Gabon – Africa's Last Eden

Naturetrek Tour Report 14th – 29th August 2026



Mandrill



Grey Pratincole



Black-casqued Hornbill



Western Lowland Gorilla

Tour report by Rob Mileto, photos by Paul Griffin and Rob Mileto

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Tour participants: Pierre Le Rigoleur (local leader), Rob Mileto (UK leader) with four Naturetrek clients

Days 1 and 2 Friday 14th & Saturday 15th August

UK to Libreville

The five of us travelled via Addis Ababa or Paris and all met up in Libreville. Here we were treated to coffee and nibbles in the VIP lounge whilst we waited for the inevitable immigration paperwork to be finished.

For most, it was dusk when we left the airport. The trees in the airport carpark were alive with Village Weavers, seeming to be very noisily catching up with today's gossip before settling down for the night. lt was then only a short drive to our lovely beachside hotel for dinner and bed.

Day 3 Sunday 16th August

Libreville to Lope National Park (via Ndjole)

Some were up early and saw the likes of Red-eyed Dove, Common Bulbul, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, African Thrush and African Palm Swift in the hotel grounds.

We enjoyed a buffet breakfast, met our driver Judex, who then packed up our two 4x4s and off we headed east. The bustling streets of the capital held little bird life. However, once out of the city, wires and branches were punctuated with the likes of Woodland Kingfishers and Western Cattle Egrets.

At Kango bridge over the river Komo, a leg stretch gave us great views of Lesser Striped Swalloows whilst Little Swifts hawked overhead. We made the obligatory stop and photo at the understated equatorial sign, which it turns out is some 1km too far north!

We stopped for lunch in Ndjole... I say stopped; we ordered takeaway pizza and sandwiches and headed off walking a little way upriver (the Ogooué). Both Bronze and Black and White Mannikins were briefly seen, as was Woodland Kingfisher. However, bird of the day was probably the Grey Pratincoles, that we first glimpsed flying and later saw perched on a sandbank with its cousin, the Rock Pratincole. African Skimmer floated up and down the river, occasionally perching with the pratincoles. A greyish looking flycatcher sallied in the bushes and wires around us. There are several such flycatchers in Gabon, but after some consultation with the Merlin app, we agreed it was Ashy Flycatcher.

Lunch done, we hit the road again. We stopped briefly to admire the view and were rewarded with a bonus view of flying African Grey Parrots and huge White-thighed Hornbills. A Red- capped Mangabey dashed across the road in front of us and soon after an equally glorious Putty-nosed Monkey helpfully sat in a tree by the road. From that vantage point, we also managed to pick up Splendid Starling and a diddy little Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird.

We arrived at the Lope Hotel just before darkness. We had well-earned cold drinks after a looooong journey and before settling briefly into our rooms. There was time to sneak in the checklist before dinner and then bed via an Egyptian Toad for some.

Day 4 Monday 17th August

Lope National Park

We gathered at around 06:45 for an early morning stroll around the camp before breakfast.

In a tree top was a single handsome African Green Pigeon. In the air, an occasional Black Saw-wing joined the Lesser Striped and Angolan Swallows. Blue-spotted Wood-dove and it's commoner larger 'cousin,', the Red-eyed Dove foraged in the short-mown grass along with a few African Thrushes, some Pin-tailed Wydah (not quite in breeding plumage) and a lonesome Long-legged Pipit. A flowering tree held a myriad of sunbirds, and we managed to pick out Green-headed and Copper.

Pierre bought us the bonus of French press cafetière coffee with breakfast. Fed and watered, we were heading out along the park boundary in the vehicles, but not before we had enjoyed our first forest buffalo, inexplicably still taxonomically treated as a sub-species of the Cape Buffalo. Just before we left, we also picked up a few tiny little Orange-cheeked Waxbills.

A Grey-headed Kingfisher perched prominently on a telephone wire and a Palm-nut Vulture glided over. There were more Cape Buffalo, and grey shapes on the forest edge morphed into our first Forest Elephants. We sneaked up on these and tried hard to spot the subtle differences between these and African Savannah Elephant. Apparently mostly in the ears (forest has rounded as opposed to fan-shaped), tusks (forest has straighter, more downward pointing tusks) and size, the Forest Elephants were noticeably smaller.

Soon after, we heard Chimpanzees and alarmed Putty-nosed Monkeys they may have been hunting, but sadly we saw neither.

Whilst waiting for lunch, a flowering tree held our third sunbird for the day, Blue-throated Brown as well as several more Coppers. We then had time for a short siesta before heading out into the park.

Our first stop was a tiny, mainly cultural museum. Here we learned from the local ranger Willy, the significance of red, white and black in many Gabonese ethnic cultures. Red represents life force, blood, power or intensity, black denotes the unknown, the night, the earth, and the connection between the living and the dead and white signifies the presence of benevolent ancestors and the power to perceive beyond the physical realm. We also saw a range of stone and iron tools found in the locality.

