falcons, Black-winged (or –shouldered) Kite, Dark Chanting Goshawk and Grey Kestrel. There are also brief views of White-shouldered Black Tit (not an easy bird to find on our itinerary), Bush Petronia and a Pied-winged Swallow.

In Tanji village we stop to watch Red-chested Swallows on the wires: they resemble Barn Swallows but nest here under the overhanging roofs. At the north end of the village we spend an hour on the beach, watching the gulls, terns and waders. Caspian and Royal Terns are only in small numbers here, but there are hundreds of gulls. Most are Grey-headed, in a variety of plumages. Among the Lesser Black-backed Gulls are two slightly larger adult Kelp Gulls with small dark eyes and greenish legs. There are Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling. We walk back to the coach past the fish-smoking sheds.

Siesta follows another excellent lunch served especially for us at the Senegambia. From the swimming pool we watch Broad-billed Roller, Hamerkop flying over, and a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird perched. We set out again for Kotu Creek, by popular request for a return visit. We start with a few African Thrushes, and an Oriole Warbler frustratingly against the light. It's high tide in the creek, where the usual waterbirds and the goggle-eyed mudskippers make relaxing viewing. Northern Crombec and Little Weaver are followed by a fine male Copper Sunbird on the edge of the ricefields. We return to base, and start to think about the up-river adventure. African Pied Hornbills again fly in to roost in one of the hotel courtyards at dusk.

Friday, 9 November

After breakfast, we say fond farewells to John and Louise, who are flying home today. We set off on the up-river adventure just before 0800, stopping in Brikama for extra water supplies and ice. Pirang shrimp-farm is a site where the public are now excluded from the raised embankments between the ponds. But by walking along the track to the side, we see Spur-winged Goose, Striated Heron, and at the far end a distant flock of Greater Flamingos feeding, and African Spoonbill in flight. Terns are Gull-billed, Sandwich, Caspian and Little.

Most of the road to Tendaba is now an excellent tarmac surface. We make good speed, passing Tawny Eagle, Grasshopper Buzzard, Palm-nut Vultures and two Bateleurs. The Blue-bellied Rollers of the coastal palm trees give way to numerous Abyssinian and Rufous-crowned Rollers, both typical of drier country. A pair of Violet Turacos show well in a tree alongside the coach. A drinks stop at the Bintang Bolon (River) is a chance to scan for a family of Black Crowned Cranes that have been recorded here recently, but there are too many places to hide. In Kwinella we stop to watch the nesting Pink-backed Pelicans, and arrive at Tendaba Camp, on the Gambia River, at 1330, in good time for a tasty lunch. Five Yellow-billed Storks soar high above camp.

Siesta time is an opportunity for all but two of us to cool down in the welcome swimming pool. The early part of the afternoon walk is quiet, with only Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Shikra and Wahlberg's Eagle of note. However, as soon as we explore the first stretch of tarmac road beyond the village, we find plenty to enjoy. Red-rumped Swallows are our first, followed by some great portraits of Bruce's Green Pigeons and Bearded Barbets in the scopes. A male Greater Honeyguide explores a bees' nest. Long-tailed and Purple seem to be the most numerous glossy starlings. Barry's owl whistle finally attracts the real deal: a fine (but diminutive) Pearl-spotted Owlet in a huge mahogany overhanging the road. At dusk those with keen hearing can make out the distant low hoots of a Verreaux's Eagle Owl. We arrive back at base just before the generator starts up at 1900, giving us light and a cooling fan in our rooms.

Saturday, 10 November

Breakfast is at 0620, and soon after seven we are out in a pirogue, on the great Gambia River, which is still tidal here, a hundred miles inland. Two African Hobbies perched and a Peregrine flying start us off; an African Spoonbill and several Spur-winged Geese fly across the river. Red Colobus Monkeys watch us as they feed. We have high tide for our trip up the Kisi Bolon, and down the Tunku Bolon. These are rivers in the mangroves on the north bank, filled with kingfishers, herons and egrets. Mouse-brown Sunbirds attend their nests built out over the water: one domed nest we watch from a distance has two well-grown young, being fed. White-throated and European Bee-eaters are a regular sight, both at rest and in flight. An African Blue Flycatcher takes some patience to find as its fanned blue tail and erratic sallies after insects are usually a little hidden by the vegetation. A Subalpine Warbler and a Green-backed (Senegal) Eremomela are in the same spot. The dominant songs are of Blue-breasted Kingfisher, various doves – here including Mourning – and the random whistling of the Common Wattle-eyes. There are plenty of Woolly-necked Storks and Hamerkops, some of the latter at their vast nests. Wandy, our boatman, has two especially good moments for us: first a White-backed Night Heron, with huge eye, perched on a branch; and nearby a well-camouflaged African Scops Owl – but easy to see when you know where to look! A perched Brown Snake-Eagle is distinctive with its huge head of raised feathers. A Martial Eagle perches close to its nest; later it (or its mate) appears in flight. There are also Short-toed Eagles, an immature African Fish Eagle, and a Dark Chanting Goshawk. The commonest egret is Intermediate, one we haven't seen yet. An explosion of Black Egrets from one tree leaves a few still perched in view, looking around nervously as their rest is disturbed. Two mammoth Goliath Herons are a fine sight, and we also enjoy Mosque Swallows in flight. There are brief views too of Yellow-backed Weaver and Cut-throat Finch. The Tendaba boat-trip is always a highlight of the tour, and this one surpasses expectations.

