

# Gambia - A Birdwatching Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 18 November 2008

---

Report compiled by tour participant Adam Bowley



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour Leader:	Local guides
Participants:	Ads Bowley
	Stuart Coleman
	Simon Cross
	Dave Davies
	Chris Glanfield
	Hugh Kent
	Liz Kent
	Kjell Larssen
	Barry Long
	Terry Marshall
	Kerry Robinson
	Alan Shears
	Jon Turner
	Alan Whatley

**Summary:** The Gambian currency is the Dalasi and the exchange rate was roughly D36 to the £. Drinks were from D15-25 and beer was usually around D50. We all still got hassled when out and about around the hotel area (as Kotu is a favourite tourist destination) but none were too annoying and a firm but polite ‘no’ was all it usually took... One warning is not to buy water from the hotel bar - £9.50 (or D330) for six bottles!!!! There is a perfectly good little supermarket opposite (six bottles for D100) that also sold beer and was a great place to unwind before dinner upon returning from all day out in the field. They drive (mostly!) on the right, but usually the size of the potholes dictated this! The road on the southern side to Tendaba and beyond is pretty rough-going and therefore slow and dusty (don’t sit in the back of the bus!) but the road on the northern side is great and we could bomb along at a reasonable speed. The local kids all love your spare plastic bottles so keep hold of them and throw them out of the windows and watch them scrap!!

The weather was constantly very warm to hot everyday, and the sun very strong. It was light enough to bird by 0700 and too dark to continue by 1900. The rains this year were very late so the grasses were still very high and extensive inland which obviously had a negative effect on our chances of connecting with some species like Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill and Temminck’s Courser. We had no rain whatsoever although it did cloud over slightly on the 14<sup>th</sup> which only succeeded in raising the humidity, which itself became noticeably higher as the trip went on. Nights were surprisingly bearable – mainly thanks to good old air con on the coast and fans upriver!! Mosquitoes weren’t really a problem, but a few were around Boabalong Camp when we ate in the evenings.

All in all, this was a successful tour, with a few logistical problems that are easily fixable. We managed 309 species as a group which everyone was very happy with. On most days the total was well over the hundred species mark and new birds were added everyday of the trip. Lastly, a big thank you must go to Chris Glanfield for bringing along his net, catching and identifying the butterflies and dragonflies for us all – even though a very large white butterfly with an orange border seen around Farasutu Forest has so far evaded identification and was bizarrely one of the more impressive species seen (answers on a postcard please!) and also to Stuart Coleman for id-ing the rest of the insects and amphibians, both of whom have helped create a more in-depth record of our trip this year.

## Day 1

Friday 7th November

We left gloomy Gatwick on time at 0915 with Monarch Airlines and arrived at Banjul airport 5.5hrs later into beautiful sunshine. After a little confusion we all finally found the bus that took us, along with the regular tourists, towards Kotu and our accommodation, the Kombo Beach Hotel. We had about 20 species from the bus – the list was off and rolling! The hotel was pleasant enough, the food was all-you-can-eat buffet-style and of excellent quality, breakfast was from 0630-1000 and the air-con rooms were spacious and clean and had a fridge and TV. When given our keys, some members had their dinner vouchers inside their envelopes, most of us didn't and had to go and get them from reception before we could eat – so check for little blue bits of paper!

We met Ousman outside the hotel after we'd all dumped our gear and went birding for the last couple of hours of daylight around Kotu Bridge and became familiar with the more regular birds. Solomon Jallow met up with us later and we discussed the tour in general and the plans for the following few days.

## Day 2

Saturday 8th November

We all met down in the dining room for breakfast at 0630 which is a veritable feast of cereals, fruit, toast, eggs, beans, sausages in whatever quantity you feel like and is eaten beneath some roosting Epauletted Fruit-bats in the roof. We met up with Solomon and Ousman by 0730 and went for our first day's birding, taking in Kotu Bridge, Creek and Ponds and then around the Faraja golfcourse where a whole host of new birds were seen, including the gorgeous Violet Turaco that flew into a tree in a blaze of iridescence. Quite a lot of large orb spiders made their massive webs along the edges here and we found them at most woodland sites later. We boarded our big old bus for the first time and journeyed out to the 'sandplover bar' on Cape Point for an amazing buffet lunch with cold beer looking out over the blue seas – perfect! We finished the day birding Brufut Woods and its surroundings which again yielded a whole plethora of goodies, especially the Northern White-faced Owl and the small hide with its drinking pool that proved a great draw to the woodland species.

