

Ethiopia – Wildlife and History

Naturetrek Tour Report

30 October - 12 November 2019



Marabou Stork by Andy Bunten



Hamerkops by Mike Dexter-Smith



Warthog by Mike Dexter-Smith



Bet Giyorgis Church by Andy Bunten

Report compiled by Andy Bunten
Images courtesy of Mike Dexter-Smith & Andy Bunten



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Summary

Ethiopia is astonishing! This was a new country for all members of the group and everyone was bowled over by its varied beauty. There were amazing uplands with endless white bushes, giant heathers and jaw-dropping views; thorn-rich forest; open, heat-hazed savannah; reed-festooned marshes; shimmering lakes and endless golden cereal fields.

Every day had its magical memories whether it was the bustling, chaotic towns where Bajaji (tuk-tuks), buzzed around like little, deranged blue-and-white whirligig beetles; the equally busy rural villages with their branch-gathering, Teff-threshing, water-collecting, wood-chopping inhabitants or the sizzling plates of delicious lamb Tibs. Everywhere there was a riot of colour and smiling, shouting, joyful children, eager to have their photos taken or relieve you of any spare change.

There are so many highlights in a trip like this – was it the Lammergeiers circling round ‘Mad Susie’s’ wonderful restaurant or the shuffling, preening, gentle Gelada groups with their playful, tumbling young and deep thoughtful eyes? Or was it the unsettling gloomy stare of the huge Marabou Storks or the goofy, elusive Giant Mole Rat? Maybe it was the artwork and sheer mystery of the Churches, or the amazing views across Lalibela from Asheton Mariam monastery?

Measured purely in numbers, we recorded 20 mammal species (including the wonderful endemic Giant Mole Rat and majestic Mountain Nyala) and just under 300 bird species. But it’s not the sheer numbers we’ll remember, but the individual snapshots in our minds. Each of us will come away with our own favourite images of places, of people, of food, of birds, of mammals and of the joys of simple travelling in a country whose riches are natural and that we were privileged to visit.

Day 1

Wednesday 30th October

Heathrow (Terminal 2) to Addis Ababa

Three of the group boarded the evening flight at Heathrow Airport (Terminal 2) to Addis Ababa. The flight left after only a short delay and we enjoyed a relatively smooth overnight flight to Ethiopia.

Day 2

Thursday 31st October

Explore Addis Ababa

We arrived pretty much on time at Addis Ababa at 07.00, and made our somewhat tortuous way through the airport to go through the Visa stamping procedure and then to collect our bags.

A good indication that we’d arrived at a special place was the sign welcoming us to Ethiopia on the 20th February 2012! Of course, there’s a different calendar here which is closely related to the Coptic and Julian calendars. Here we met a further two of our party who had flown via Brussels just a little before us. Baggage safely collected, we went to the car park to meet our local guide for the trip, Mel, and our driver Michael.

Brown-rumped Seedaters and Swainson's Sparrows hopped around us as we loaded our bags in the time-honoured way through the window of the bus, and set off on the short distance to the excellent Jupiter Hotel.

A good breakfast followed and, as our rooms weren't ready, we decided to go to the National Museum. En route we saw a few Hooded Vultures and some Yellow-billed Kites drifting across the road behind the numerous tall office blocks.

We went through the museum security (which seemed most interested in any cigarettes we may possess) and just before the entrance a number of white droppings on the ground alerted Mel to a bird roosting in the tree above – African Wood Owl. Tucked away and motionless in the heat of the day, it took us a while to focus on the bird quietly trying to sleep the day away.

The museum was a most interesting stop with exhibits on Ethiopia's history and most famously looking at this area's role as the birthplace of humanity. Lucy – the 3 million year old early hominid – was there, in all her glory.

We had a quick wander around the garden where we found Mountain/Abyssinian Thrush, Streaky and Brown-rumped Seedaters, Bronze Mannikins, Red-billed Firefinch and Tacazze Sunbirds. Lurking a little further in the trees were an Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, a female African Paradise Flycatcher and a highly active Montane/Heuglin's White Eye.

Back to our hotel, where our rooms were now ready, we unpacked, freshened up and relaxed before an intended visit to the garden of the Ghion Hotel at 16.00. Sadly Mel reported extremely thick traffic so rather than waste two or more hours in a hot bus, we abandoned the idea and instead pottered locally finding Baglaffeht Weavers, Speckled Mousebirds and Brown-rumped Seedaters in the hedges opposite the hotel; Yellow-billed Kites circling above and White-collared Pigeons (an Ethiopian/Eritrean Endemic) perched on the television aerials.

At 18.30, we met to go over the list of sightings, introduce everyone, including the final two members of our group who had been to Zambia and a pre-extension in Ethiopia before joining us, and go over the excitement that was to come on this wonderful holiday.

Day 3

Friday 1st November

Debre Libanos Gorge & Sululta Plains

We woke feeling much refreshed after our flights even though we had a fairly early start this morning.

After breakfast of delicious coffee, fruit and omelettes, we boarded the bus at 07.00 and headed off north through the gradually building Addis Ababa traffic.

Hooded Vultures and Yellow-billed Kites were also having an early start it seemed, drifting around open areas of the city. We climbed to around 3,000 metres to cross the official Addis exit/entrance at around 08.00, and started to move into more rural areas.

Everything started to become very green. In the fields, men with scythes were busy at work expertly swinging these great sharp implements; boys and girls were tending sheep, cattle, goats and horses and guiding them down

the road through the swirling traffic. We noticed that there were very few working dogs and assumed children were better – and cheaper?

Various birds appeared to left and right as we drove –Wattled Ibis, a Lanner Falcon disappeared into a tree, White-collared Pigeons careered away across the fields. A lump in the road revealed itself to be a dead Spotted Hyena – sadly fairly frequent road casualties.

Near the town of Sululta we stopped at some undulating areas of mixed wetland. Here we found a small group of African Spoonbills, lots of the striking and endemic Wattled Ibis as well as the metallic-looking Hadada Ibis. There were birds just about everywhere we looked - Yellow Wagtails, Yellow billed Ducks, Spur-winged and Three-banded Plovers and, star of the show, some very smart Blue-winged Geese. Another endemic.

Leaving the site we had a Tawny Eagle circling overhead being followed closely by a Lanner Falcon. We bade farewell to the inevitable group of curious children who had emerged from nowhere and as we drove off noticed a couple of Red-billed Oxpeckers clinging tightly to the back of a passing sheep.

As we motored along, a plethora of smaller birds appeared and disappeared either side of us. Mourning Chats, Red-breasted Wheatears, wire-perched Blue-breasted Bee-eaters, shining Greater Blue-eared Starlings, Thekla Larks and increasing numbers of Groundscraper Thrushes standing bolt upright and looking as taut as a tightly coiled spring.

We dropped in to the ‘Cool Café’ to book our lunch and then, a short time later, we were at the spectacular gorge site with astonishing views of a tributary of the Blue Nile way, way below us. Even this view, however, took second place as troop of Gelada, only a matter of metres away, were peacefully making their way across an area of grassland and scrub. Adults were concentrating on their feeding or, in the case of the spectacular males, on their brooding stares around their family party. The troop were gradually moving to our left when another coach party arrived and spilled out rather noisily causing the Gelada to slightly increase their speed as they melted away into the scrub land.

We wandered ourselves into this mixed area of vegetation and found various good birds - Little Rock Thrush, Ruppell’s Black Chat, the lapis lazuli blue of a small flock of Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus, a few Slender-billed and White-billed Starlings. We walked closer to the edge of the gorge for even better views of the deep canyon with its grey river far below snaking along the valley bottom. Here we saw vultures soaring past us -White backed and Ruppell’s Vultures joined from time to time by Tawny Eagles.

Then a bird we’d really hoped to see – Lammergeier or Bearded Vulture! This huge, spectacular bird makes its living picking up pieces of bones and swallowing them where its powerful stomach acids gradually act on them. Sometimes they will fly up with larger bones and drop these onto rocks to shatter them so they can be gulped down. We recalled the story of a Greek playwright linked to this habit but couldn’t quite recall his name. It came to us later - Aeschylus.

Other arguably less spectacular, but still wonderful, birds appeared among the bushes and trees at the gorge’s edge. Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, Dusky Turtle Doves, African Citrils: a Red-rumped Swallow flew low over

the vegetation, a White-winged Cliff Chat appeared on a low tree branch and a Fan-tailed Raven soared over with the vultures looking strangely 'sawn-off' with that almost non-existent tail.

Inevitably, a group of children had appeared around us offering us the opportunity to buy various goods – including marble pendants. A sudden swarm of bees threatened to scare them away but Mel advised them to stay still – less chance of being stung. Accompanied by our merchandising retinue, we made our way back to the coach and drove a short distance to a café overlooking the gorge. Here we relaxed and drank in both the welcoming fluids and the stunning view. More Gelada were feeding on a ridge away to our left and once again vultures were circling in the void ahead of us.

Now it was time for lunch so it was back to the 'Cool Bar' where we initially thought we were in glorious solitude but we soon found we were to be joined by a group from Saga – and very pleasant they were too.

Lunch was buffet style with Injera and other local foods for those who wished to sample this often quite spicy cuisine. After lunch we were treated to the delightful smell of fresh coffee being roasted and then served out to us in small traditional cups.

After we'd finished we retraced our footprints back towards our hotel. We stopped again at the wetland we'd looked at in the morning and yet more delights were there for us to find. Sacred Ibis strode gracefully along and a Grey Heron, sentinel-like, lurked at the back of a pond; a White-winged Black Tern dipped its way delicately over the water while a flock of Red-rumped Swallows also flickered across the grassland and pools in search of insects. Our Blue-winged Geese and Yellow-billed Ducks were still present as was a number of different waders including Ruff, Wood Sandpipers and half a dozen very smart Black-tailed Godwits.