During siesta a Wahlberg's Eagle soars overhead; but most of the time we are resting or keeping cool in the pool. At 1545 we set out again for the sandy tracks of the Kiang West National Park. The first stop features a statuesque Grasshopper Buzzard perched on a dead tree; in the same spot the resident Rufous-crowned Roller is trying to evict two Abyssinian Rollers from its territory. We watch Yellow-billed Oxpeckers inspecting both sheep and cattle for ticks – their attentions are not always welcomed. A field of recently harvested peanuts attracts a Dark Chanting Goshawk, Fork-tailed Drongos, and both Purple and Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starlings. There are Green Wood Hoopoes fussing noisily around the trunks of the trees. Next come a fine pair of Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Bruce's Green Pigeons, and (best of all) an obliging African Golden Oriole. We watch this beautiful bird for several minutes: Barry can whistle its call well, which keeps it interested in us. At our furthest point we are hoping to see Abyssinian Ground Hornbills, but the grass is waist-high this year after the heavy rains; and they are not to be seen. The grass is likely to keep growing too, since we hit a thunderstorm on the way home, and find puddles in the sand of the camp compound.

Sunday, 11 November

As we leave Tendaba after breakfast, a Fine-spotted Woodpecker plays hide-and-peek with the photographers. We have a cloudy morning for our journey to Georgetown, but yesterday's rain has passed. As we drive east on the one remaining part of rough road, to Soma, a Brown Snake-Eagle and Black-rumped Waxbills are in the same spot, but the Lavender Waxbills by the road stay too briefly. Barry finds us a pair of Abyssinian Ground Hornbills. This is now an unusual and declining species in the Gambia, but this pair show themselves off, up in a tree. The red-wattled male has a frog in its bill. They fly across the road, showing off white primaries that are totally hidden when perched. Our first obliging Levillant's Cuckoo perches in a tree.

Soma Wetlands give us our first Egyptian Plover, which Olive finds on the road ahead of us. This exquisite wader, which breeds in Senegal and spends the dry season here, is a must for anyone with a camera. The Greek historian Herodotus first described their habits in the 5th century B.C.: he wrote that on the banks of the Nile one bird would enter the open mouths of the crocodiles and pick out flesh from between their teeth. There are a few Marsh Sandpipers among the other waders here. Just before we reach the Farafenni ferry, three Four-banded Sandgrouse fly past us and keep pace with us for a while. Our crossing is comparatively quick and easy: sometimes it takes an hour to queue, but today cars are few, and three ferries are operating. The only delay is when the coach's rear wheels are stuck in the dip between land and boat as Ali drives on. Pushing by several stout ferrymen is to no avail, so we are chained to the huge truck in front and pulled aboard, accompanied by much shouting. The bustle of both ends of the ferry is colourful and photogenic. There are many fruit stalls; and hawkers bring us brightly coloured materials, with some success.

Once on the north bank, we stop to buy ice, peanuts and bananas, and head east on the fine tarmac road to Georgetown. When I last came up-river, the mud road was a nightmare, and we used to arrive at our destination after dark, exhausted. A stop by a waterhole produces nothing coming to drink, as the best rains for 20 years have left standing water everywhere. However the surrounding scrub has a superb male Exclamatory Paradise Whydah display-fighting from treetop to treetop, the first of many for the day. Here also are Vieillot's Barbet, Diederik Cuckoo, and Namaqua Dove. Several Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks feed on dry ground around us, and a fruiting tree has a Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat.

The main afternoon stop is at the Kaur Wetlands, where several more Egyptian Plovers are only one of the highlights. There is a pair of Knob-billed Duck with the White-faced Whistling Duck flock, which scatter each time a Eurasian Marsh Harrier flies over. There are two Ruff, two Kittlitz's Plovers and large numbers of Senegal Thick-knees too. Best of all are over a thousand Collared Pratincoles: a wonderful sight. They form dense flocks on the ground, and are above us hawking insects in the manner of swallows for an hour. More distant are Yellow-crowned Bishops. A Quailfinch feeds close to us on the embankment of the road. Again an Egyptian Plover stops to feed on the road ahead.