## Day 3

Sunday 9th November

We made our first visit to the famous Abuko Nature Reserve this morning, reaching it by 0830. Part of the track system was closed due to the flooding of one of the bridges so access was impossible, but this did little to spoil our visit as there's still plenty to see. A big Nile Croc swam towards us as we viewed the pond from the hide at the Darwin Station and we had a good morning's birding, getting views of both Western Bluebill and Ahanta Francolins. Several groups of impressive Red Colobus and Green Vervet Monkeys were seen well, along with a few Gambian Sun Squirrels. From there we headed out to Lamin Lodge for another great lunch whilst dodging the unwanted attentions of the resident Green Vervets – one of which swiped Chris' cake, plastic bag and all, from his hands and made off with it! After a leisurely meal we headed off towards Tujereng and birded the track here which held a lot of birds as the afternoon cooled down slightly.

## Day 4

Monday 10th November

The start of the trip inland...we left at 0730 and made our first stop at Pirang Shrimp Farm where access had been arranged. Plenty of great birds were seen here, but unfortunately the Black-crowned Cranes seemed to have found somewhere better due to the increasing number of people working around the immediate area.

We left to visit Solomon's Greyish Eagle-Owl site at Faraba Banta and after picking up the 'owl man' to take us to the right spot we soon found ourselves walking through shoulder-height grasses to view a large tree from which the owl soon flew out of and landed in full view! We all had great views and left it perched there as we wandered back to the bus to begin the torturously slow drive upriver.

The potholed road resembled a WWII bombed runway in places and the red dust billowing up from the other traffic permeated everything and being sat in the back, Alan and I ended up looking like we'd been sat on the roof for the entire journey!!

A lunch stop at Campanti was productive and welcome and we reached Tendaba Camp by mid-afternoon which gave us enough time for a little foray outback, although the height of the grass was a hindrance. The rooms were basic but clean, with private facilities and shower and a ceiling-fan that was adequate for keeping the night temperatures down. The staff were friendly and the food pretty good and mozzies weren't a problem at all. The pool was also a welcome diversion in the afternoons!

## Day 5

**Tuesday 11th November**

We were up early for the eagerly anticipated boat trip through the mangrove bolongs branching off the main Gambia River opposite the Camp. The motorised pirogue was more than big enough for us all and we enjoyed a good four hr trip that produced some excellent birds and a Marsh Mongoose out on one of the flooded fields. The boatmen brought a chilly bin with drinks so we didn't go thirsty – there was even a beer or two...! We respectfully observed a minute's silence at 11am as we crossed the main river and soon after docked back at the Camp for a quick lunch and then took a walk out along the track behind the camp where we had some good birds, most notably White-crested Helmetshrike, Namaqua Doves and African Hobby.

Upon returning to the camp a few of us forced ourselves to get into the pool – well it would've been rude not to! Later in the afternoon we headed out to the airport area and then onto Kiang West NP where the Brown-hooded Parrots were disappointingly absent, although a small party of Guinea Baboons in the trees around the very full lake was appreciated.

As we had dinner back at the camp we met another private tour who informed us of the nightjars they had seen nearby so, after talking with Solomon, most of the group got back onto the bus (with a borrowed spotlight and an i-pod!!) and succeeded in having great views of both species and of a bonus Scrub Hare.

## Day 6

**Wednesday 12th November**

We were up early and after settling bar bills, set off eastwards once again. We stopped at the Soma Wetlands where, as usual, the first Egyptian Plover was seen feeding on the seashell-encrusted main road.

We reached the Yellytenda ferry port where we birded the little mangrove area and Solomon called in a few favours to get us to the front of the queue (good man!). The short ferry crossing to Farafenni was uneventful but absolutely bustling with people and vehicles (some adorned with tied-up goats on their roofs!) squeezed onto every available inch.