We continued our way home seeing the usual birds of prey as we drove - Yellow-billed, and the occasional Black Kites, Hooded Vultures and a Tawny Eagle. A checkpoint at the entrance slowed us a little and then we hit the stop-go traffic of Addis so settled down to watch the hurly-burly of this buzzing city until we got back to our hotel.

We did our list, accompanied by the rather bizarre playing of the pianist, had our meal and then headed off to bed to ensure we were fresh for what the next day was going to bring.

Day 4

Saturday 2nd November

Lake Awassa

An early start today so most of the group were down at breakfast before 06.00 and we were ready to go at 06.30. This time we were heading east and south out of Addis and again the traffic was fairly light at this time of the day.

We had scarcely left town when we stopped at an area of open grassland to look for larks. Red-breasted Wheatears appeared and gave us good views before Mel spotted our quarry – Erlanger's Lark. It was a little difficult to pick up at first but eventually we had quite reasonable views of a couple of these very special birds. As we climbed back into the bus one had taken off and was circling overhead singing away in a manner reminiscent of a Short-toed Lark.

Next stop was slightly unusual in that we pulled over onto the hard shoulder of the main motorway and piled out to see a flock of wonderful Common Cranes feeding a hundred yards or so away from us. A Long-legged Buzzard flew out of a tree and a smaller tree nearby held a shining blue Greater Blue-eared Starling and a Common Fiscal.

Around a couple of hours after leaving the hotel we pulled in to Cherries Café to have a quick ‘technical’ and coffee stop and to see what might be present in the gardens. Quite a lot as it turned out - three species of sunbirds - Variable, Scarlet-chested and Beautiful all gave us good views. In addition there were some lovely Cordon-blues and Heuglin’s White-eyes bathing in the pools created by various gushing hosepipes. A Wire-tailed Swallow flew around our heads before obligingly landing on a wire beside a house and giving us excellent views of his chestnut head and delicate tail.

Off we headed again getting views from the bus of White-browed Sparrow Weavers, Eurasian Hoopoes, Eastern Chanting Goshawks, Augur Buzzards, Laughing and tiny figurine-like Namaqua Doves.

At around 09.30 we had arrived at Lake Koka where we stopped for a while to feast our eyes on all sorts of avian delights. African Fish Eagles flew close and called in their characteristic way. Marabou Storks soared overhead and a variety of smaller birds - Grey-backed Camaroptera, Willow Warbler, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe and Grey-headed Woodpecker also put in an appearance. Across the lake Pied Kingfishers hovered and dived, a Spur-winged Goose swam past and African Jacanas picked their way carefully over the floating vegetation. Reed Cormorants were present as were Squacco Herons and Little Stints but the stars of the show were three Carmine Bee-eaters that eased their way around us. Gorgeous.

We stopped a little further on to see more of this marvelous lake and had a feast of different waders – Ruff, Little Ringed, Kittlitz’s and Three-banded Plover; Wood, Marsh, Common and Green Sandpipers and three Sanderling – the latter fairly rare in the Rift Valley. Passerines were not to be outdone with Boran’s Cisticola lurking in a hedge and some nice Chestnut Weavers (including a resplendent male) atop a nearby tree.

We continued on our way south passing huge loads of hay that dwarfed the carts and donkeys that were conveying them and looked almost as if they were travelling along under their own steam. At a little before 12.00 we arrived at Ziway and our hotel lunch stop. We quickly ordered our lunch and had a look around the site and the nearby lake. African Fish Eagles were calling, Marabou Storks were everywhere, and an Eastern Grey Woodpecker tapped away on a huge tree in the hotel grounds which had an enormous Eagle nest in it and various Marabou Storks and Egyptian Geese amongst its branches.

A very big lunch followed, and we returned to the lake to find numerous excellent birds there. Grey-headed gulls loafed among White-headed Whistling ducks and various Egrets. Prehistoric looking Anhinga’s held their wings akimbo to dry them. Another swimming Anhinga appeared from the water with a large fish only to be overshadowed by an immaculate looking African Fish Eagle which also had captured a very large fish and flew a few yards away to devour it. Pied Kingfishers, Grey-headed Kingfishers and Woodland Kingfishers were present but the kingfisher show was probably stolen by a tiny bright Malachite which darted to and fro searching for small fry. There were Little and Blue-breasted Bee-eaters lined up along the bund that ran alongside the water and Village and Ruppell’s Weavers disappearing into their hanging nests in slightly larger bushes.

In the distance, a Black-crowned Crane was feeding on the lake shore while a female Marsh Harrier glided over nearby reeds. White-winged Terns flitted over the water and a row of White Pelicans surveyed the busy scene with magisterial calm. Another Carmine Bee-eater appeared and gave wonderful views of its stunning plumage as it dashed around hunting for the plentiful dragonflies and butterflies.

It was time to press on and our final farewell was from a small number of Grivet monkeys feeding and on the path and negotiating glass-strewn walls. We had around another 2 hours to go before reaching our hotel so we pressed on with only the occasional short stop merited by some wonderful wildlife. A couple of Crowned Plovers caught our attention and close to them two, well-named, Superb Starlings.

One stop produced a number of nearby White-backed Vultures in a tree, three marvellous Abyssinian Ground Hornbills and an unexpected Somali Ostrich which strode past and through some nearby maize crops. Lilac-breasted Rollers appeared on telegraph wires; Silvery-cheeked Hornbills on the posts themselves.

Then at around 16.30 we arrived at Hawassa and our very nice hotel where we settled in. Some availed themselves of the swimming pool, before we met to go through our ever burgeoning list. Sadly once again it was to the strain of a rather tiresome pianist, before a very nice buffet meal and then bed in readiness of another busy day tomorrow.

Day 5

Sunday 3rd November

Lake Awassa to the Bale Mountains

A beautiful dawn appeared around 06.00 and with it a host of birds calling and flying around our lovely hotel. African Fish Eagles were yelping from their trees, various Martins dashed over the swimming pool and streams of Sacred Ibis returned from their roosting spots to their feeding areas. A small party of Little Swifts zoomed past as well.

A very acceptable breakfast followed and we packed our bags and left the hotel at around 07.30. Our original intention had been an early morning walk near the hotel but we felt a better option would be to get to the woodland reserve site of Amorigedele at the rear of the Fish Market. Huge and glowering Marabou Storks lined the tree tops and road sides as we entered into the park and spectacular Silvery-cheeked Hornbills adorned the tree tops as well. A Willow Warbler called from the branches above and in searching for it another warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, was also seen, its dark mask showing well. On the ground, Hadada Ibis watched our progress as did the plentiful Grivet Monkeys. Birds were popping out of everywhere now and it was difficult to keep pace – African Thrush, Ruppell's Starlings, Double-toothed Barbet, Bronze Mannikins, Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike and Hamerkops flying up into their enormous nests.

A Clapperton's Francolin called from a tangle of undergrowth finally giving its location away as it dropped down to the ground. Another Francolin, this time Crested, also called but remained invisible. Hooded Vultures surveyed us from the treetops and a small group of beautiful Bruce's Green Pigeon chased each other around in the lower leaves of a nearby tree. A Great Sparrowhawk shot passed us in hot pursuit of something and Rufous Chatterers acted up well to their name hidden in a dense bush.

Mel's astonishingly sharp eyes then picked out a lurking little Pygmy Kingfisher low down, almost invisible, in a small tree. We then came across a small troop of five wonderful Colobus/Guereza accompanied by a few Grivets who seemed somewhat jealous of the Colobus's easy good looks and style.

Further round the park we found more Rufous Chatterers, a Blue-headed Coucal and a tree full of Sacred Ibises with a regal African Fish Eagle looking stunning silhouetted against the brightly shining lake.

Mel was urging us on at this stage but there were so many photographic opportunities around every turn that we were dragging our feet like children reluctant to leave a party. A group of very stately yet grumpy looking Marabou Storks surveyed us without much favour as we walked close past them and there were huge numbers of 4-spot type dragonflies buzzing around, their wings shimmering in the sun.

More urging from Mel was countered by a very impressive Goliath Heron that had to be photographed as did the Red-knobbed Coots, Pelicans and smartly plumaged Spur-winged Plovers.

Finally we emerged from the sanctuary of the reserve into a thronging open area by the fish market where we were surrounded by children in calabash selling mode. A few of us succumbed to the expert selling tactics and bought some very smart looking calabashes and at only 100 Birr each (about £3) both vendors and purchasers were happy.

Then, via Pink-backed Pelicans and Yellow-billed Storks in tree tops, it was off to the old hotel Naturetrek used to stay in for quickly served coffee, Ethiopian Orioles, Spotted Creeper and a wonderful male African Paradise Flycatcher with impressively long tail streamers before we were on the road again and heading east via the Rastafarian town of Shashemene. As always birds appeared left, right and centre as we drove along – Hemprich's Hornbill, Village Indigo, Common Fiscals on roadside wires, Wattled Ibis in the fields and dark plumaged Dusky Turtle Doves darting up from the roadside verge.

We gradually climbed out of the Rift Valley – there was no clear escarpment but the vegetation changes to Juniper, Pine and Ebony indicated that we were entering a different zone. A wood we drove past contained two Woolly-necked Storks measuring the ground as they paced after their insect prey; a tree to our left contained a brace of Lanner Falcons and as we drove Mel told us of the amazing False Banana Tree the sap of which is used to make a form of bread.

Through Kafele town with Thick-billed Ravens circling and, as we got higher, so we saw more and more White-collared Pigeons and Wattled Ibis. The main visual impact, though, were the vast expanses of golden wheat as far as the eye could see. We arrived into Dodola, our lunch stop, at 13.00 and made our way into the Rose restaurant.