Pressing on, we stop for Black-headed Lapwings, looking immaculate on the ground, and White-backed Vultures above a cow carcass. Short stops at two more wetland sites reveal Egyptian Plovers at each, making a total of about 16 birds at four sites. There are also Black Crakes and African Jacanas. At Wassu we enjoy the spectacular gathering of Red-throated Bee-eaters at a nesting colony, and perched around a pond. In the other direction, a Northern Carmine Bee-eater perches atop a huge baobab. Here are also dowdy Northern Anteater Chats and scarlet Yellow-crowned Gonolek and Bearded Barbet.

The last stretch of road is full of rollers on the wires: mostly Abyssinian, with a few Rufous-crowned. Now we arrive at the ferry which takes us onto the island where we stay. Usually called Georgetown for ease, the island's town is now officially called Janjangbureh. Yvonne finds a Yellow-throated Leaflove in a fruiting fig as we wait to cross. This crossing is quick and easy, and soon we are enjoying cold drinks at our riverside camp. Simple but adequate accommodation is in round huts in the courtyard. A short stroll in the riverside garden turns up Blackcap Babblers, and many herons and egrets making roosting flights. The buffet dinner is worth waiting for, and as we head off to our rooms, we are delighted by a pair of African Scops Owls, illuminated by torchlight in a *neem* tree (*Azadirachta indica*) in the courtyard.

Monday, 12 November

Garden birds in the few minutes of daylight before breakfast include Swamp Flycatcher by the river and African Mourning Doves. This morning we have a slow and leisurely cruise downstream from Georgetown to Kuntaur, including a cooked lunch on board. Weavers' nests overhang the river all the way, but most are untenanted now that the dry season has begun. A few are still attended by Village and Yellow-backed Weavers. Grey-headed Kingfishers become a regular sight – this adaptable species is at home by water and in the driest bush country. Abyssinian and Broad-billed Rollers are common; but the one pair of Blue-bellied Rollers we see are under some stress, as they chase off a Long-crested Eagle and even a Long-tailed Cormorant that fly too close to the nest. As if this is not enough pressure, a large Nile Monitor with a taste for eggs is starting to climb the dead palm that is their nest tree. Yellow-crowned Gonoleks and Oriole Warblers make a frequent soundtrack to the cruise, but are not so easy to see. Birds of prey include many

thermalling White-backed Vultures, a Wahlberg's Eagle, a Shikra chasing a Woodland Kingfisher, and our first Red-necked Falcon, a magnificent little raptor perched in a palm, and scopeable as the boat idles for us.

By 1030 it is too hot for us to remain on the boat's upper deck; so we head downstairs where the bar is open and the view of the banks is still good. Late morning views include a family of Dark-faced Baboons, a fine pair of Violet Turacos, and a small flock of Red-billed Queleas. A fine cooked lunch is served at 1245, with rice and various tasty dishes. Two Hippos finally appear as we approach Kuntaur: in the Gambia they are shy and hard to find, since they are persecuted when they raid the rice crops at night. An Osprey and two Eurasian Marsh Harriers are our last birds of note before we disembark at 1430. The final score in a contest between the charismatic riverside raptors is: African Fish Eagle 4, Palm-nut Vulture 3.

From Kuntaur it's only a few minutes' drive to Wassu, where the Northern Carmine Bee-eaters offer far better views than yesterday. They share a tree with Abyssinian Roller, Village Indigobird, Black-rumped Waxbill, and Cut-throat Finches. At the Red-throated Bee-eater colony, Liz puts us onto a single Little Green Bee-eater, a species well known also to birders in Asia. Heading back to the ferry, we stop for good views of Double-spurred Francolin and Black-headed Lapwing.

After a short drinks break back in our camp bar, we set out again for a wilderness habitat at the east end of MacCarthy Island. Here our highlights are Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling, Pin-tailed Whydahs, an inquisitive Pearl-spotted Owlet, and several Four-banded Sandgrouse coming for an evening drink. The star is a Dwarf Bittern, which stops in view in the scopes a few times as it moves from one rice-field area to another. After an excellent dinner, African drums and local dancers entertain!

Tuesday, 13 November

Swamp Flycatcher and Western Olivaceous Warbler are by the river at first light. After breakfast we start with a walk by the newly completed southern bridge off the island. There are Violet Turaco, Levaillant's Cuckoo, and a Red-faced Cisticola, not a species we often find here. We check various rice-fields for Greater Painted-Snipe, but without success. Bruce's Green Pigeons offer our best views yet, and Roger finds a small flock of Yellow White-eyes. Once back on the south bank, we stop frequently to watch anything of interest. One tree has a pair of Fork-tailed Drongos harrying an African Harrier-Hawk. Marabou Storks have a nesting colony on treetops in a village. Little Green Bee-eaters hawk insects and return to their favoured tree many times. A pair of handsome Red Patas Monkeys drink from one of the many roadside pools. Another pool has Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Black-rumped Waxbill, Yellow-fronted Canary and Tree Pipit drinking. Raptors include Wahlberg's Eagle and a juvenile Bateleur, which keeps pace with the coach for a long time. The morning highlight is the pair of magnificent Verreaux's Eagle Owls that stare at us from their long-established roost in a grove of trees. Ali has known the site for years, but on each visit a new search has to be made: since the owls move around within the grove. Luckily one is obligingly in the open, and the second close by, more hidden. The pink eyelids are a surprising plumage detail.