Off we then went through the savannah and forest. A Forest Elephant slipped into the forest before we could get a close view. Congo Pied Hornbills flapped heavily overhead before landing in a nearby tree. A lone Forest Elephant afforded a decent view, but a nearby herd, probably comprising a matriarch and her three offspring were particularly obliging. The matriarch clearly knew we were there, raising her trunk to sniff our scent, but was content to take her family only slowly away. As we strolled back to the vehicle, Grey Parrots gave us a memorable fly over. It was dusk as we headed back. A female Northern Bushbuck and her calf leapt off the track in front of us and disappeared. A little later, several Thick-knees were scattered on the track. These were far from water and appeared to be Senegal Thick-knees, but these shouldn't occur in Gabon, so maybe they were drought resistant Water Thick-knees?!

After a wash and brush up, dinner was followed by the checklist.

Day 5 Tuesday 18th August

Lope National Park

The early morning walk revealed only the usual suspects from the previous morning, plus a White-crowned Lapwing.

Two of the group had a slightly earlier breakfast in order to head out in search of Mandrills. The rest of us headed off on safari and enjoyed White-thighed, Congo Pied and our first Black-casqued Hornbills. We also managed to spot Olivaceous Flycatcher and Crested Malimbe before Pierre had a call...

…Apparently, the Mandrills were at some distance, so it was best if we joined the morning group and trekked together, so we did. En route we managed to pick up Yellow-throated Longclaw.

Arriving at a remote spot, we met up with the rest of the party. We all then had a long sweaty, but ultimately rewarding walk in the steaming forest. After some one hour of trekking (adding to what the other two had already endured) we found our prize - a large troop of Mandrills Although they were habituated, they still kept themselves at a reasonable distance. In open vegetation this would not have been an issue. However, in dense tropical forest, clear views proved challenging. Thankfully, some individuals climbed trees making them more conspicuous. Also, at one point, they crossed a small clearing and so most got excellent views of the colourful adult males amongst the more subtly coloured females and youngsters.

After about an hour, it was time to head back to the vehicle and thence back to the lodge. We had missed out on lunch so the oranges and sponge fingers Rob had bought with him went down well.

It was good though to have an early dinner after a much-needed shower and snooze. Checklist done, most had an early night after the day's quite strenuous excursion.

Day 6 Wednesday 19th August

Lope National Park to Lamberene (via Ndjole)

Today's early morning walk added Speckled Tinkerbird to our growing checklist. We also had good views of the rather reclusive Pale-throated Greenbul.

We had breakfast in the company of the Minister for Technology, so service was noticeably more prompt! We were packed and ready to leave at 09:00.

We retraced our steps back to Ndjole. On the way, there was surprisingly little to see though the dusty roadbuilding didn't help. However, what was most probably a juvenile Cassin's Hawk Eagle was a welcome sight for some.

Lunch was a similar affair to on the inward journey - we ordered from the selection of pizzas, burgers or sandwiches and then took a stroll downriver. We saw similar birds, with the Rock and Grey Pratincoles putting on another good show.

There was little to see on the post-lunch drive to Lambarene. A leg stretch stop gave us good views of Village, Vieillot's Black and a single Orange Weaver busily nesting, and for some we had our first views of the gorgeous Rosy Bee-eater.

Arriving at the Albert Schweitzer hospital guesthouse, we were soon hearing and seeing a good variety of birds. Splendid Starlings squawked from the treetops and Grey-rumped Swallows dashed around the sky.

After a quick break, some took a walk down to the nearby riverside where Common and Little Terns glided over the water. Also commuting up and down the river were the likes of Reed Cormorants, Great Egrets, African Darters, Purple and Grey Herons.

We polished off the checklist and then the lovely dinner before bed.

Day 7 Thursday 20th August

Lamberene to Lake Onangue

The morning walk was relatively quiet, although we did have three weaver species (Orange, Vieillot's Black and Black-necked) in same palm oil palm. Into the bargain, there was also a Grey-headed Nigrita there.

After a hearty breakfast, we boarded a boat and did a little tour around camp while we waited for our picnic lunch to be prepared. Branches in the water held perched and very dapper White-bibbed Swallows, whilst on the bank lurked Water Thick-knees. We landed on an instream sandbank and found nesting Common Terns along with Little and Gull-billed Terns. A surprise find here was a vagrant Tibetan Sand Plover.

Picnic lunch collected, we headed off downstream towards Lake Onangue. Unsurprisingly, there were many stops en route. We saw our first Common Hippopotami, eyeing us up as we slowly passed by, or swung the boat around for better views. Piping and Congo Pied Hornbills flew lazily overhead, and the corking Rosy Bee-eaters perched helpfully on bare branches. We also enjoyed watching Pink-backed Pelicans on their treetop nests... causing us to nearly miss the African Finfoot trying to sneak past behind us! Once spotted, it afforded some excellent views.