After checking everyone was happy with the suggestion Mel ordered us all a local dish Shekla Tibs. This wonderful lamb dish duly arrived in huge amounts and almost instantly everyone asked to share one between two such was the quantity.

The sizzling lamb came on top of a charcoal burner which kept it piping hot and was accompanied by Injera. This is Ethiopia's staple and comes from the grain Tef – the fields of which we'd been seeing in our drive.

After lunch, we drove on rising steadily until we reached our highest point of around 3,600 metres where we stopped for photos of the impressive vista.

At this area there are a lot of potatoes grown and these are sold by children by the roadside so Mel bought some for us all to share. Juggling hot, boiled potatoes in the back of a bouncing bus is an art but one many of us quickly mastered. And well worth it - the potatoes were delicious.

At 16.30, we arrived into the Gaysay Valley of the Bale National Park. This flat bushy area had a lot of mammal life in it. There was a herd of fairly distant Bohor's Reedbuck also some Mountain Nyala towards the edge of the fringing woodland and a few Warthogs trotted about amongst the vegetation. We drove slowly along until on the left hand side, and only a few metres away, we saw the fawn crouching shape of a largish cat – Caracal! This wonderful cat with its huge ears and ear tufts remained close to us for around 10 mins giving us all some excellent views as it moved slowly in stalking mode around the nearby low bushes. What an amazing animal to see. More close up mammal sightings followed as two big male Mountain Nyala crossed the road just in front of us. Close up they are really impressive beasts.

We still had a little way to go though so, despite this wonderful wildlife, we headed onwards through the town of Robe and to our hotel in Goba. We signed in, ordered our food, and then went the rooms before convening a little while later to do the wildlife list and have our meal before dropping into our beds.

Day 6

Monday 4th November

Bale Mountain Lodge

We breakfasted at 07.00 and then left our hotel at 08.00. It was a cooler, cloudier morning as we set off in search of more amazing wildlife that this spectacular part of Ethiopia has to offer.

Today we started at 2,700m, we'd be going up to around 4,100m as we crossed over the Sanetti Plateau and we'd be dropping down again to 2,500m in the evening.

As we left Goba, there were Thick-billed and Fan-tailed Ravens and shining bright Greater Blue-eared Starlings to see us on our way. We quickly left the tarmac road and embarked on the more challenging gravel track – for what Mel described as an African massage. We drove through a Juniper plantation and a little further on a pair of Black-winged Lovebirds were perched perfectly for photos until one of the ubiquitous children popped her head through the bush and scared them away! Moorland Chats and Groundscraper Thrushes were plentiful now and just before we entered the park proper, we found our first Rouget's Rail. Another endemic, this bird is not shy and was trotting confidently along by the side of the road.

At 09.00 we passed the check point and were into the national park where almost immediately found another endemic – this time some very smart Black-headed Siskins perched on the white Everlasting bushes that covered the ground and almost appeared like limestone pavement as they retreated into the distance. Together with the towering giant heather trees, this gave the plateau a very other world look. A Chestnut-naped Francolin perched briefly on a rock beside the road, Wattled Ibis were becoming increasingly common and we found a few more obliging Rouget's Rails. The small roadside lakes held Blue-winged Geese and the amazing Giant Lobelias added to this strange and enchanting landscape. Augur Buzzards were frequent and Steppe Eagles almost common as

we tried to fix our eyes on the small Grass Rats scuttling to and fro and proving highly tricky to pick out amongst the low vegetation. As well as the geese, the small ponds also held a few Yellow-billed Ducks, two pairs of Ruddy Shelduck bossily chasing each other around and various waders – Common and Green Sandpipers but much more impressive were the beautiful Spot-breasted Lapwing elegantly making their way across the turf.

The large numbers of small mammals on this plateau naturally attracts plenty of raptors. We saw wonderful close up views of Golden Eagles, not common in Ethiopia, Augur Buzzards perched regularly on low rocks, Steppe Eagles, a female Pallid Harrier - no wonder the rats move so quickly to dive into their burrows. We were still looking for Giant Mole Rats which were proving a tad elusive and tricky to pinpoint their location for everyone to see but in the end everyone managed to get a reasonable view of those goofy-looking heads, with top mounted eyes, stuck out of holes.

Obviously our main quarry was Ethiopian Wolf but try as we might we couldn't find one. We retraced our footprints (or rather tyre tracks) with Michael doing some sterling driving in tricky situations but despite Mel walking to distant ridges to scan around we couldn't find a sign of this rare, and elusive, predator. So, rather later than originally planned, we made our way to our lunch with only a very smart perched Lanner Falcon as a consolation prize.

Our lunch was on a ridge with wonderful views, the atmosphere amplified by the thick cloud that swirled around and flowed up from the valley below.

After lunch we continued our way downhill into thicker cloud and some rain as Chestnut-crowned Francolins merged into the roadside vegetation.

Then at around 16.00 or so we arrived at the lovely Bale Mountain Lodge and a warm greeting by Guy the joint owner.

We were settled into our various lodges and cabins and then all met again around a warm fire to do our lists and then a delicious Shepherd's Pie for dinner before heading back to our rooms with their own fires and comforting hot water bottles.

Day 7

Tuesday 5th November

Bale Mountain Lodge

Taccaze Sunbirds, Dark-capped Bulbuls, Ethiopian Orioles, Streaky Seedeaters and Dusky Flycatchers greeted us as we woke to a nice morning with the towering edge of the plateau dominating the view.

Today we had a relaxed start with a filling breakfast at 07.00 and we heard about the various exciting wildlife people had been seeing from their balconies and in front of their rooms. As we were getting ready to leave, one of the hotel guides found an Endemic Bale monkey and we were all able to have excellent views through the telescope. A great sighting of a really rare endemic mammal.

A few of the group elected to stay behind in the spectacular and relaxing lodge while the rest of us drove a kilometre or two up the road to look for more monkeys and whatever else we could find.

Before we got to the Lodge exit we found a lovely male Pin-tailed Whydah, tail flowing as it moved from bush to ground. A beautiful Ruppell's Robin-chat appeared near a Mountain Thrush giving us splashes of colour in the morning. Less spectacular perhaps, but always nice to see, were Cinnamon Bracken Warbler and Tawny-flanked Prinia lurking in the undergrowth. We wandered into the woodland to try to find more Bale Monkeys. Guereza (Colobus) monkeys were present plus a rather incongruously singing Chiffchaff but no monkeys.

We walked single file through the fairly thick woodland with messages being passed back down the line. The report of a Lion's footprint gave excitement to those at the rear of the party though sadly when we all gathered together this report had started out as a Hyena's footprint.

We re-boarded the bus to the accompaniment of Streaky Seedeater and Tawny flanked Prinia songs and headed downhill in search of more birds and mammals. A few of the group decided to go back to the lovely lodge while the rest of us continued onwards. Chestnut-naped Francolins appeared on the path in front of us but one of our target species - Abyssinian Crimsonwing – was playing very hard to get. Mel kept getting glimpses and then the birds would disappear into the bushes. In all, a few of us saw a bit of a glimpse of part of a bird!

Much better views were had of various groups of Colobus relaxing in the trees with their bell-pull tails hanging elegantly down. In the verges beautiful Yellow-bellied Waxbills flitted to and fro – generally giving good views. Black Saw-wings criss-crossed the path in front of us and we had a brief fly past of two Sharpe's Starlings. We had equally brief views of White-cheeked Turaco but then an excellent sighting of a soaring Crowned Eagle with its striking wing markings. As is often the way we were hearing a lot of birds which weren't necessarily showing themselves. Klass's Cuckoo, Ethiopian Bou-bou, Lesser Honeyguide as well as the Tawny-flanked Prinia (which we had seen) but whose explosive song was way out of proportion to the bird. Walking back to our bus we found more waxbills, a female Pin-tailed Whydah with its smart red bill and an Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher high in a tree.

Time for lunch now and as we were driving back a Bush Hyrax scampered across the track in front of us. Taking its life in its hands judging by the rate of travel of the buses, vans and four wheel drives we'd experienced on this bumpy gravel road.

We had a delicious lunch and then a bit of relaxing before heading out again at 15.30 for a local walk in the lodge grounds.

Somewhat dark, and spotting with rain, but we went for it anyway. Our first port of call was to a patch of taller vegetation where, earlier, Mel had found a somnolent Bush Pig. We tiptoed to the site and there it was. It seemed so oblivious of us that we probably could have danced up in hobnailed boots. A little further on a Ruppell's Robin-chat appeared and Dusky Flycatchers were in evidence often perched low on logs and venturing forth in classic flycatcher style. An Ethiopian Cisticola also appeared and moved along the edge of some taller vegetation. Our familiar friends the Yellow bellied Waxbills were also in evidence. A couple of Abyssinian Crimsonwings made a very brief appearance again – and again only Mel really saw them properly.

By this time we'd sought shelter in the forest as the rain was increasing and with rumbles of thunder behind us, we made a tactical retreat back to the lodge for a nice cup of tea (and some biscuits) from our ever attentive host Guy. We'd clearly made the right choice as soon after the rain intensified and the grassy area outside the main

building which had been harbouring domestic cattle and a family of Warthogs quickly became a very wet looking quagmire.

So we all had a relaxing time gazing out at the lovely, if damp, view with tea or wine before completing our list of sightings and having another lovely meal. Once again it was then time to get back to our cosy rooms with their wood fires. Blissful.

Day 8

Wednesday 6th November

Bale Mountain Lodge to Senetti Plateau to Lake Langano

Today was principally going to be a travelling day though we agreed that we must have another go at trying to find Ethiopian Wolf.