After lunch and siesta, we set out again for the same area as yesterday evening, but walking further to the abandoned hotel. This has no roof, but bizarrely, a full swimming pool inhabited by frogs, and a gas cooker and washing machine out in the open. Its garden of acacia scrub and huge baobabs provides us with views of Northern Puffback, Scarlet-chested and Beautiful Sunbirds, African Paradise Flycatcher, and a fine Grey-headed Bush-shrike. This is a very vocal and conspicuous individual which gives us lengthy views. Brilliantly lit photographic subjects include Abyssinian and Broad-billed Rollers, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, Senegal Parrot, and Bearded Barbet. Nicole finds an African Golden Oriole, and we finish with great views of Four-banded Sandgrouse on the ground and in the air. Stone Partridges set off their car-alarm calls in the scrub at dusk, but cannot be tempted into view.

The African Scops Owl calls as we go to bed.

Wednesday, 14 November

Some of us awake to the sound of the Gambian Epauletted Fruit-Bats uttering their monotonous single notes in the trees of the courtyard. A Pearl-spotted Owlet calls before dawn too.

We leave Georgetown and head west for Tendaba, passing Brown Snake-Eagle and Red Patas Monkey on the way. A Palm-nut Vulture shares a tree with a Short-toed Eagle. At Jahally we stop to explore the large

complex of irrigated rice-fields. With Chinese aid a huge pump was installed to provide year-round rice; but many of the paddyfields are filled more with water-lilies than rice. It's a great place for African Jacanas, many herons and egrets. Purple Heron, Knob-billed Duck, Spur-winged Goose, and (after much searching) a lone male African Pygmy Goose are the principal sightings. Black Coucals are also much in evidence – much to Ali's surprise.

Continuing on the good tarmac road, we meet a flock of Helmeted Guineafowl, and a fine juvenile Martial Eagle, very pale, both perched and in flight. It may have had the guinea fowl on its menu, as they were close-by. Stopping briefly for Namaqua Dove, Lanner Falcon and Grasshopper Buzzard, we hit the rough road after Soma. A donkey is attended and groomed by four Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. We arrive at Tendaba Camp for a late lunch.

After a swim or a rest, we set out at 1600 for a boat trip: in the reverse direction from Saturday, to optimize the direction of the sun. We enter Tunku Bolon against the receding tide, and finish by racing back down the Kisi Bolon. It is amazing how strong the tide is so far inland. We have many of the highlights of the other day, but now we also have a pair of Northern Puffback, Diederik Cuckoos and a male Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike. The shoulder patch is a deep orange-yellow, as illustrated as a variant in the new Borrow and Demey book. There are good views of Woolly-necked and Yellow-billed Storks, and our second juvenile Martial of the day, this one heraldically perched atop a huge baobab. Delights range in size from Malachite Kingfisher to Goliath Heron, and there's even a brief Nile Crocodile appearance, before it slides into the muddy waters. We are back at dusk.

Thursday, 15 November

Today we travel back to the coast. But before we go, we take a bush walk to the peanut factory after an early breakfast. A Stone Partridge walks across the track, but only Chris and Olive are looking its way. Lavender Waxbill and Northern Crombec are scarcely more obliging, but at least Namaqua Dove, Bearded Barbet, Senegal Eremomela and Northern Puffback perform for scopes and cameras. A Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat turns up on the return walk. The juvenile blue-eared glossy starlings are more immediately identifiable than the adults: a brown-breasted one has to be Lesser: Greater are almost black on the breast.

Leaving Tendaba soon after 1000, we tackle the last section of rough road, and stop at Jattaba School. School visits have been a feature of our Gambian tours for many years. The headmaster is expecting us, and welcomes us into one of the junior classes. He tells us that the school has 500 children, in 14 classes. But as they only have seven classrooms, there is a morning and an afternoon shift. The catchment area is two villages that speak different languages, Mandinka and Fulla. The children sing us a song, and demonstrate with their teacher the system of 'jolly phonics' that they use to teach English, with a rhyme for each letter. We reciprocate with an unrehearsed (chaotic!) version of Old MacDonald's Farm, which helps to bring a smile to many young faces. The teachers thank us for the offerings of pens, pencils, erasers, and exercise books we have brought.