On arrival at the lake, we were greeted by African Skimmers, Purple Heron and both Great and Little Egrets. We landed on an island and had a lovely picnic lunch in the company of some very confiding Grey Pratincoles and somewhat less confiding White-fronted Plovers.

Lunch finished and the view soaked in, we made the return journey seeing many of the same creatures but with the welcome addition of a troop of Red-capped Mangabeys

We had a short break before having a pre-dinner tour of the Albert Schweitzer hospital museum. Much of the hospital is still present albeit renovated. It holds a plethora of memorabilia; journals with photographs documenting

all manner of tropical ailments, obsolete medication still in original containers, an operating theatre with surgical instruments and even a fearsome old dentist chair!



African Finfoot



Hautlaub's Duck



Slender-billed Weaver



Black Bee-eater

Day 8 Friday 21st August

Lamberene to Ndola camp in Loango National Park (via Omboue)

An impromptu walk just before breakfast gave some of us many Splendid Starlings and a few Blue-throated Brown Sunbirds.

After an omelette laden breakfast, we departed at 08.15. Initially we travelled upstream a short way to a road bridge, beneath which roosted thousands of Egyptian Rousette (fruit) Bats - quite a visual and auditory experience. There were so many bats, we did well not to get hit with any droppings!

We then set off downstream, travelling slowly at first to avoid submerged sandbanks. This gave us the opportunity to re-see Water Thick-knees, Little Terns and the ever-smart Grey Pratincoles.

Once past the shallow water, it was full throttle down on the twin 115 bhp outboards making for very speedy progress, but little opportunity for wildlife viewing.

After about 1.5 hours, we stopped at Ngomo where the pastor gave us a tour of the church. However, we also managed to sneak in a good view of Swamp Palm Greenbul and a snatched view of Reichenbach's Sunbird. As an additional treat, Rob spotted movement in one of the abandoned buildings which turned out to be quite a sizable roost of insectivorous bats, probably some sort of leaf-nosed bat.

Off we went downriver with the occasional Palm-nut Vulture or African Harrier Hawk floating over. At the village of Gonguinanga, we arrived to the sight of four weaver species all busily weaving. The commonest was the ubiquitous Village Weaver, but this was indispersed with a scattering of Vieillot's Black Weavers. On thinner lower branches and in nearby small bushes were good numbers of dainty Slender-billed Weavers, and finally there was the occasional Orange Weaver.

In Gabon, visiting a village requires an introduction to chief. Pierre handled this, explaining who we were, where we had come from (including a potted Le Rigoleur family history!) what we were doing and where we were going. After this, small gifts were handed over and only then were we allowed the freedom to have our picnic lunch and explore the fish processing. Very many large "fish with no name" (African Arowana, *Heterotis niloticus*, introduced to Gabon, hence the lack of local name) were being salted and laid out on drying racks. The finished items were packed into large sacks and shipped off to the highest bidder. At some 5.5 euros per fish, it seemed like a lucrative exercise, although no great wealth was obvious within the village.

We then continued with our boat ride. It wasn't too long before we arrived at a large coastal lagoon. Here the sea breeze and the large expanse of water meant waves and thus a bit splashing into the boat. So most of us were a bit damp when we arrived in Omboue, and so a coffee there was very welcome. We then boarded local 4x4 and headed off on a very sandy track. The sand slowly became deeper as we approached the coast and our transfer spot onto another boat. Eventually, the sand became too deep and we ground to a halt. Luckily, this was only a few hundred meters from the boat. This took us speedily to Ndola camp and lovely welcome drinks, before being shown to our cabins.

Later, the checklist was snuck in before dinner.

Day 9 Saturday 22nd August

Ndola camp to Akaka camp, both in Loango National Park

As we gathered for breakfast there were Leaf-loves to be seen and we glimpsed a Yellow-billed Turaco. Post breakfast, as we waited for our transfer boat, there were Brown-throated Wattle-eyes, Reichenbach's, Mangrove and Green-headed Sunbirds to be enjoyed.

We then had another bouncy boat ride across another lagoon to the gorilla trekking centre where Pierre and three guests were dropped off. They waited there enjoying the cracking Black Bee-eaters. After quite a wait, they were summoned back to the boat and off to the landing site nearest the habituated troop. After a 40-minute trek, sometimes through swampy ground, they were amongst the Western Lowland Gorillas. They spent a fantastic hour watching them feed, groom and even come curiously within a couple of meters to watch 'us watching them'. Meanwhile, two of us had a slow boat ride to Akaka camp. En route we had a close encounter with young African Rock Python on an overhanging branch and both Slender-snouted and Nile Crocodiles hauled out on the riverbank. Birds were also seen in abundance, especially Hamerkops, African Darters, Great and Yellow-billed Egrets and no end of Palm-nut Vultures.

The two of us had lunch overlooking the river with Forest Elephants feeding in the adjacent swamp and a couple of them swimming across the river to pastures new. The group were reunited around 15:30 and two chose to join the afternoon's activity which was a boat trip upstream.