We had another very good breakfast before saying goodbye to our highly welcoming host Guy and heading off a little later than planned at 07.15.

As we left we heard Abyssinian Ground Thrush singing and the harsh call of Wattled Ibis. Michael our driver wrestled manfully with the deep pot-holes and minor crevasses although one of them managed to hit our underneath and caused us some consternation for a while but Michael's inspection revealed no significant harm. We were constantly amazed by the service buses cheerfully churning their way up and down this tricky mud/gravel road. Colobus Monkeys adorned some of the trees by the roadside and a Long-legged Buzzard was seen perched on a large branch just below the level of the road. Yellow-crowned Canaries flitted amongst roadside bushes and Red-eyed and Dusky Turtle Doves flew up from the dusty track in front of us. We passed through the amazing giant tree heathers as we climbed through the low cloud and eventually reached the clearer weather on the plateau summit. We saw our familiar friends on the tops. Augur Buzzards, both pale and dark morphs, were quartering the ground or sitting watchfully on low boulders; Steppe Eagles were again frequent, circling the sky looking for an unwary Grass Rat; a pair of Lanners, their minds probably on a rodent breakfast as well, were flying in wide circles.

All the time of course our eyes were straining for signs of Ethiopian Wolf. Again Mel walked off to higher vantage points to scan the surrounding areas and we stopped and cross-examined all the groups coming across the plateau but the answer was always the same: no joy.

So we had to be content with the other delights present including a wonderful flock of 60 plus endemic Black-headed Siskins; numbers of upright, creamy Isabelline Wheatears; a Mountain Buzzard blending in to the dark rock where it was perched and more, very close, views of the lovely Spot-breasted Lapwings. We had more good views of the odd Giant Mole Rat protruding out of their holes and of quite a few smaller Grass Rats nipping rapidly across open areas of the plateau. While the pair of Red-billed Choughs we'd seen the previous day were still feeding in the more open areas of the plateau.

The various water bodies on the tops were still providing homes for the beautiful Blue-winged Geese, Ruddy Shelduck and various different waders but the bird of the morning was undoubtedly a very handsome Abyssinian Longclaw perched just close by the edge of the road, its warm orange throat resplendent in the light.

By around 11.30 we reached the park boundary and headed gradually downhill towards Goba and Robe.

At 13.00 we arrived at the Bale Park HQ where we met our owl man who had been searching out owls for us. The key species of course was the Abyssinian Owl. This wonderful long-eared owl is not easy to see anyway and without expert help the casual visitor really has little chance. Our owl man lead us just a few yards from the main track and then we all peered upwards to try to locate it. It wasn't easy but when we got the telescope set up everyone was able to get a view of this lovely nocturnal bird.

A little further on from the Park HQ, we were back in the exciting Gaysay Valley again where we stopped for some great mammal watching. The whole place was alive with the movement of Warthogs and Olive Baboons. Indeed we had to keep the bus windows closed when we were near a Baboon troop because sadly they'd become accustomed to unthinking people giving them food from their cars. There were also a few distant Bushbuck, a couple of Reedbuck and quite a good number of Mountain Nyala including some more very impressive males.

We finally left the valley around 14.00 and continued on our way westwards. Going over the hills, Mel once more bought us some delicious hot boiled potatoes and, when were held up at a road block, some roasted barley as a most delicious treat.

Our adventures continued when we were stopped by police for no particular reason and watched as Michael and Mel went through the rigmarole of questioning. Eventually we were waved on after the police had satisfied their curiosity and honour!

At around 16.00, we arrived into Dodola and headed back to the Rose Café. It was a fast day today so a lot of restaurants only serve vegetarian food. A number of us had the traditional 'Combo' which was an Injera with beans, lentils and other mixed vegetation. Very nice indeed. Once we'd finished, we ploughed onwards with more raptors appearing to the left and right – White-backed Vulture, Augur Buzzards and a number of Tawny Eagles.

Light was fading and we now just sat tight until we finally got onto the track leading down to our destination - the Lodge at Langano. We looked for mammals in our headlights but the only animal we saw was the sudden appearance of a Nightjar which narrowly missed our windscreen before disappearing into the night.

We arrived at the lodge and, as rapidly as we could, got our bags into our rooms and had a late supper before heading to bed.

Day 9

Thursday 7th November

Lake Langano

Following the long drive we'd had the day before we didn't have an early morning walk and instead met for breakfast at 07.00.

The setting of the dining room at the lodge is wonderful with an awesome view across the lake and large trees dotted around in the foreground. Over the eggs, porridge and toast, we were able to admire the Hippos, Senegal Thick-knees, African Fish Eagles, Ruppell's Starlings and lots of hovering Pied Kingfishers.

We headed off at about 07.45 for a very short drive to an area of open land and woodland where we were going to spend the rest of the morning. We left the bus and immediately found two Black Scimitarbills, lots of Greater Blue-eared Starlings and numerous White-browed Sparrow Weavers. Northern Black Flycatchers flicked around among the low hanging branches and six lovely Violet-backed Starlings flew up into a nearby tree. The males and females looking so different from each other you'd think they were different species. Birds were appearing all over – Emerald Mourning Doves, a Common Redstart, Black-billed Barbets, Mocking Cliff Chat and couple of Blue-breasted Bee-eaters darting out from their low branches to catch an insect and then dashing back again. Eurasian Hoopoes like huge, pink, black and white butterflies rose up and flapped away and a couple of White-winged Black Tits searched through tree branches giving us very good views. Huge Silvery-cheeked Hornbills honked their way along lines of trees and carpets of Yellow Wagtails were dashing across the ground in their endless pursuit of insects. A dark shape on top of a tree drew our attention and it revealed itself to be an African Hobby. It was in a strange posture and at first we thought it was mantling over prey but then we realised it was just drying its feathers after a wash.

We continued along the open area of grassland near the wood with livestock sharing this space with us. A Cow, complete with a Red-billed Oxpecker jockey, trotted past us. Just about every bush and low tree seemed to have birds in it – various different Starlings, smart groups of Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus, Olive Pigeons and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. We crept as silently as were able into the wood and could hear Scaly-throated Honeyguides calling but they proved elusive. As we stood and listened we could hear, and then saw, two Brown-throated Wattle-eyes moving around in the low bush in front of us. We watched these lovely birds while Mel tried to find the calling Honeyguide but once more it was hidden in the canopy. A Nubian Woodpecker was tapping away high overhead and then we spent some time trying to make sure we all got good views of a beautiful, but infuriatingly tricky to see, Red-capped Robin-chat. Worth it in the end! We finally found a bird we'd been very keen to track down - Narina Trogon – although it was quite high up and, almost inevitably with trogons, had its back towards us!

We wended our way around various tree stumps and Aardvark created burrows with calling Yellow-fronted Parrots, White-cheeked Turacos and noisy White-rumped Babblers in the surrounding bushes. Those at the front of our line saw the unusual sight of a Black Cuckoo with the babblers. An Ethiopian Bou-bou appeared in a bush above our heads while Lemon Doves, tucked into a thicket, were more difficult to see as they lurked in the shadows. A lovely Banded Barbet was much more accommodating.

We then emerged back into the more open area where every bush seemed to have its own Grey-backed Fiscal sitting proudly on the uppermost twigs and occasionally flying down to pick up a prey item.

Two large Abyssinian Ground Hornbills were making their stately way amongst the livestock and there were Isabelline Wheatears flitting ahead of us as we made our way across the grassland. Once again we noticed flocks of Yellow Wagtails foraging in the low grass and, as we approached the bus, we re-found our Hoopoes and Common Redstarts.

Then it was time for lunch and an opportunity to relax in this wonderful lodge with its teeming wildlife and spectacular views.

Over lunch we were treated to flocks of bright-eyed Ruppell's Starlings chasing around the trees and bathing in a large water container just at the edge of the dining room. To everyone's delight they were joined for a few minutes by a very smart White-Cheeked Turaco also having its midday ablutions. On the shore two Senegal Thick-knees stood rigid and sentinel-like, while a more energetic Greenshank swept around them and White-winged and Gull-billed Terns flew ceaselessly around the edge of the lake.

At 15.30 we set off for a brief walk around the nearby woodland and lake edge. Owls were on the menu again as we'd heard of a pair of African Scops Owls in the scrub behind the main building. We quickly found them and with the aid of the telescope got excellent views of these lovely birds. We headed into woodland and quickly found a very smart Red-shouldered Cuckoo Shrike and had excellent views of a Black Scimitarbill probing around a fallen log right in front of us. There were more of the very dapper White-winged Black Tits too. Lots of interesting birds were appearing for us - Buff-bellied Warbler moving quietly through leaves and two Black-headed Batis flitting around in front of us. Northern Black Flycatchers were present as were Green-backed Eremomela, Heuglin's White-eye and Common Redstart. A Great Sparrowhawk caused a bit of a commotion as it flashed past and into what seemed an almost impenetrable thicket.

We meandered down to lake edge where huge Marabou Storks were striding around accompanied by a couple of smaller Woolly-necked Storks. From a couple of trees ahead of us, a dozen or so Bruce's Green Pigeons exploded out of the branches in the way only pigeons can and above us the distinctive call of bee-eaters as two Carmine Bee-eaters flew overhead. Out on the lake there was a small flock of Red-knobbed Coot and a few Egyptian Geese while the edge of the shore was alive with bustling waders – Common and Kittlitz's Plovers scuttled around, Spur-winged Plovers moved more sedately, and a group of Ruff picked around amongst the vegetation.

Our birdwatching antics caused some amusement to two young ladies doing their washing down by the beach and later, as we were making our way back to the lodge, a group of young men had great fun looking down our telescope at some sandpipers in a pond. In fact this was a great view as there were three sandpipers in a row – Wood, Green and Common – a perfect opportunity for comparison.