The main road on the northern side of the river was in a much better state and allowed us to make reasonable progress. We stopped a number of times to view new birds by the roadside as we made our way towards the Dibbakunda area which held two excellent waterholes, one of which was called 'Solomon's Waterhole'. As one would imagine these were great draws and the birdlife flocked down to them, including both pytilias, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Red-billed Quelea and the amazing Paradise-Whydahs. We also had a couple of Red Patas Monkeys sitting in a tree there which added nicely to the mammal total.

Further along, a stop at the Kaur Wetlands was productive with a nice flock of 12 stunning Egyptian Plovers although we were unfortunately a little late for the White-crowned Lapwings. Stopping at the picturesque lily-covered pools at Panchang was well worth it too, with Black Crakes and Purple Swamphen seen. A final stop at Wassu, near the famous stone circle, failed to produce Northern Carmine Bee-eaters but did hold a contentious bustard. We reached the ferry at Janjanbureh which is the northern entry port to get onto McCarthy Island where Georgetown itself is situated.

A short distance later we arrived at Boabalong Camp for a three night stay. The camp was more basic than Tendaba, but the staff were again friendly and helpful and the food excellent. Chris and I had the added bonus of a noisy Common African Toad living in our bathroom.

## Day 7

Thursday 13th November

Breakfast was usually interrupted by something good – be it Pearl-spotted Owlets or Bearded Barbets and walking down to the river was always worth it in the morning. We left the island by the southern pull-ferry for the disappointingly-quiet Jahali rice fields, stopping at the village of Fulabanta for views of the breeding Marabouts. On the way back, we stopped at Brikamaba village and Ousman proved his worth by getting us the Verreaux's Eagle-Owl.

We returned to the camp for lunch and later in the afternoon we headed back off the island and to Bansang Quarry with its impressive Red-throated Bee-eater colony and birded the surrounding fields. We finished the day off with a walk along a track near Boraba that was generally quiet but we still managed to add a couple to the list, most notably a pair of silhouetted African Paradise-Flycatchers and a couple of more familiar Wood Warblers. A very large praying mantis was found here too.

## Day 8

Friday 14th November

Today we did the boat trip down the Gambia River. After birding the river by the camp, we walked down to the jetty to board the double-decker boat – which wasn't the most stable craft in the world! – at 0830 and set off at a leisurely pace westwards down the river. 97 species of bird were seen and also three brilliant Hippos – a big male and two females!

We also saw several groups of Red Colobus and Green Vervet Monkeys as well as a number of Nile Monitors. Drinks and food were available on board and the only truly scary moment was when everyone decided to stand on the starboard side to photograph a perched Red-necked Falcon which very nearly ended with us all in the water – how my 'scope didn't go overboard after sailing through the air I just don't know....

We finally got back to the dock by 1530 and we then went down to the Bird Safari Camp - which looked excellent! We birded the tracks behind it and saw some good birds, including the impressive Grey-headed Bushshrike and a few European migrants like Turtle Dove, Redstart and Pied Fly.

## Day 9

## Saturday 15th November

We left the camp today for the long trek back to the coast and after catching the first ferry of the day across to Janjanbureh we made a bee-line for Wassu where the Northern Carmine Bee-eaters put on a wonderful display. We continued back along the good-quality road all the way back to Barra, stopping at Panchang, the Kaur Wetlands, Kerr Corsa, Solomon's Waterhole and the Boabulo Wetlands, seeing similar species to the 10<sup>th</sup>. No matter how hard we looked, we could not find a single Ground Hornbill anywhere!

We caught the busy ferry back to Banjul and enjoyed the hour or so crossing with lots of terns, gulls and marauding Pom Skuas to watch – and a fight at the back of the boat was amusing too! We stopped along Bunde Rd just outside Banjul to view the terns and gulls flocking on the mudflats and made it back to the luxury of the Kombo Beach Hotel by 1900...ah, air con!!