We were soon amongst Giant Kingfishers, Carmelite Sunbirds and Cassin's Flycatchers. We snuck up to within 5 metres of a dozing Forest Elephant, which was none too pleased when it probably smelled our presence. Blue-headed Coucals lurked in the thick riverine bank vegetation, as did African Finfoots (or should that be Finfeet?!). A Lizard Buzzard put in a welcome appearance and a starling perching against the light was almost certainly a Purple-headed Starling.

Some 3km upstream of the lodge, the boat outboard decided it had had enough for the day and refused to start! The local guides tinkered with it, but it was not playing ball. During the tinkering, we drifted close to a bank. We soon discovered this bank held a bee's nest! The bees were not happy we had encroached into their personal space. Some got a few stings before one of the local guides removed the engine cover and used that as a makeshift paddle to back us away. So there we were, stranded 3km from camp with no phone signal, no walkie-talkies and no paddles!

We did though have beers and two lovely camp guides who literally fashioned punting poles with Swiss Army knives! Soon we were punting and paddling our way slowly but steadily back downstream. It took nearly three hours to punt back to camp, but the silver lining was good views of Hartlaub's Duck and a newly fledged Pel's Fishing Owl. We arrived back to a surprising lack of concern and news that those who had remained behind had spotted Vermiculated Fishing Owl.

We polished off a late dinner but forwent the checklist.

Day 10 Sunday 23rd August

Akaka camp in Loango National Park

There were Giant Kingfishers and Palm-nut Vultures with breakfast... and Camembert cheese!

We swapped round and two of us went to find the Gorillas whilst Pierre and three guests went for a forest walk. They had what was described as a rather slow morning, but the highlight was a bird party with the likes of Chestnut Wattle-eyes, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Icterine Greenbul and Green Hylia present.

Meanwhile, two were disembarked at the centre, had a briefing, signed disclaimer forms and waited for the Gorillas to be found. The impossibly smart Black Bee-eaters provided the entertainment during the longish wait. At around 11:45 we received the message that the Gorillas had been located. We set off in the boat to the nearest landing point, disembarked and set off into the forest.

The forest in this part of Gabon intricately mixed with swamps, so we did well to keep our feet dry for our 40-minute hike to the habituated group. When we were nearby, we were asked to don face masks to help protect the Gorillas from infectious disease. We then continued. The Gorillas could be smelled almost before they could be seen, a pungent odour perhaps most reminiscent of human body odour (or human body odour and urine as Pierre suggested). There they we scattered over the forest floor finding morsels to eat amongst the fallen leaves. One teenager climbed a near vertical trunk as if it was horizontal to gather a bunch of small grape-like fruit. It placed whole bunch into its mouth and then pulled out the stalk, teeth mostly closed, in order to strip the fruit from the stems.

Soon the big silver back decided he wanted something more substantial than titbits from the forest floor so duly headed off for the nearest verdant swamp. Whilst the Gorillas seemed to cover the sodden ground with impunity, a solo fellow Gorilla watcher that was with us took one step in... and his leg disappeared up to his knee!

Hmmmm, well if we wanted to see more of the Gorillas, there was nothing for it but accept we were going to get wet feet. So we picked our way mostly from papyrus tuft to papyrus tuft through the quagmire until we finally caught up with the family busily munching away on juicy looking sedge bases. These they pulled from the ground, stripped off the outer leaves, bit off the roots and tucked into the white flesh above that (as you might with a spring onion). A mother carrying her three-month old jockey style kept a respectful distance, but some of the youngsters came to within some five metres.

All too soon it was time to leave them to finish their feast... except the quickest way back to the forest was through the centre of the group! This we did slowly and cautiously, but it seems there was no cause for concern, the big silver back ignored us completely!

We were back for a very late lunch and then most of us headed out in the boat.

We found a Pied Kingfisher with a fish that seemed way too large for it to ever swallow, but moved on before it even tried. Perhaps the star of the afternoon show was another but showier kingfisher, the impossibly bright Shining Blue that perched helpfully several times for us. We found a treefull of mixed monkeys, but they were

adept at staying mostly hidden! With patience, most managed to pick out Red-capped and Grey-cheeked Mangabeys and the rather distinctive Moustached Monkey – it's pure white moustache clearly visible even at distance.

We snuck in two days' worth of checklist just before another lovely dinner.

The day's wildlife viewing was not over though as Rob whilst searching for owls by torchlight found two sets of eye shine. One was most likely Southern Needle-clawed Galago, the other rather too far and too hidden to definitively name but most probably a Thomas' Dwarf Galago.

Day 11 Monday 24th August

Akaka camp in Loango National Park

It was rather frustratingly, a morning of 'almosts'. Having taken the boat to a forested area and there taken a short walk, we almost saw Red River Hog, but had to make do with its porcine smell, droppings and snuffle holes. We almost saw Crowned Monkey, but for most it did a fantastic job of hiding in the canopy. We almost had great views of Black Guineafowl, but only a few saw glimpses as the disappeared into thick cover. We did though have decent views of Leaf-loves!