Back to the Lodge and a Marico Sunbird put in an appearance silhouetted against the evening sun and as we passed through the gate we did so under the watchful eyes of two Bare-faced Go-away Birds.

A wonderfully peaceful afternoon and early evening and we then relaxed until it was time to do our list, have a meal and then find our way by torchlight back to our huts.

Day 10

Friday 8th November

Lake Langano to Addis Ababa

Three of us met at 06.00, just as it was thinking about getting light, for a welcome cup of morning coffee and an early walk around the Lodge grounds.

As always this time of day is great for wildlife and we saw various different things – an African Goshawk, calling and then flying over was new for us. There were plenty of Slender-billed, Ruppell's and Greater Blue-eared Starlings too. A Pygmy Kingfisher was tucked low down in a tree and a small bush held a disproportionate

amount of small birds - Spotted Flycatcher, Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus and Bronze Mannikins. Three White-cheeked Turacos were prominent in tree tops calling vociferously to one another. By the lake side, there was the usual array of waders including Greenshank and Common Sandpiper together with good views of Intermediate, Great and Cattle Egrets.

After another substantial breakfast we paid our bills, gathered our belongings and boarded the bus for our journey back to Addis.

The initial part of the journey was on the gravel track we'd entered the lodge on and it was great to do this journey in the daylight. The area was alive with people going about their daily business and everywhere there were goats, cattle and donkeys with lively, shouting, smiling children. We saw various starlings, Speckled Mousebirds, White-browed Sparrow-weavers and a single Bruce's Green Pigeon. A set of wires to our left held a number of Barn and Mosque Swallows - these latter being similar but noticeably larger than the Red-rumped Swallows. Many of the posts we went passed had a dark Chanting Goshawks perched on them.

We passed cemeteries with graves that depicted the status of occupier – a carved book shows he/she was educated; one with head of cow indicated an owner of livestock and therefore wealthy. Near these graves was a small flock of very handsome Crowned Lapwings together with a number of the very aptly named Superb Starlings. Superb indeed!

As we drove to the entrance of the Abijata and Shala Park we encountered a rather grim sight. A pick-up truck had obviously come into contact with a herd of cattle and there were nine dead cows and a much damaged truck on the verge.

We entered this park which covers around 887 Sq km and picked up our guide. While we waited a Warthog trotted by and a couple of Somali Ostriches surveyed us through their limpid eyes. One seemed quite settled but the other approached us in what seemed a rather more threatening manner. Four Black-billed Wood Hoopoes flipped away from us into an Acacia tree. There were frequent Northern Red-billed Hornbills and plentiful White-browed Sparrow Weavers as we drove a short distance and then climbed out of the bus and started a short walk through the bush. Crested Francolins were calling and we saw two White-bellied Go-away Birds on a tree which also contained a Grey-backed Fiscal. An Orange-bellied (or Red-bellied) Parrot flew rapidly past and through the trees we could see a small group of Grant's Gazelles, together with some Warthogs, moving along through the brush. A tree held an African Mourning Dove and the light was such that we were able to get a really good view of its very pale eyes. Two Mouse-coloured Penduline Tits gave us a run around as they flittered about in the vegetation but in the end, most of us were able to get good views of these delicate birds.

As we were seeking out these little birds, a Cardinal Woodpecker was tapping away at around eye level in an old rotten tree right in front of us. Fantastic views. An Ethiopian Hare appeared and bounced away in front of us before we boarded the bus again and drove along the dusty track. More Gazelles appeared around a100 yards away and a very handsome, and big, male Somali Ostrich strutted along parallel to the track. Isabelline Wheatears seemed to be liberally scattered throughout the park and we found a group of lovely, elegant Temminck's Coursers just close to the left side of our bus. Their chestnut caps were distinctive and when they faced away from us we could see a lovely V shape on the back of their heads.

Along the track some beautiful White-headed Buffalo Weavers appeared – looking very smart in their brilliant white plumage with bright red rumps. There were more Eurasian Hoopoes flapping across the track too and a group of Rufous Chatterers in a nearby bush gave those on the left hand side of the bus excellent views.

We drove to the higher area of the park from where we could look down at the two lakes – Lake Shala which has a mean depth of around 86 m and Abijata which is a shallow brackish pan reaching a depth of no more than 14m.

As we drove along, we saw lots of vultures circling over the lake edge and had good views of the wedge of white on the lower back of some - clearly denoting White-backed Vultures. The other vultures were Ruppell's. Other birds of prey were present too including a very good view of a dark Steppe Eagle circling below us and a Shikra. We looked over the lakes and with the aid of the telescope could see that there were some flamingos a long way away in the water - with faith we felt we could distinguish between a group of whiter Greater flamingos and slightly pinker Lesser.

Looking down into the trees below we could see a number of vultures – both Ruppell's and White-backed perched in the trees and on the ground. We suspected that something had met its demise down there. We had our usual merchandising opportunities from a few stalls set out at the view point and then made our way back to the bus via a nearby lovely Little Rock Thrush perched in tree.

Driving out of the park, we stopped under a spreading tree and had the wonderful sight of two Greyish Eagle Owls tucked into the branches by the main trunk. We were literally leaving the park when we spotted a new kingfisher species for the trip - Striped Kingfisher - on tree just to our left hand side. Then it was onto the road and heading north back to Addis. As we sped along we passed an old cow carcass with funereal looking Ruppell's Vultures in attendance together with a scavenging dog. A more colourful sight was that of a beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller perched on the roadside wires.

At around 12.45, we'd arrived back at our previous lunch stop of the Haille Resort at Ziwai. We'd pre-ordered our food to save time so were able to quickly eat some delicious fish – or in Mel's case a huge pizza –before a walk down to the lake to see what was present.

Once again there were birds aplenty. African Fish Eagles flew overhead and a singing Willow Warbler was in the bushes behind our dining table plus an inquisitive Black-billed Barbet that came in close to a bush next to where we were eating.

As always too, there were lots of birds on the lake. White Pelicans; White-faced Whistling Ducks; Spur-winged Goose; Reed Cormorants; African Jacana; a lovely Malachite Kingfisher and a subtly beautiful blue and grey Woodland Kingfisher. Squacco Herons were dotted around the invasive Water Hyacinth and Grey-headed Gulls with White-winged Terns coursed around above the water surface. Birds everywhere it was a truly wonderful place. At around 14.30, we dragged ourselves away from this bird paradise and continued towards Addis.

We passed through many bustling little towns and villages with markets where piles of tomatoes were balanced unfeasibly high, and stalls groaned under the weight of other vegetables. Goats, sheep, children, donkeys, cows and horses all spilled out over the road and the Bajbaji whisked around narrowly avoiding everything.

On the roads, we were treated to the amazing sight of what appeared to be self-propelling giant haystacks until, when we got nearer, we noticed a donkey and cart buried deep beneath and toiling along with the huge load. We drove past Lake Koka but sadly didn't really have time to stop to see the Fish Eagles and Marabou Storks perched in the trees or the various waders picking their way around the shore edges. We did stop for a brief minute for us all to twist our necks round and see a distant Black-crowned Crane.

At around 16.30 we made a brief 'technical' stop. And, as always, children appeared out of every nook and cranny to wave and smile and stare. The stop also added a new bird to our list – Cut-throat Finch - with a female perched on top of a distant bush. Then, with our familiar Hooded Vultures circling, we arrived into the jammed traffic of Addis. Michael did an excellent job of squeezing through the chaos of cars and an even better one of getting our bus through the rather crazy system outside the hotel to deposit us right at the door. We said our very sad and heartfelt farewells and thanks to our driver, Michael. He'd been really careful and considerate and had had some tricky driving to do over the course of our trip.

Then we slipped into the peace and order of the lovely Jupiter hotel while Mel assisted with the sorting out and delivery of the bags to our rooms.

We then had a bit of time to relax, to have our meal and to do our list (this time without piano accompaniment) and then fairly early to bed as we'd an early start in the morning.

Day 11

Saturday 9th November

Lalibela – northern churches

It was an early morning today with many getting up around 05.00 to get breakfast and be ready to leave for the airport at 06.20. We were delighted, if surprised, to see Michael again but apparently by the time Mel had finished sorting things out for us at the hotel the traffic was too bad to get home – so they both stayed locally.

Our passage through the airport was relatively straightforward, especially with Mel smoothing the way for us. Another group of birders were also on the flight though they were getting off at our first stop – Gondar. At Gondar the flight filled up completely and after a short hop we arrived at Lalibela on time and went to our bus, to our new driver, Abi, and were on our way to our hotel.

On the way we saw Common Fiscals, Pied Wheatears, Swainson's Sparrows, Speckled Pigeons and, of course, Yellow-billed Kites. We arrived at our hotel just before lunch at 11.50. The hotel was lovely with an amazing view and we made our way to our rooms – though quite slowly because of the altitude!

During our very pleasant lunch a couple of Lammergeiers drifted past in the mid-distance – a nice addition to any meal. As was the learned discussion about cations and anions.

Then it was off the short distance along the cobbled road to go around the northern cluster of churches. We started off with the museum and Mel guided us round the exhibits explaining their significance and adding some fascinating aspects on their history. We heard about the old religious robes, the ancient velum parchments and the significance of the colours of the Ethiopian flag - green for the fertile land, yellow for religious freedom and peace and red for the martyrs who spilled blood in the defence of Ethiopia. Then we went around the

churches – once again with Mel's seemingly unending knowledge and clear pride in his country's fascinating history. We bombarded him with questions and he answered every one. Slipping in and out of our shoes – but with our faithful shoe-man always on hand - we moved from church to church. Not always that easy to access with high steps, worn smooth and slippery by countless thousands of feet that had trod before us.