At Bintang Bolon, a short search reveals the three Black Crowned Cranes which we looked for on Friday. After we have watched them feeding in long grass for a while, they emerge and fly right over us as they head for pastures new. This is a scarce species in The Gambia and easy to miss. Two fine Lanner Falcons also fly right over our heads. The Kalagi River Camp makes a great spot for our picnic, as we can sit in the shade and drink cold soft drinks and beers. The view is over the west bank of the same wetland. The rest of the journey is more comfortable on the tarmac, and we are back at the Senegambia by 1600. We are all happy to enjoy the facilities in and outside our air-conditioned rooms. The dusk song of the White-crowned Robin-Chat just outside my room is as fine as any Blackbird's or Nightingale's. The Asian buffet is a wonderful spread.

Friday, 16 November

At our familiar breakfast spot on the terrace, we watch two African Pied Hornbills fly from their roost in the garden. We have time for one last outing, to a new spot: Tanji Reserve, on the coast just beyond Brufut. This is a bird reserve, protecting coastal scrub. There are a few worrying signs of recent illegal tree-cutting but it's almost pristine. Here are Little and Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Levillant's Cuckoo, a perched Lanner Falcon, Variable Sunbird and Grey-backed Camaroptera, all showing well. A Violet Turaco is not inclined to stay in view for long. One Bruce's Green Pigeon shares a treetop with a few African Green Pigeons,

making comparison easy. Two Four-banded Sandgrouse rise from our feet with a twittering call: in fact this happens three times. Two Ospreys fly over, one carrying a large fish.

Taking a short break in the coach, we move a mile further on to the river mouth just north of the fish-smoking site, where we were last Thursday. Here the massed Caspian Terns and Grey-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are mixed in with smaller numbers of Sandwich and Royal Terns. Two Common Terns are with them, showing red legs but black bills at this time of year. An immature Northern Gannet is a surprise, plunging into the sea not far offshore. Another rare sighting is of Clive Barlow, author of the first Gambia field-guide: Ali tells us that he lives in nearby Brufut. On the return journey, Pete requests one last stop for his favourite bird, the Blue-bellied Roller, which he spends a while digiscoping.

There is time for relaxing and repacking before we check out and enjoy a final lunch with Barry and Ali. Also joining us is Samba Batch Fye, one of the Senegambia Hotel directors, who has also organized our up-river programme. We have Batch to thank for our drinks. Saying fond farewells to Barry and Ali, we head off to the airport where the check-in and other formalities are quick and hassle-free. Monarch is on time, and we land at Gatwick 40 minutes early at 2220.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Barry for guiding and Ali for safe driving and to both for wonderful wildlife spotting. Aba at Brufut, Kawsu at Bonto Forest and Wandy at Tendaba also helped by locating special birds for us. Thanks to staff at The Gambia Experience for flight logistics and to Samba Batch Fye for organizing our up-river programme and providing an excellent air-conditioned vehicle. Most of all, thanks to all of you for participating in the group with such enthusiasm and good humour. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Special thanks go also to Roger C, Roger A, John, Yvonne and Nicole for the photographs that illustrate this report. Roger C needs a special mention for the 6,730 photos that he took during the tour, the best of which he has happily shared with us all!

Simon Boyes
Ornitholidays
29, Straight Mile
Romsey
Hampshire
SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794-519445

E-mail: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

December 2012

Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given. Humidity was high at the start of the tour, but dropped in the second week.

- 02 Nov Arrive Banjul 1520. To Senegambia Hotel (SGH). Sunny, 32°C (90°F)
- 03 Nov SGH. Bijilo Forest Park. Kotu Creek. Sunny, 27-35°C (81-95°F)
- 04 Nov SGH. Abuko Forest Reserve. Lamin Rice-fields. Sunny, 27-35°C (81-95°F)
- 05 Nov SGH. Marakissa River Camp (lunch). Dry, partly cloudy, 25-32°C (77-90°F)
- 06 Nov SGH. Brufut Reserve. Cape Creek, Bakau, and Bund Road, Banjul. Sunny, 25-33°C (77-91°F)
- 07 Nov SGH. Bonto Forest, Faraba Banta Bush-track, Mandinaba Forest, Sanyang Beach (lunch). Sunny, 25-33°C (77-91°F)
- 08 Nov SGH. Tujering and Tanji. Kotu Creek. Sunny, 26-34°C (79-94°F)
- 09 Nov SGH to Tendaba Camp, via Pirang. Sunny, 27-33°C (81-91°F)
- 10 Nov Tendaba: boat-trip a.m, Kiang West National Park p.m. Sunny a.m, evening thunder. 26-33°C (79-91°F)
- 11 Nov Tendaba to Georgetown via Soma, Farafenni Ferry, Kaur, Wassu. Dry, partly cloudy, 27-34°C (81-94°F)
- 12 Nov Georgetown to Kuntaur river cruise. Wassu. East end of MacCarthy Island p.m. Sunny, 26-33°C (79-91°F)
- 13 Nov Georgetown. South Bank road. P.m. as on 12th Nov. Sunny, 26-32°C (79-90°F)
- 14 Nov Georgetown to Tendaba via Jahally Rice-fields. Boat trip p.m. Sunny, 26-32°C (79-90°F)
- 15 Nov Tendaba to SGH, via Jattaba School and Bintang Bolon. Sunny, 26-32°C (79-90°F)
- 16 Nov SGH. Tanji Bird Reserve. Banjul depart 1700. Sunny, 26-32°C (79-90°F)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded

1 2h means seen on 1
day and heard on 2
other days

Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)

1 = 1 – 4 individuals
2 = 5 - 9
3 = 10 - 99
4 = 100 - 999
5 = 1000 - 9999

This list follows the order and nomenclature of *A Field Guide to Birds of the Gambia* by Barlow, Wacher and Disley. Any departures from it are explained in the taxonomic notes (^{1,2, etc}), that follow the list.

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Northern Gannet	1	1	<i>Sula bassana</i>
Great Cormorant	4	1	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Long-tailed Cormorant	9	2	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
African Darter	7	3	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
Pink-backed Pelican	6	3	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>
Dwarf Bittern	1	1	<i>Ixobrychus sturmii</i>
White-backed Night Heron	1	1	<i>Gorsachius leuconotus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	3	2	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Squacco Heron	9	3	<i>Ardea ralloides</i>
Cattle Egret	14	3	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Striated Heron	9	3	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
Black Egret	2	3	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>
Western Reef Heron	11	3	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
Little Egret	9	2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Intermediate Egret	3	3	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
Great White Egret	13	3	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Purple Heron	2	1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Grey Heron	12	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Black-headed Heron	7	2	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
Goliath Heron	2	1	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
Hamerkop	11	3	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
Yellow-billed Stork	2	2	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	3	3	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Marabou Stork	3	3	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>
African Spoonbill	2	3	<i>Platalea alba</i>
Greater Flamingo	1	3	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
White-faced Whistling Duck	9	3	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
Spur-winged Goose	6	3	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
Knob-billed Duck	2	3	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>
African Pygmy Goose	1	1	<i>Nettapus auritus</i>
Black-winged Kite	4	1	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Black (Yellow-billed) Kite ¹	15	3	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
African Fish Eagle	3	1	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Palm-nut Vulture	10	1	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>
Hooded Vulture	15	4	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
White-backed Vulture	3	3	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Short-toed Eagle	4	2	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Brown Snake-Eagle	3	1	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Bateleur	3	1	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
African Harrier-Hawk	11	1	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	6	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Dark Chanting Goshawk	9	2	<i>Melierax metabates</i>
Shikra	11	2	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Grasshopper Buzzard	4	1	<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>
Lizard Buzzard	7	1	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
Tawny Eagle	1	1	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Wahlberg's Eagle	6	1	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>

Long-crested Eagle	2		1	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>
Martial Eagle	2		1	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Osprey	4		1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Grey Kestrel	11		1	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>
Red-necked Falcon	1		1	<i>Falco chicquera</i>
African Hobby	1		1	<i>Falco cuvieri</i>
Lanner Falcon	5		1	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1		1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Stone Partridge	1	5h	1	<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>
Ahanta Francolin	1		1	<i>Francolinus achantensis</i>
Double-spurred Francolin	10	1h	1	<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>
Helmeted Guineafowl	1		2	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Black Crake	4		1	<i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>
Common Moorhen	2		1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Black Crowned Crane	1		1	<i>Balearica pavonina</i>
African Jacana	6		3	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	7		2	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Senegal Thick-knee	9	1h	4	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>
Egyptian Plover	1		3	<i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>
Collared Pratincole	1		5	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Little Ringed Plover	1		1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Ringed Plover	4		3	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Kittlitz's Plover	1		1	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
Grey Plover	3		1	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Wattled Lapwing	9		3	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
Black-headed Lapwing	4		3	<i>Vanellus tectus</i>
Spur-winged Lapwing	12		4	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Sanderling	2		2	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Ruff	1		1	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Snipe	1		1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	4		1	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Eurasian Whimbrel	9		3	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Common Redshank	7		2	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	1		1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Common Greenshank	9		3	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Green Sandpiper	3		1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	2		1	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	12		3	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	2		3	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Grey-headed Gull	6		4	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
Kelp Gull	1		1	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	5		4	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Gull-billed Tern	2		2	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
Caspian Tern	7		4	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Royal Tern	5		4	<i>Sterna maxima</i>
Sandwich Tern	5		3	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Common Tern	1		1	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Little Tern	1		1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Four-banded Sandgrouse	4		3	<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i>
African Green Pigeon	2		2	<i>Treron calva</i>
Bruce's Green Pigeon	8		2	<i>Treron waalia</i>
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	2	1h	1	<i>Turtur afer</i>
Black-billed Wood Dove	9		2	<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>
Namaqua Dove	4		1	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Speckled Pigeon	15		3	<i>Columba guinea</i>
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	13		3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Red-eyed Dove	14	1h	4	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
African Mourning Dove	7		3	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>
Vinaceous Dove	14		3	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>
Laughing Dove	15		4	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Senegal Parrot	12	1h	3	<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	12		3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Green Turaco	2		1	<i>Tauraco persa</i>