Back on the boat, there were many Cassin's Flycatchers along the riverside and one of John Cassin's other 'discoveries', the Spinetail, flew bat-like overhead. Violet-tailed and Collared Sunbirds were added to the day list and there were no shortages of the seemingly locally ubiquitous African Darters, Palm-nut Vultures and Giant Kingfishers.

We were back in the late morning and picked up Winding Cisticola and Blue-headed Coucal from the lodge balcony.

Lunch was followed by a siesta until 15:00 when it was time to board the boat again and head north towards the lagoon.

We soon managed to spot both Senegal and Blue headed Coucals and also Sabine's Spinetail to add to the Cassin's seen in the morning. A Central African Slender-snouted Crocodile appeared on first view to have an extra appendage on its snout, but closer inspection showed this to be an unfortunate large Aubry's Flapshell Turtle it had caught by the hind flippers.

We chanced upon a big bull Elephant on the shoreline with tusks nearly as long as its trunk. The tusks were also noticeably straighter and more downward pointing than its savannah cousin. An African Woolly-necked Stork helpfully perched prominently on top of a dead tree, unlike the Chattering Cisticola that we could readily hear but took quite some finding. Black Crakes initially also proved elusive after disappearing into dense vegetation, but Rob managed to coax them out with a short cheeky call. There were the ubiquitous Palm-Nut Vultures and African Darters that seem to dominate the bird sightings, so it was refreshing to have a flyover by a dark falcon-like bird - a Bat Hawk. As we approached camp, we had the joy of a Rosy Bee-eater 'murmuration' as hundreds took to the sky as one, presumably off to a roosting site.

Just before dinner we had the massive treat of a Vermiculated Fishing Owl perched just meters from the camp balcony.

Day 13 Tuesday 25th August

Akaka camp in Loango National Park to Libreville (via Port Gentil)

Today, after another lovely fruit-filled breakfast, we said goodbye to the lovely staff at Akaka camp. We set off down the Ngowe river for the last time, and it was no surprise to see Forest Elephant which abound in this national park.

There were excellent views of Hartlaub's Duck and at one point later we stopped to try and spot a cuckoo, only to find there were three species calling from the same locality: Red-chested, Diedrik and Emerald. We spotted the first two, albeit briefly, but sadly the third eluded us.

On entering the lagoon, we were treated to a couple of Goliath Herons. Shortly after, we stopped at Arondibongo island in the lagoon which is a known breeding site for the near endemic Loango Weaver. It was not breeding season for them, but we still managed to get a few sneaky views.

We had lunch and delicious brewed coffee at the rather posh Olako hotel overlooking the lagoon where it was good see Slender-billed Weavers again. Fed and watered, we set off in posh cars up the first tarmac road we had encountered in some days. We had a short stop on Nkomi bridge (at 4.5km it is the third longest in Africa) which had Common Terns patrolling below it.

A further quick stop at a stream revealed both Kittlitz's and Forbes' Plovers, which was an unexpected treat.
The internal flight from Port Gentile to Libreville was pretty much on time and we even got crisps and a drink, despite the whole flight lasting only 30 minutes.

Day 14 Wednesday 26th August

Libreville to Nyonie

We hit the busy streets of Libreville at rush hour, so that was an adventure in itself! Some half an hour later we were at the local port.

Here there were Ethiopian Swallows, who appear to be recent colonists of Gabon. After a short wait we, and several others, squeezed onto a rather small boat and headed out across the Gabon estuary, just south of the capital. Some 3/4 of the way across we managed to bump into a sandbank! No damage done, and the stillness gave us a chance to view Whimbrel and Grey Plovers.

Having landed at a makeshift quay in the mangroves, we boarded an equally snug 4x4 and started off on what turned out to be a relatively short drive to Nyonie camp. En route we had brief views of Putty-nosed Monkey, White-thighed Hornbill and a flyover by a Great Blue Turaco.

On arrival at this rustic beach top haven, we made full use of the free bar! Thirst quenched, we went for a short walk around camp. It had pretty much been overcast for our whole trip, but today it was bright sunshine which foreshortened the walk for some. There was though Blue-chested and White-fronted Bee-eaters, as well as a cracking Forbes' Plover for those that continued the walk all the way to the beach.

We had a lovely lunch with red wine and a sea breeze. It was then a siesta or solo strolls or swims until 16:00.

Off we then went on a 4x4 safari and almost immediately found several stonking Black-headed Bee-eaters. There were several of these large forest bee-eaters in this location but puzzlingly they were the only ones seen on the trip. There were regular flyovers of mixed hornbill flocks that included Congo Pied, White-thighed and the impressive Black- casqued. Much of the grassland had been recently burned, but it could still prove tricky to see the occasional Senegal Lapwing or Yellow-throated Longclaw.