The churches were truly magnificent and we moved gradually through from Bet Medhane Alem – possibly the world's largest rock hewn monolith at 11m high and covering around 800sq m supported on impressive pillars. We passed from them to Bet Maryam, Meskel and Danagel. We also peered into the murky depths of the courtyard pool. We slipped into the western part of the complex where the churches of Bet Mikael and Bet Golgotha are to be found. The interior of the latter (the one church where only men are permitted) has seven life-size reliefs of saints carved around its walls. This is a feature which, apparently, is more typical of 15th century churches. Our final visit was to the isolated church of Bet Giyorgis. An amazing site carved out of solid rock in a cross shaped tower and Lalibela's most iconic building. Obviously history was our main focus but we couldn't help but notice a few rather nice birds that were in the vicinity. A lovely Ruppell's Black Chat was very obliging and White-billed Starlings appeared to be just about everywhere, as were the White-collared and Speckled Pigeons. A splash of colour was provided by the occasional Mocking Cliff Chat too.

By now it was time to leave so we re-boarded our bus and made the short journey back to the lovely hotel arriving around 17.45. Time to get showered and refreshed, do our wildlife list and then settle in to the buffet dinner before making our way down the paths to our accommodation.

Day 12

Sunday 10th November

Lalibela, Asheton Mariam and Yemrehanna Kristos

Today we were visiting two slightly outlying areas and so we were up fairly early – many of us awoken by the call to prayer from the town – and down to a very nice breakfast with great eggs, fresh pastries and, of course, good coffee before setting off at 08.00. The first part of our journey was to the north for some 40km to Yemrehanna Kristos. We passed through some extremely spectacular countryside and there was a great many birds to be seen too. A Peregrine circled over the road in front of us and of course there were the usual Yellow-billed Kites, occasionally with a Black Kite as well. A beautiful Cinnamon-breasted Bunting posed for us on a huge roadside rock and Ruppell's Black Chat was also seen nearby.

We entered a sort of New Town – a large estate with lots of houses many of which seemed to come complete with a Mocking Cliff Chat on their roof.

As we drove along, we were finding a number of different Wheatears - Northern, Pied, Isabelline and then later the lovely Abyssinian with its creamy-brown head and jet black plumage. We had an excellent view of a Village Indigobird with its clean white beak and then, later, an adult Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark busily feeding a young bird in a ditch next to the road. We passed through a number of sunflower fields and in around them more birds –White-winged Cliff Chat, Vinaceous Doves and Ortolan Bunting.

At around 10.00, we had arrived at the village so we clambered out of our bus and began the slow ascent up the stairs to the church. There were many willing helpers and others also very willing but mainly to extract money in exchange for clay effigies of cows and Ibex. We were at around 2,700 or so metres and so took the walk steadily.

The views down the valley and across to the mature trees were wonderful and well worth the regular stops to admire them. Rock Martins flipped past us, Augur Buzzards soared across the valley and there were plenty of White-billed Starlings dashing from tree to tree. After a little while, we were at this most impressive cave style structure with both Black-winged Lovebirds and nesting White-billed Starlings flying into the dark interior.

We entered into the church with Mel explaining what it was we were seeing. Once we'd gone past the rather utilitarian modern protection wall, we were met with some astonishing examples of Axumite architecture. The main church was made of alternating layers of dark and cream – dark wood and granite faced with white gypsum. The guide books had said it resembles a gigantic layered chocolate cream cake and indeed it did. At the rear of the dark cavern there were the bones of many pilgrims. Some were said to have travelled all the way from Egypt to end their days here. It was a very poignant place.

After a while drinking in the history of this exceptional site, we started to descend back to the small village. We came back a slightly different way with more White-billed Starlings, Lovebirds flying in the trees around us. In a low bush, a Brown-woodland Warbler appeared but unfortunately was scared away by a group of advancing children hoping that, in us, they'd identified a marketing opportunity.

Less easily scared was a lovely Abyssinian Woodpecker, another endemic (of Ethiopia and Eritrea) to add to our list. This was a wonderful little bird which very obligingly remained on its tree branch for 10 minutes or more surveying the passing pilgrims.

By about 12.00, we were back down by the bus again and were invited in to a local shop where we had some wonderful coffee and tried some Injera with a spicy chili sauce – delicious.

Leaving at around 12.30, we made our way back towards Addis and aiming to have lunch at the rather eccentric looking building we'd seen on our way out. This restaurant was Ben Abeba the brainchild of the equally eccentric owner/manager who cheerfully introduced herself as Mad Suzie. Suzie entertained us while she waited for an 83 strong delegation from Washington DC (it had only been Mel's special pleading that enabled us to be squeezed in and sample the extremely nice food she had on offer). Probably the best Shepherd's Pie you could get in Ethiopia. So we had a delightful buffet meal and were treated to regular fly pasts of Fan-tailed Ravens, a Steppe Eagle, numerous Yellow-billed Kites and very close Lammergeiers. Perfect.

By the time we'd finished the USA contingent had just arrived so we edged past the retinue with their various well-armed guards and made our way to our final venue for the day – the church at Asheton Maryam.

This was only around 7km away so we arrived quite quickly – more or less the same time as the rain started. Fortunately it was only a brief shower and we started on another uphill walk to this monastery.

It was a wonderful walk of a couple of kilometres up a steepish section and then along a curving path with a slope below and a towering rock face above.

Moorland Chats and Rock Martins appeared below us and we saw a couple of Erkel's Francolin down in the scrub areas by the edge of some trees. The final section of the walk was a bit of a scramble up some steep rock cut stairs through a narrow cleft in the rock – and then we were there.

The feeling is this monastery was founded by King Nakuta La'ab. The execution may be a little rougher than the other churches we'd visited, but we were shown some fine ancient crosses and manuscripts.

Possibly the most impressive aspect however were the magnificent views we had from this amazing viewpoint. We could see the airport, our lunch venue and our hotel in Lalibela all laid out beneath us with shafts of sunlight piercing the clouds and illuminating different parts of the valley as the clouds drifted across the wide expansive sky.

Our knees were slightly dreading the downward section of the walk as we headed back to the bus but, once again, there were helpers aplenty. Also aplenty were the clusters of people selling small items and once a purchase was made that appeared to trigger a sort of selling frenzy and the assumption appeared to be that anyone interested in buying a small clay guinea fowl or Ibex must inevitably want to have another 20. It was all done in such an appealing way though that it did take a hard heart not to start buying everything that was offered. Most of did resist this however.

Back to the bus we headed off to the hotel and decided that this time we'd get to the buffet meal first and then we'd do our list –which we duly did and then it was off to our lovely and well-appointed rooms for our final full night in Ethiopia.

Day 13

Monday 11th November

Lalibela – Southern Churches - Addis

A few of us were up early meeting a little after 06.00 for early bird walk.

Laughing, Red-eyed and Dusky Turtle Doves seemed to be everywhere as we strolled around the grounds of this delightful hotel. We saw many old friends –Variable Sunbirds, Swainson's Sparrows, Brown-rumped Seed eaters, Common Bulbuls and a nice kite perched nearby which turned out to be Black Kite.

Our walk took us to a bush ablaze with purple Bougainvillea and clearly irresistible to birds. Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus, Swainson's Sparrows, Speckled Mousebirds, Variable Sunbirds and a Tawny-flanked Prinia all jostled for position among the colour. By the gate, a Common Fiscal stood sentry awaiting a small creature for breakfast while Dusky Turtle doves fed assiduously on the ground.

We were back for breakfast at 07.00 and all ready to leave at 09.00 – we were going to visit the southern set of churches in Lalibela before heading off to the airport.

Older than the northern churches, these were also simpler than the northern cluster. Our first visit was to Bet Gabriel Rafael with its imposing trench which was a bit daunting for the more vertiginous of us. According to some people, this building may have been originally carved as the residence of King Lalibela. Mel's feeling was that, as well Axumite, there was also an Islamic influence about this northern façade. A hugely impressive building whichever way one looked at it and with mobile splashes of colour as two Mocking Cliff Chats darted around its arched niches.

We visited Bet Abba Libanos the legend of which says that it was built overnight by Lalibela's wife Meskel Kibre with the help of angels. With Mel leading two of our party braved the pitch black tunnel connecting this to Bet Lehem (the House of Bread), an extremely disorientating and unnerving experience! In Bet Mercurios – a cave church dedicated to Saint Mercurios – we saw a building which may be 1400 years old and in Bet Emanuel one of the finest and best worked of all the Lalibelan churches

Sadly we had a plane to catch though so at 11.00 we made our way to the airport for our direct flight back to Addis Ababa. The check in was a fairly lengthy affair but Mel steered us through it calmly and after an uneventful flight we collected our bags, found our bus and new driver, Asrat, and were quickly back to our Jupiter Hotel.

We had a last lunch with Mel and bade him a very fond farewell. Mel had been a fantastic guide. Incredibly knowledgeable on birds, archaeology and history, there was never a question on Ethiopia he couldn't answer. He matched all this ability with a calm, cheerful personality and was always going the extra mile to ensure our trip was a success. We wished him luck on his next trip which was to last 31 days!

We then retired to our day rooms to rest and pack or explored the local shops for final purchases to take home. We had a last supper at the hotel before our driver Asrat appeared dead on time to take us to the airport.

Day 14

Tuesday 12th November

Addis to Heathrow

We had two flights for the group. The Manchester Group leaving at 00.45 and the Heathrow contingent at 01.20. We had some slight concern on the Heathrow flight as, after we were all safely on board, there were technical issues which at one stage seemed to cause all the electrics on the plane to fail. An hour and a half after we due to take off we began to fear we'd be going back to the airport terminal building.