Violet Turaco	6		1	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>
Western Grey Plantain-eater	15		3	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>
Levaillant's Cuckoo	9		1	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>
Klaas's Cuckoo	1		1	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>
Diederik Cuckoo	3		1	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
Black Coucal	2		2	<i>Centropus grillii</i>
Senegal Coucal	13		2	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
African Scops Owl	2	3h	1	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
Northern White-faced Owl ²	1		1	<i>Ptilopsis leucotis</i>
Verreaux's Eagle Owl	1	1h	1	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
Pearl-spotted Owllet	3	2h	1	<i>Glaucoedon perlatum</i>
Long-tailed Nightjar	1		1	<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>
Mottled Spinetail	4		1	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>
African Palm Swift	12		3	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Pallid Swift	2		2	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Little Swift	13		4	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Grey-headed Kingfisher	3		2	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	6	1h	3	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>
Woodland Kingfisher	13	1h	2	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>
Striped Kingfisher	1		1	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
African Pygmy Kingfisher	2		1	<i>Ceyx picta</i>
Malachite Kingfisher	7		1	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>
Giant Kingfisher	2		1	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
Pied Kingfisher	13		3	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Little Bee-eater	5		3	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	3		1	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
Red-throated Bee-eater	2		4	<i>Merops bulocki</i>
White-throated Bee-eater	2		3	<i>Merops albicollis</i>
Little Green Bee-eater	3		1	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
European Bee-eater	3	2h	3	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Northern Carmine Bee-eater	2		1	<i>Merops nubicus</i>
Rufous-crowned Roller	10		3	<i>Coracias naevia</i>
Blue-bellied Roller	12		3	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>
Abyssinian Roller	8		4	<i>Coracias abyssinica</i>
Broad-billed Roller	12		3	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
Green Wood Hoopoe	9		3	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Abyssinian Ground Hornbill	1		1	<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>
Western Red-billed Hornbill ³	15		3	<i>Tockus kempii</i>
African Pied Hornbill	5		1	<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>
African Grey Hornbill	14		3	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	5	6h	1	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>
Vieillot's Barbet	1		1	<i>Lybius vieilloti</i>
Bearded Barbet	11		2	<i>Lybius dubius</i>
Greater Honeyguide	4		1	<i>Indicator indicator</i>
Fine-spotted Woodpecker	2		1	<i>Campethera punctuligera</i>
Grey Woodpecker	13		1	<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	1		2	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>
Fanti Saw-wing	4		2	<i>Psalidoprocne obscura</i>
Mosque Swallow	3		2	<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	6		3	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	6		3	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Pied-winged Swallow	1		1	<i>Hirundo leucosoma</i>
Red-chested Swallow	10		2	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>
Yellow Wagtail	1		1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
White Wagtail	1		1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Plain-backed Pipit	1		1	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
Tree Pipit	1		1	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Red-shouldered Cuckoo-Shrike	1		1	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>
Little Greenbul	1	1h	1	<i>Andropadus virens</i>
Yellow-throated Leaflove	3		1	<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i>
Common Bulbul	15		4	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat	4		1	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>
White-crowned Robin-Chat	10		2	<i>Cossypha albicapilla</i>