The vegetation in this area is a mix of grassland and forest, but with sharply defined boundaries. Hence the Forest Buffalo and Elephant seen at distance were easily able to disappear into the forest. A small waterhole held a Black Crake and a Senegal Coucal but sadly little else. We stopped at a viewpoint where there was pretty much nothing but forest, grassland and ocean to be seen in any direction.

The camp guide had mentioned a mystery bird roost inhabited by birds that sounded like parrots but weren't parrots. These turned out to be a Splendid Starlings, coming to noisily roost in their hundreds which was quite a sight to behold.

We drove back to camp at dusk. That is nightjar time and, as if on cue, we found a lovely Swamp Nightjar.

Day 15 Thursday 27th August

Nyonie to Libreville

We had a simple breakfast at 05:30 before heading out with other guests and a camp guide on a wildlife walk. It soon became apparent that this was more of a forced march than a leisurely wildlife walk! So we decided to split from the rest of the group. This gave us time to scan, listen and so find the likes of Yellow-throated Longclaw, African Stonechat, a glorious if rather brown Fan-tailed Grassbird and a very mobile Sjostedt's Greenbul.

We had a second simple breakfast at around 08:30 followed shortly after by a little walk, partly for those who had not quite managed to get onto the longclaws before they headed off. Sadly, they eluded us, but we did have good views of Grey-rumped Swallows in abundance and both White-fronted and Blue-breasted Bee-eaters.

Some then went to catch up on lost sleep. Rob was busy writing this very report in the open-air restaurant when he happened to look up and out for inspiration. What were those black chunky birds flying in over the adjacent shoreline? African River Martins! A much sought gem of a bird with its scarlet eye ring and bill seen clearly by most when they finally decided to settle briefly before disappearing over the horizon. What a treat!

There was chilli con carne for lunch, spiced up by some with some fearsomely hot homemade chilli sauce.

We again glimpsed Great Blue Turaco on our 4x4 transfer back to the makeshift quay and enjoyed final views of the resplendent Rosy Bee-eaters as we headed by boat back to Libreville. The Hotel De La Sabliere provided us with a final touch of luxury on our last night in Gabon although we dine out on this occasion.

Day 16 Friday 28th August

Arboretum Raponda Walker, beach with mudflats, Owendo Station, then flight to UK

One guest left before the rest on an extension to SE Gabon and apparently had great views of Chimpanzee and Mandrill. Rob had an earlier flight than the rest of the guests and to said his goodbyes as they left for a morning of birding. At least one guest saw three new bird species for the trip! They were Tambourine Dove, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon and the shy and reclusive Scaly Spurfowl. That brought the grand totals to 161 bird species and 18 mammal species seen and/or heard over the course of two weeks in Africa's last Eden.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

		August 2026													
Common name	**Scientific name**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**
White-faced Whistling Duck	*Dendrocygna viduata*								✓	✓	✓	✓			
Hartlaub's Duck	*Pteronetta hartlaubii*								✓	✓	✓	✓			
Black Guineafowl	*Agelastes niger*										✓				
Scaly Spurfowl	Pternistis squamatus														✓
Great Blue Turaco	*Corythaeola cristata*		✓	H									✓	✓	H
Yellow-billed Turaco	*Tauraco macrorhynchus*								✓	✓					
Senegal Coucal	*Centropus senegalensis*										✓		✓		
Blue-headed Coucal	*Centropus monachus*				✓				✓		✓				
Diederik Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx caprius*					H		✓			✓	✓			
Klaas's Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx klaas*						H								
African Emerald Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx cupreus*											H			
Red-chested Cuckoo	*Cuculus solitarius*										H	✓			
Red-eyed Dove	*Streptopelia semitorquata*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Bronze-naped Pigeon	*Columba iriditorques*														✓
Feral Rock Dove - I	*Columba livia*	✓				✓						✓		✓	✓
Tambourine Dove	Tambourine Dove														✓
Blue-headed Wood Dove	*Turtur brehmeri*									✓					
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	*Turtur afer*			✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
African Green Pigeon	*Treron calvus*			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
African Finfoot	*Podica senegalensis*						✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Black Crake	*Zapornia flavirostra*										✓		✓		
Water Thick-knee	*Burhinus vermiculatus*						✓	✓						✓	
Senegal Thick-knee	*Burhinus senegalensis*			?											
Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*												✓		
Forbes's Plover	*Thinornis forbesi*											✓	✓	✓	
White-crowned Lapwing	*Vanellus albiceps*				✓		✓	✓							
Senegal Lapwing	*Vanellus lugubris*				✓	✓							✓	✓	