However, eventually, all was pronounced well and at 03.00 we took off and somehow or other contrived to land only about 30 minutes late into Heathrow.

All hold bags arrived safely and we said our final farewells and went our separate ways back home after what had been a fantastic and most enjoyable trip.

As well as to Mel our guide, Michael and the other drivers I'd like to thank the group for being so cheerful and accommodating throughout our trip. Any holiday is only as good as the people who make up the group –and this was a very good holiday indeed. Thanks to all of you.

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		October / November													
	Common name	<i>Scientific name</i>	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Somali Ostrich	<i>Struthio molybdophanes</i>					1					6				
2	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>				10						8				
3	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>				2						1				
4	Knob-billed Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>				2										
5	Blue-winged Goose - E	<i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i>			8			20		6						
6	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			50	✓	✓				20	20				
7	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>						6		1						
8	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>			4											
9	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>			6											
10	Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>			10			4								
11	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>										20				
12	Crested Francolin	<i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>					H					4				
13	Clapperton's Francolin	<i>Pternistis clappertoni</i>					1									
14	Chestnut-naped Francolin - N	<i>Pternistis castaneicollis</i>						7	2	8						
15	Erckel's Francolin	<i>Pternistis erckelii</i>												4	H	
16	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			2											
17	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>										8				
18	Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>										2				
19	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>					6									
20	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>												1		
21	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>					2				2					
22	Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>				50	✓				6	50+				
23	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>			14	✓	✓		3	50	20	✓				
24	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>			3		6				12	30				
25	Wattled Ibis - N	<i>Bostrychia carunculata</i>			50	2	50+	50+	6	80		2				
26	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>			6											
27	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>				1										
28	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			1	12	12				6	12				
29	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>			20	20	10			12	20	✓				

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30	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			2						2	1				
31	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>				1										
32	Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>					1									
33	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				1					2	1				
34	Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>										1				
35	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			1	2	6				12	10				
36	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>			4	6	20				2	20				
37	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>				30	20				12	50				
38	Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>					7									
39	Reed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>				20	3					8				
40	White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>				1	3				6	6				
41	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>				6						10				
42	African Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>										1				
43	Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>			3								2	4		
44	Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>		4	4	30	40+			20	2	6		1		
45	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>			1	8				1		6				
46	Rüppell's Vulture	<i>Gyps rueppelli</i>			6							10			1	
47	Crowned Eagle	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>							1							
48	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>										1				
49	Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i>			1											
50	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>			5		1			3		2				
51	Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>						4		6		1		3		
52	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>						2						1		
53	Dark Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>										4				
54	Eastern Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax poliopterus</i>				4										
55	African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>										1				
56	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>										1				
57	Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>					1				1					
58	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				1										
59	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>						1								
60	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>										1?				
61	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>			1									2	1	

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62	Yellow-billed Kite	Milvus aegyptius		10	✓	✓	✓	6		10	1	✓	2	30	10	
63	African Fish Eagle	Haliaeetus vocifer				15	12				4	8				
64	Long-legged Buzzard	Buteo rufinus				1				2						
65	Mountain Buzzard	Buteo oreophilus						1		1						
66	Augur Buzzard	Buteo augur			4	2	4	8	1	12		1		4		
67	Rouget's Rail - N	Rougetius rougetii						8		5						
68	Red-knobbed Coot	Fulica cristata					15				12					
69	Black Crowned Crane	Balearica pavonina				2						1				
70	Common Crane	Grus grus				32										
71	Senegal Thick-knee	Burhinus senegalensis									4	4				
72	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus			6						2					
73	Spur-winged Lapwing	Vanellus spinosus			6	6	12				6	20				
74	Crowned Lapwing	Vanellus coronatus				2						8				
75	Spot-breasted Lapwing - E	Vanellus melanocephalus						12		8						
76	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius					1									
77	Common Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula									4					
78	Kittlitz's Plover	Charadrius pecuarius				1					4					
79	Three-banded Plover	Charadrius tricollaris			2	1										
80	African Jacana	Actophilornis africanus				6	4					5				
81	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa			6											
82	Ruff	Calidris pugnax			15	1					12					
83	Sanderling	Calidris alba				3										
84	Little Stint	Calidris minuta				2										
85	Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago			1											
86	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos				4	2	3			4	2				
87	Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus				1		1		1	2					
88	Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa stagnatilis				1										
89	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola			2	4	2			1	4	1				
90	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia					1				2	1				
91	Temminck's Courser	Cursorius temminckii										8				
92	Grey-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus				6	12				6	2				
93	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica									2	2				

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94	White-winged Tern	Chlidonias leucopterus			1	2					4	4				
95	Feral Pigeon - I	Columba livia var. domestica		✓	✓	✓								✓	✓	
96	Speckled Pigeon	Columba guinea			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	4	✓	8	
97	White-collared Pigeon - N	Columba albitorques		3	50		80	12	1	20			2	20	10	
98	African Olive Pigeon	Columba arquatrix							H							
99	Lemon Dove	Columba larvata									4					
100	Dusky Turtle Dove	Streptopelia lugens		6	12	6	✓	6		40		✓		20	10	
101	Red-eyed Dove	Streptopelia semitorquata		10	2	✓	✓	6	✓	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
102	Mourning Collared Dove	Streptopelia decipiens				2	1					8				
103	Ring-necked Dove	Streptopelia capicola									1	4				
104	Vinaceous Dove	Streptopelia vinacea												2	1	
105	Laughing Dove	Spilopelia senegalensis				✓					2	20	6	✓	20	
106	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Turtur chalcospilos									1	H				
107	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Turtur afer									1					
108	Namaqua Dove	Oena capensis				20				2	1	10		2		
109	Bruce's Green Pigeon	Treron waalia					2				12	1				
110	White-cheeked Turaco	Tauraco leucotis							4		4	3				
111	Bare-faced Go-away-bird	Corythaixoides personatus									6	4				
112	White-bellied Go-away-bird	Corythaixoides leucogaster										2				
113	Blue-headed Coucal	Centropus monachus					1									
114	Klaas's Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx klaas							H							
115	Black Cuckoo	Cuculus clamosus									1					
116	African Scops Owl	Otus senegalensis									2					
117	Greyish Eagle-Owl	Bubo cinerascens										2				
118	African Wood Owl	Strix woodfordii		1												
119	Abyssinian Owl - N	Asio abyssinicus								1						
120	Nightjar sp	Caprimulgus sp								1						
121	African Palm Swift	Cypsiurus parvus					30									
122	Little Swift	Apus affinis					3							1		
123	Speckled Mousebird	Colius striatus		4	1	8	8				4	6			8	
124	Narina Trogon	Apaloderma narina									2					
125	Lilac-breasted Roller	Coracias caudatus				2										

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126	Abyssinian Roller	Coracias abyssinicus			1											
127	Grey-headed Kingfisher	Halcyon leucocephala				2										
128	Striped Kingfisher	Halcyon chelicuti										1				
129	Woodland Kingfisher	Halcyon senegalensis				1	1					2				
130	African Pygmy Kingfisher	Ispidina picta														
131	Malachite Kingfisher	Corythornis cristatus														
132	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis				6	4				15	6				
133	Little Bee-eater	Merops pusillus														
134	Ethiopian Bee-eater	Merops variegatus lafresnayii														
135	Northern Carmine Bee-eater	Merops nubicus				4					4	2				
136	Eurasian Hoopoe	Upupa epops senegalensis				2					4	4				
137	Black-billed Wood Hoopoe	Phoeniculus somaliensis				2					1	1				
138	Black Scimitarbill	Rhinopomastus aterrimus									2					
139	Abyssinian Ground Hornbill	Bucorvus abyssinicus				3					2					
140	Northern Red-billed Hornbill	Tockus erythrorhynchus										6				
141	Hemprich's Hornbill	Lophoceros hemprichii			2		1					H				
142	Silvery-cheeked Hornbill	Bycanistes brevis				2	12				12	6				
143	Red-fronted Tinkerbird	Pogoniulus pusillus							H							
144	Banded Barbet - N	Lybius undatus					2				3					
145	Black-billed Barbet	Lybius guifsobalito				2						1				
146	Double-toothed Barbet	Lybius bidentatus					1				H					
147	Lesser Honeyguide	Indicator minor							H		2					
148	Scaly-throated Honeyguide	Indicator variegatus									H					
149	Red-throated Wryneck	Jynx ruficollis									H					
150	Nubian Woodpecker	Campethera nubica					1		H		2					
151	Abyssinian Woodpecker - N	Dendropicos abyssinicus												1		
152	Cardinal Woodpecker	Dendropicos fuscescens										1				
153	Eastern Grey Woodpecker	Dendropicos spodocephalus					2				1	1				
154	Lesser Kestrel	Falco naumanni						1								
155	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus			1	1						2	1			
156	African Hobby	Falco cuvierii									1					
157	Lanner Falcon	Falco biarmicus			2		3	6		3						