## Day 10

## Sunday 16th November

We left today for the newly-opened reserve in Farasutu Forest which has been set up near the village of Tunjina by another local guide called Baba, who was excellent. The highlight here was a White-backed Night-Heron on its' nest and the presence of Leaflove and Green Crombec. This place is excellent and well worth a visit. There are White-spotted Flufftails present in the forest and Baba is hoping to get funds together to build a hide overlooking a suitable waterhole so the chances of seeing this elusive bird will be greatly improved. A good selection of birds was seen and we wandered around to the fields in the outlying regions notching up a total of 78 species before setting off to the impressive Baobab Island where we were ferried across to for lunch and where a few other birds crept onto the list.

We spent the afternoon birding the Farababantang Bush Track which was frustratingly hot and quiet and then went to visit a waterhole just across the border into Senegal which was too full and coupled with the local kids that accompanied us it was no surprise that not a lot was seen there! Later, quite a few Straw-coloured Fruit-Bats were leaving their roosts as we neared Kotu, flapping languidly over the main road.

## Day 11

## Monday 17th November

Our last full day was quite frustrating really. It started off well with another visit to Abuko and success in seeing Green Turaco.

The rice fields opposite the entrance were fairly quiet so we headed off for lunch, again at Lamin Lodge where the light-fingered Green Vervets were a lot more belligerent this time and had to be chased off! We then set off for Tanji where we totally dipped on Kelp Gull and White-fronted Plover – apparently another tour group had visited the previous day when the tide was lower and more optimal and had failed also.

A long search of the area failed to find anything of note so we headed back to Kotu Bridge where we had a visit to the hide by the bridge which overlooks a small bathing pool which was frequented by Oriole Warbler and Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat. We then tried in vain to locate the Painted-Snipes that were present nearby....

## Day 12

Tuesday 18th November

Most of the group visited Bijilo Forest for a few hours in the morning, after again dipping the Painted-Snipes at Kotu. The forest was very quiet and the biggest highlight was probably the local dog chasing the Green Vervets! I had managed to get the hotel to let us keep our rooms for an extra hour so we returned and showered and checked out in a leisurely style. We left in the bus just after 1300 and after stopping for a Black-shouldered Kite en route, we reached the airport by 1400 and everyone checked in with no problems.

Dinner at the airport is a little pricey (£5.50 for a sandwich!) but we were all pretty hungry. The plane took off on time and the return flight took slightly less than the scheduled 6hrs, landing at 2210 into Gatwick.

## Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) to sign up.

## Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

## Species Lists

### Birds

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis capensis*

A pair seen on the 8<sup>th</sup> at their only regular site of Kotu Ponds.

**Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Definitely the scarcer of the two species. One in flight over the mangroves at the Sandplover Bar at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> was followed by four over Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and two in flight over the ponds at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens*

Widespread resident, with birds noted at most wetland and riverine sites and the breeding colony near Tendaba was impressive.

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*

One was called from the Barra-Banjul Ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus*

A gathering of c30ad/immatures at Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus africanus*

Common resident along most riverine habitats.

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa*

Sightings of One circling over the mangroves at the Sandplover Bar at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> and two in flight over Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> were followed by the best day total of 12 along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The only other sightings were two over the river from the Georgetown boat trip and one flying over the ponds at Farasutu Forest.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea cinerea*

Common and widespread; seen at most wetland habitats that we visited.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala*

Common resident, seen well at most wetland sites with breeding birds in a colony with the Marabouts at Fulabanta on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the palms surrounding croc pond at Abuko were a good site for them.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath*

Only two seen, one of which perched up very nicely for photos along the river on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea purpurea*

Scarce bird, with singles seen from Lamin Lodge, at Kaur and Boabulo Wetlands, Jahali rice fields and from both boat trips and one flying southwards over the Yellytenda-Farafenni ferry.

**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba melanorhyncha*

Fairly common, being present at most wetter habitats visited.

**Black Egret** *Egretta ardesiaca*

one over Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> got the ball rolling, but five low over the bolongs at Tendaba whilst on the boat trip were much better, with the morning light emphasizing their orange feet perfectly. Three others were 'scoped preening at Jahali rice fields which showed off their surprisingly long crests to full effect. One was seen at Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup> and later that day one lucky member saw another do its famous 'shading' routine as we passed a pond en route back to the hotel. By the time we'd stopped and backtracked it had unfortunately disappeared.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia*

Seen a couple of times around Kotu but was most numerous along the bolongs at Tendaba on 11<sup>th</sup>, with c60 seen. Also seen from the Georgetown river trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta garzetta*

Not as numerous as the following species, but seen in small numbers at all wetland sites we visited.