		August 2026													
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Kittlitz's Plover	*Anarhynchus pecuarius*											✓			
White-fronted Plover	*Anarhynchus marginatus*						✓								
Tibetan Sand Plover	Anarhynchus atrifrons					✓									
African Jacana	*Actophilornis africanus*						✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*											✓			
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*													✓	
Rock Pratincole	*Glareola nuchalis*		✓			✓									
Grey Pratincole	*Glareola cinerea*		✓			✓	✓	✓							
African Skimmer	*Rynchops flavirostris*		✓			✓	✓	✓							
Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*					✓	✓	✓							
Gull-billed Tern	*Gelochelidon nilotica*						✓								
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*						✓								
West African Crested Tern	*Thalasseus albididorsalis*								✓						
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*					✓	✓					✓		✓	
Yellow-billed Stork	*Mycteria ibis*								✓	✓	✓	✓			
African Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia microscelis*										✓	✓	✓		
African Darter	*Anhinga rufa*					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Reed Cormorant	*Microcarbo africanus*						✓	✓				✓			
Hadada Ibis	*Bostrychia hagedash*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
African Sacred Ibis	*Threskiornis aethiopicus*													✓	
Hamerkop	*Scopus umbretta*			✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Pink-backed Pelican	*Pelecanus rufescens*						✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*						✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Western Reef Heron	*Egretta gularis*												✓		✓
Little Heron	*Butorides atricapilla*									✓					
Great Egret	*Ardea alba*					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Yellow-billed Egret	*Ardea brachyrhyncha*								✓			✓			
Western Cattle Egret	*Ardea ibis*		✓				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Goliath Heron	*Ardea goliath*											✓			

		August 2026													
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Squacco Heron	*Ardeola ralloides*						✓								
Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*					✓								✓	✓
Brown Nightjar	*Veles binotatus*			H											
Swamp Nightjar	*Caprimulgus natalensis*												✓		
Sabine's Spinetail	*Rhaphidura sabini*										✓	✓			
Cassin's Spinetail	*Neafrapus cassini*										✓	✓			
African Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus parvus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Horus Swift	*Apus horus*					✓									
Little Swift	*Apus affinis*		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓
Pel's Fishing Owl	*Scotopelia peli*								✓						
Vermiculated Fishing Owl	*Scotopelia bouvieri*								✓		✓				
African Wood Owl	*Strix woodfordii*						H								
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*									✓					✓
African Harrier-Hawk	*Polyboroides typus*	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		
Palm-nut Vulture	*Gypohierax angolensis*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cassin's Hawk-Eagle	*Aquila africana*					✓									
Bat Hawk	*Macheiramphus alcinus*										✓				
Lizard Buzzard	*Kaupifalco monogrammicus*								✓						
African Fish Eagle	*Icthyophaga vocifer*						✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Congo Pied Hornbill	*Lophoceros fasciatus*			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-casqued Hornbill	*Ceratogymna atrata*				✓				✓				✓		
White-thighed Hornbill	*Bycanistes albotibialis*		✓	✓	✓					✓			✓		
Piping Hornbill	*Bycanistes fistulator*						✓							✓	
Broad-billed Roller	*Eurystomus glaucurus*						✓								
Black-headed Bee-eater	*Merops breweri*												✓		
Black Bee-eater	*Merops gularis*								✓	✓				✓	
White-fronted Bee-eater	*Merops bullockoides*												✓	✓	
Blue-breasted Bee-eater	*Merops variegatus*		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Rosy Bee-eater	*Merops malimbicus*					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
African Pygmy Kingfisher	*Ispidina picta*						✓								
Malachite Kingfisher	*Corythornis cristatus*		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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Shining-blue Kingfisher	*Alcedo quadribrachys*									✓					
Giant Kingfisher	*Megaceryle maxima*							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon malimbica*									H					
Woodland Kingfisher	*Halcyon senegalensis*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey-headed Kingfisher	*Halcyon leucocephala*			✓											
Speckled Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*					✓									
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus bilineatus*		✓						✓						✓
Double-toothed Barbet	*Pogonornis bidentatus*				✓										
Grey Parrot	*Psittacus erithacus*		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Chestnut Wattle-eye	*Dyaphorophyia castanea*									✓					
Brown-throated Wattle-eye	*Platysteira cyanea*								✓						
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone rufiventer*									✓					
African Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone viridis*			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓			
Pied Crow	*Corvus albus*						✓					✓			✓
Bleating Camaroptera	*Camaroptera brachyura*			H		✓									
Chattering Cisticola	*Cisticola anonymus*										✓				
Winding Cisticola	*Cisticola marginatus*										✓				
Fan-tailed Grassbird	*Catriscus brevirostris*													✓	
African River Martin	*Pseudochelidon eurystomina*													✓	
Black Saw-wing	*Psalidoprocne pristoptera*			✓	✓								✓	✓	
Grey-rumped Swallow	*Pseudhirundo griseopyga*					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Banded Martin	*Neophedina cincta*												✓	✓	
White-bibbed Swallow	*Hirundo nigrita*						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Ethiopian Swallow	*Hirundo aethiopica*												✓	✓	✓
Angola Swallow	*Hirundo angolensis*		✓	✓	✓	✓									
Lesser Striped Swallow	*Cecropis abyssinica*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Green Hylia	*Hylia prasina*									✓					
Swamp Palm Bulbul	*Thescelocichla leucopleura*							✓							
Pale-throated Greenbul	*Atimastillas flavigula*		✓	✓		✓									
Sjöstedt's Greenbul	*Baeopogon clamans*													✓	