Whinchat	1	1	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	
Northern Anteater Chat	2	1	<i>Myrmecocichla aethiops</i>	
African Thrush	5	1	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	
Sedge Warbler	-	2h	-	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Western Olivaceous Warbler	5	1h	1	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>
Red-faced Cisticola	1		1	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>
Singing Cisticola	1		1	<i>Cisticola cantans</i>
Siffling (Short-winged) Cisticola	1		1	<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>
Zitting Cisticola	5	1h	1	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Tawny-flanked Prinia	7		1	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
Yellow-breasted Apalis	1		1	<i>Apalis flavida</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	4	4h	1	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>
Green-backed (Senegal) Eremomela ⁴	4		1	<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>
Northern Crombec	3		1	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>
Oriole Warbler (Moho)	2	1h	1	<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>
Green Hylia	-	1h	-	<i>Hylia prasina</i>
Willow Warbler	1		1	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Blackcap	-	1h	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Subalpine Warbler	1		1	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
Northern Black Flycatcher	6		1	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>
Swamp Flycatcher	3		1	<i>Muscicapa aquatica</i>
Pied Flycatcher	1		1	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Common Wattle-eye	2		1	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>
African Blue Flycatcher	1		1	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	2		2	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>
African Paradise Flycatcher	1		1	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
Brown Babbler	7		2	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>
Blackcap Babbler	4		1	<i>Turdoides reinwardtii</i>
White-shouldered Black Tit	1		1	<i>Parus leucomelas</i>
Mouse-brown Sunbird	2		2	<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	3		1	<i>Nectarinia senegalensis</i>
Variable Sunbird	6		1	<i>Nectarinia venusta</i>
Copper Sunbird	2		1	<i>Nectarinia cuprea</i>
Splendid Sunbird	4		1	<i>Nectarinia coccinigaster</i>
Beautiful Sunbird	13		2	<i>Nectarinia pulchella</i>
Yellow White-eye	1		2	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>
African Golden Oriole	5		1	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>
Yellow-billed Shrike	14		3	<i>Corvinella corvina</i>
Brubru	1		1	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
Northern Puffback	3		1	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	3	2h	1	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>
Yellow-crowned Gonolek	10	3h	2	<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>
Grey-headed Bush Shrike	1		1	<i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo	8		2	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Piapiac	8		3	<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>
Pied Crow	14		4	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Purple Glossy Starling	7		3	<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>
Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling	10		3	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling	4		1	<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>
Long-tailed Glossy Starling	15		3	<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	3		3	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>
House Sparrow	4		1	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Grey-headed Sparrow	13		3	<i>Passer griseus</i>
Bush Petronia	2		1	<i>Petronia dentata</i>
White-billed Buffalo Weaver	11		3	<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>
Little Weaver	1		1	<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>
Black-necked Weaver	3		1	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>
Vitelline Masked Weaver	1		1	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Village Weaver	14		4	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Yellow-backed (Black-headed) Weaver	5		2	<i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i>
Red-billed Quelea	3		3	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Yellow-crowned Bishop	1		2	<i>Euplectes afer</i>
Black-winged Red Bishop	2		1	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>

Northern Red Bishop	12	3	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	13	3	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	12	3	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>
Lavender Waxbill	3	1	<i>Estrilda caeruleus</i>
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	2	1	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>
Black-rumped Waxbill	4	3	<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>
Quail-finch	1	1	<i>Ortygospiza atricollis</i>
Bronze Mannikin	9	3	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>
Cut-throat Finch	2	1	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>
Village Indigobird	9	2	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>
Pin-tailed Whydah	2	2	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
Exclamatory Paradise Whydah	1	2	<i>Vidua interjecta</i>
Yellow-fronted Canary	5	1	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>

Taxonomic Notes.

- 1 Black Kite: we saw only birds of the yellow-billed resident form which is often now split as a separate species (*aegyptius*) from the migratory form *migrans* that breeds in Europe and winters in Africa.
- 2 Northern White-faced Owl: this has now been removed from the genus *Scops*. *Scops* is therefore dropped from the English name.
- 3 Western Red-billed Hornbill: a recent split has divided African red-billed hornbills into four species.
- 4 Green-backed Eremomela: a recent split places Green-backed (*E. canescens*) in Central and East Africa; while the form in The Gambia is Senegal Eremomela. As it was named first, it keeps the name *pusilla*.

MAMMALS

Western Red Colobus	10	3	<i>Colobus badius</i>	
Dark-faced Baboon	2	2	<i>Papio papio</i>	
Red Patas Monkey	4	1	<i>Erythrocebus patas</i>	
Green Vervet Monkey	10	3	<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>	
Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat	4	2h	1	<i>Epomops gambianus</i>
Yellow-winged Bat	1	1	<i>Lavia frons</i>	
Striped Ground Squirrel	2	1	<i>Euxerus erythropus</i>	
Gambian Sun Squirrel	8	1	<i>Heliosciurus gambianus</i>	
Brown Rat	1	1	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	
Hippopotamus	1	1	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	

OTHER ANIMALS included Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*, Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus*, Agama Lizard *Agama agama*, Gecko *sp*, Square-marked Toad *Bufo regularis*, Atlantic Mudskipper *Periophthalmus barbarus*, etc.

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



Hooded Vulture



Verreaux's Eagle Owl



Black-crowned Cranes



Grey-headed Gull



Speckled Pigeon



Long-tailed Nightjar



Senegal Thick-knee



Egyptian Plover



Malachite Kingfisher



Red-throated Bee-eaters



Beautiful Sunbird



Northern Carmine Bee-eater



Abyssinian Ground Hornbill



Yellow-crowned Gonolek



Pied Crows



Long-tailed Glossy Starling



Abyssinian Roller



Goliath Heron



Quail-finch



Hamerkop



Fiddler Crab



Square-marked Toads



Green Vervet Monkey



Red Colobus Monkey

Front cover: Blue-breasted Kingfisher

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