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158	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>								1				1		
159	Yellow-fronted Parrot - E	<i>Poicephalus flavifrons</i>									6	6				
160	Red-bellied Parrot	<i>Poicephalus rufiventris</i>										3				
161	Black-winged Lovebird - E	<i>Agapornis taranta</i>				6		2			5			20	6	
162	Western Black-headed Batis	<i>Batis erlangeri</i>					1				2					
163	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>									2					
164	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>												1		
165	Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>					1				H					
166	Slate-colored Boubou	<i>Laniarius funebris</i>										H				
167	Ethiopian Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>							H		2	H		2	1	
168	Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>									H	H				
169	Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>					1				2					
170	Grey-backed Fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitorides</i>				10					12	6				
171	Common Fiscal	<i>Lanius humeralis</i>			6	1	6			2		2	2	6	2	
172	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>					1									
173	African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>										1				
174	Ethiopian Oriole - N	<i>Oriolus monacha</i>					2	1	4	2	1					
175	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>									2	3				
176	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>						2		2						
177	Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>			✓	✓	✓	6		6		2		1		
178	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		6	✓	✓	✓			6		6				
179	Somali Crow	<i>Corvus edithae</i>								4		2				
180	Fan-tailed Raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>			4	4	5	2		4		2	12	30	12	
181	Thick-billed Raven	<i>Corvus crassirostris</i>			1		8	6	2	8						
182	White-winged Black Tit	<i>Melaniparus leucomelas</i>									2	1				
183	Mouse-colored Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus musculus</i>										2				
184	Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>												2		
185	Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>			1			6		2						
186	Erlanger's Lark - E	<i>Calandrella erlangeri</i>				2										
187	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>			4	2	4	2			4	4	2	8	4	
188	Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>						1	6	4						
189	Black Saw-wing - E	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera antinorii</i>							10		4					

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190	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>			6	20	12				✓	✓				
191	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				20	10									
192	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			30	✓	✓	1			✓	✓			1	
193	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>				1										
194	Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>			4									8		
195	Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>										10				
196	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>			6											
197	Northern Crombec	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>										1				
198	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			1	H	1		1			H		H		
199	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>							H							
200	Brown Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus umbrovirens</i>												1		
201	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>					1									
202	Cinnamon Bracken Warbler	<i>Bradypterus cinnamomeus</i>							2							
203	Red-faced Cisticola	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>									1					
204	Ethiopian Cisticola - N	<i>Cisticola lugubris</i>							1					1		
205	Boran Cisticola	<i>Cisticola bodessa</i>				1	4					1				
206	Pectoral-patch Cisticola	<i>Cisticola brunescens</i>								1						
207	Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>				1			6					1	1	
208	Buff-bellied Warbler	<i>Phyllolais pulchella</i>									6					
209	Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>				1										
210	Green-backed Eremomela	<i>Eremomela canescens</i>									2					
211	Rufous Chatterer	<i>Turdoides rubiginosa</i>					4					6				
212	White-rumped Babbler	<i>Turdoides leucopygia</i>									10	8		4		
213	Abyssinian Catbird - E	<i>Parophasma galinieri</i>							4					1		
214	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>										1				
215	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>						1		1						
216	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>					1				2					
217	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>						1	1	1						
218	Heuglin's White-eye	<i>Zosterops poliogastrus poliogastrus</i>		1	1	3			2		2			2	2	
219	African Spotted Creeper	<i>Salpornis salvadori</i>					1									
220	Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>										5				
221	Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>			6	20	✓	6		2	100	✓		✓	20	

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222	Rüppell's Starling	Lamprotornis purpuroptera				10	✓				60	✓				
223	Superb Starling	Lamprotornis superbus				2	1					30+				
224	Violet-backed Starling	Cinnyricinclus leucogaster									8					
225	Slender-billed Starling	Onychognathus tenuirostris			2						12	✓				
226	Somali Starling	Onychognathus blythii									?					
227	White-billed Starling - N	Onychognathus albirostris			3								8	30	6	
228	Red-billed Oxpecker	Buphagus erythrorhynchus			2	20					2					
229	Abyssinian Ground Thrush	Geokichla piaggiae								H						
230	Groundscraper Thrush	Turdus litsitsirupa			30	1	8	6		6						
231	African Thrush	Turdus pelios					1				4	2				
232	Abyssinian Thrush	Turdus abyssinicus		4	1	1	4	6	6	8	12	8		6	2	
233	Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher - N	Melaenornis chocolatinus		2	1									1		
234	Northern Black Flycatcher	Melaenornis edolioides					1				3			1		
235	Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa striata									1	1				
236	African Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone viridis		1		2	2				4	6				
237	African Dusky Flycatcher	Muscicapa adusta				1	1		6	1						
238	Rüppell's Robin-Chat	Cossypha semirufa							1							
239	Red-capped Robin-Chat	Cossypha natalensis									2					
240	Common Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus				1					2	1				
241	White-winged Cliff Chat - N	Monticola semirufus			1									2		
242	Common Rock Thrush	Monticola saxatilis			1											
243	Little Rock Thrush	Monticola rufocinereus			1							1				
244	Blue Rock Thrush	Monticola solitarius											1		1	
245	African Stonechat	Saxicola torquatus			1		2			2						
246	Moorland Chat	Pinarochroa sordida			8		2	50		30				20		
247	Mocking Cliff Chat	Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris									1		1	20	4	
248	Rüppell's Black Chat - N	Myrmecocichla melaena			2								1	3	1	
249	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe			1						1	4		6	1	
250	Red-breasted Wheatear	Oenanthe bottae			4	2	2									
251	Isabelline Wheatear	Oenanthe isabellina			2					2	6	8		12	2	
252	Pied Wheatear	Oenanthe pleschanka				1			1		2	4	1	4	3	
253	Abyssinian Wheatear	Oenanthe lugubris												8		

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	Common name	<i>Scientific name</i>	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
254	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Chalcomitra senegalensis				2	1									
255	Tacazze Sunbird	Nectarinia tacazze		2	2		1	4	12	4				1	1	
256	Beautiful Sunbird	Cinnyris pulchellus				2	3									
257	Marico Sunbird	Cinnyris mariquensis									1	1				
258	Variable Sunbird	Cinnyris venustus			H	3	6	2	12	2	2	2	6	8	6	
259	Swainson's Sparrow	Passer swainsonii		3	6	10	12	6		4	6	6	8	✓	✓	
260	White-headed Buffalo Weaver	Dinemellia dinemelli										30				
261	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	Plocepasser mahali				6	4				12	✓				
262	Baglafaecht Weaver	Ploceus baglafaecht		4	2	2	3	1	6	2				2	4	
263	Little Weaver	Ploceus luteolus					2				1	1				
264	Spectacled Weaver	Ploceus ocularis					H		H							
265	Rüppell's Weaver	Ploceus galbula				5	3					2				
266	Village Weaver	Ploceus cucullatus				6					1	2				
267	Chestnut Weaver	Ploceus rubiginosus				6										
268	Red-winged Weaver	Anaplectes rubriceps leuconotos					1				2					
269	Red-billed Quelea	Quelea quelea				50+					20	20				
270	Northern Red Bishop	Euplectes franciscanus				3										
271	Yellow Bishop	Euplectes capensis					1			1						
272	Red-collared Widowbird	Euplectes ardens			1		2									
273	Cut-throat Finch	Amadina fasciata										1				
274	Green Twinspot	Mandingoa nitidula									H					
275	Abyssinian Crimsonwing	Cryptospiza salvadorii							2							
276	Red-billed Firefinch	Lagonosticta senegala		2		4	4				4	6				
277	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	Uraeginthus bengalus			2	6	2				4	6		1	4	
278	Yellow-bellied Waxbill	Coccyzygia quartinia						1	20							
279	Bronze Mannikin	Lonchura cucullata		8			20					4				
280	Village Indigobird	Vidua chalybeata					1							1		
281	Pin-tailed Whydah	Vidua macroura							2							
282	Western Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava			12	6	4				✓	✓				
283	Blue-headed Wagtail	Motacilla flava flava									✓	✓				
284	Black-headed Wagtail	Motacilla flava feldegg										1				
285	Abyssinian Longclaw - E	Macronyx flavicollis								1						

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced			October / November													
	Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
286	African Pipit	Anthus cinnamomeus			2											
287	Red-throated Pipit	Anthus cervinus						3		1						
288	African Citril	Crithagra citrinelloides			1	1	6		2			10				
289	Reichenow's Seedeater	Crithagra reichenowi								1		6				
290	Yellow-fronted Canary	Crithagra mozambica						1		2						
291	Brown-rumped Seedeater	Crithagra tristriata		12	12	1	3	2	2					15	2	
292	Streaky Seedeater	Crithagra striolata		3		1		12	20+	6			1	15	4	
293	Yellow-crowned Canary	Serinus flavivertex						1								
294	Ethiopian Siskin - E	Serinus nigriceps						20		100						
295	Ortolan Bunting	Emberiza hortulana												1		
296	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	Emberiza tahapisi			1									2		

Mammals

1	Yellow-spotted Hyrax	Heterohyrax brucei							1							
2	Grivet Monkey	Chlorocebus aethiops				4	✓				1	6				
3	Bale Monkey - E	Chlorocebus djamdjamensis						1	1							
4	Guereza	Colobus guereza					5	3	15	6	2	H				
5	Olive Baboon	Papio anubis				1				100	50					
6	Gelada Baboon - E	Theropithecus gelada		100+												
7	Ethiopian Hare	Lepus fagani										1				
8	Blick's Grass Rat - E	Arvicanthis blicki						✓		✓						
9	Giant Mole Rat - E	Tachyoryctes macrocephalus						5		1						
10	Gambian Sun Squirrel	Heliosciurus gambianus					2				1	1				
11	Caracal	Caracal caracal					1									
12	Common Warthog	Phacochoerus africanus					12		10	80	6	8				
13	Hippopotamus	Hippopotamus amphibius									3	1				
14	Bush pig	Potamochoerus larvatus							1							
15	Grant's Gazelle	Nanger granti										9				
16	Bohor Reedbuck	Redunca redunca					40			1						
17	Common Duiker	Sylvicapra grimmia									2					
18	Mountain Nyala - E	Tragelaphus buxtoni					20			25						
19	Bushbuck - E	Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki						1	2	1						
20	Shrew sp									1						

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Abyssinian Woodpecker by Andy Bunten



Priest in Lalibela by Mike Dexter-Smith



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