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Little Greenbul	*Eurillas virens*								✓						
Icterine Greenbul	*Phyllastrephus icterinus*									✓					
Leaf-love	*Phyllastrephus scandens*								✓		✓				
Common Bulbul	*Pycnonotus barbatus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	*Buphagus africanus*			✓	✓	✓							✓		
Purple-headed Starling	*Hylopsar purpureiceps*								✓						
Splendid Starling	*Lamprotornis splendidus*		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		✓
African Thrush	*Turdus pelios*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
Olivaceous Flycatcher	*Fraseria olivascens*				✓										
Cassin's Flycatcher	*Muscicapa cassini*								✓	✓	✓	✓			
Ashy Flycatcher	*Fraseria caerulescens*		✓			✓									
African Stonechat	*Saxicola torquatus*													✓	
Mangrove Sunbird	*Anthreptes gabonicus*								✓						
Violet-tailed Sunbird	*Anthreptes aurantius*								✓		✓				
Collared Sunbird	*Hedydipna collaris*									✓	✓				
Reichenbach's Sunbird	*Anabathmis reichenbachii*						✓	✓	✓				✓		
Green-headed Sunbird	*Cyanomitra verticalis*			✓					✓						
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	*Cyanomitra cyanolaema*			✓		✓		✓	✓						✓
Carmelite Sunbird	*Chalcomitra fuliginosa*						✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green-throated Sunbird	*Chalcomitra rubescens*														
Johanna's Sunbird	*Cinnyris johannae*								✓		✓				
Copper Sunbird	*Cinnyris cupreus*			✓	✓	✓			✓						
Slender-billed Weaver	*Ploceus pelzelni*							✓				✓			
Loango Weaver	*Ploceus subpersonatus*											✓			
Black-necked Weaver	*Ploceus nigricollis*			✓			✓								
Orange Weaver	*Ploceus aurantius*				✓	✓	✓	✓							
Vieillot's Black Weaver	*Ploceus nigerrimus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Village Weaver	*Ploceus cucullatus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dark-backed Weaver	*Ploceus bicolor*				✓										
Crested Malimbe	*Malimbus malimbicus*				✓										
Pin-tailed Whydah	*Vidua macroura*			✓											

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Bronze Mannikin	*Spermestes cucullata*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-and-white Mannikin	*Spermestes bicolor*		✓												
Grey-headed Nigrita	*Nigrita canicapillus*					✓	✓								
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	*Estrilda melpoda*		✓	✓	✓	✓									
Common Waxbill	*Estrilda astrild*							✓							
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	*Passer griseus*		✓					✓					✓	✓	
House Sparrow - I	*Passer domesticus*		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
African Pied Wagtail	*Motacilla aguimp*		✓				✓			✓	✓	✓			
Yellow-throated Longclaw	*Macronyx croceus*				✓									✓	
Long-legged Pipit	*Anthus pallidiventris*			✓	✓			✓				✓			

Mammals

		August 2026													
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African Forest Elephant	*Loxodonta cyclotis*			✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Cape Buffalo	*Syncerus caffer*			✓	✓	✓							✓		
Northern Bushbuck	*Tragelaphus scriptus*			✓											
Common Hippopotamus	*Hippopotamus amphibius*						✓	✓							
Southern Needle-clawed Galago	*Euoticus elegantulus*									✓					
Thomas' Dwarf Galago	*Galagoides thomasi*									✓					
Red-capped Mangabey	*Cercocebus torquatus*		✓				✓		✓	✓				✓	
Moustached Monkey	*Cercopithecus cephus*									✓	H				
Putty-nosed Monkey	*Cercopithecus nictitans*		✓	H	H		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Crowned Monkey	*Cercopithecus pogonias*										✓				
Gray-cheeked Mangabey	*Lophocebus albigena*									✓					
Mandrill	*Mandrillus sphinx*				✓										
Western Gorilla	*Gorilla gorilla*								✓	✓					
Chimpanzee	*Pan troglodytes*			H											
Green Bush Squirrel	*Paraxerus poensis*			✓											
Red-legged Sun Squirrel	*Heliosciurus rufobrachium*						✓	✓							

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Forest Giant Squirrel	*Protoxerus stangeri*									?					
Egyptian Rousette	*Rousettus aegyptiacus*							✓							

Reptiles & amphibians

Common name	**Scientific name**
Egyptian Toad	*Sclerophrys regularis*
Reptiles	
Peters's Rock Agama	*Agama picticauda*
African Rock Python	*Python sebae*
Nile Crocodile	*Crocodylus niloticus*
Central African Slender-snouted Crocodile	*Mecistops leptorhynchus*
Aubry's Flapshell Turtle	*Cycloderma aubryi*