**Western Reef-Egret** *Egretta gularis gularis*

Common and widespread at all wetland habitats visited. Only one white-morph was seen with three 'usuals' along Bunde Rd, Banjul after disembarking from the ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*

One seen over Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> was the first to be seen and it proved to be more widespread the further inland we went, with good numbers on both boat trips and at Panchang.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis ibis*

A very common and widespread resident, seen everyday of the trip.

**Striated Heron** *Butoroides striata atricapilla*

Common resident and seen at all wetland and riverine habitats visited throughout.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*

Fairly common along riverine habitat visited although surprisingly absent from the bolongs around Tendaba and a small heronry was present on the main pond at Abuko.

**White-backed Night-Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus*

two seen, not well, by most of the group on the Tendaba boat trip amongst the mangrove tangles in their usual spot on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A much better bird was seen on its nest on the ponds inside the Farasutu Forest at Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup>, pleasing everyone!

**Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmi*

one immature flushed from the low vegetation was a surprise bonus for some on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> – nearly made up for the Finfoot travesty....nearly!

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta*

Common and widespread resident, with birds seen in most damp areas visited. Some of their monstrous nests were seen in a few places, often surprisingly low. It was quite amazing how often they resembled a raptor when flying at you head-on!

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis*

c.10 perched distantly on the opposite bank from Tendaba Camp on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> were followed by much more satisfactory views of c.30 in small flocks circling the bolongs on the boat trip the following day and c.12 high over the track behind the camp. The last sighting was of a flock of eight circling over the Yellytenda-Farafenni ferry port on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*

c.20 seen along the bolongs on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Marabou** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

c.10 seen at the small breeding colony around Fulabanta village on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Also 13 in flight over Brikamaba whilst watching the Verreaux's Eagle-Owl later that day were perhaps from the same colony. At least 15 were seen from the Georgetown boat trip including another pair on a nest on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a singleton was soaring near the ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Immature and immature-looking ugly birds!

**Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus aethiopicus*

Only one seen, in flight over the bolong during the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash brevirostris*

Two feeding on the wetlands along the bolongs on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a single bird perched in trees from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> were the only sightings.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*

At least five birds were picked out amongst a flock of more numerous Africans at Pirang Shrimp Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba*

A total of c.50 birds were seen at Pirang Shrimp Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus*

A pair flying in and feeding on one of the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a flock of ten birds on the coast from the Barra ferry port were the only sightings.

**White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata*

Seen in small groups at most wetland sites visited including around Kotu Bridge. Flocks of c.40 and c.60 at the Kaur Wetlands and the Jahali rice fields respectively were the highest totals noted.

**Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis gambensis*

A showy adult perched up in a tree over the lake at the Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Small parties were seen flying across the river early mornings during our stay at Boabalong Camp and on our return journey on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 18 were counted at the Kaur Wetlands with another 32 at Boabulo Wetlands.

**African Pygmy-Goose** *Nettapus auritus*

A pair took flight from alongside the path through the Jahali rice fields, giving brief views to only a couple of group members on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A much better party of 11 birds at Panchang on the 15<sup>th</sup> gave everyone the chance to catch up with this lovely duck.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Eight females taking flight from the Jahali rice fields as we pulled up on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

two females were seen feeding at the Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*

Encountered frequently, obviously around bodies of water, mostly near the coast.

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus caeruleus*

Our last trip tick and a lifer for some! was gratefully added to the list when one was finally spotted atop a tree en route to the airport on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans migrans*

Several birds were seen in various places across the country, but only ever in ones or twos.

**Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus parasitus*

Common resident in all habitats and the second-most numerous raptor seen after the Hoodies.

**African Fish-Eagle** *Haliaaetus vocifer*

A lovely adult sat in a dead tree along the main river and a showy immature perched at the entrance to the bolongs as we began the boat trip from Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> were enjoyed by all. An adult and an immature were seen soaring over fields as we waited for the southern pull-ferry off of McCarthy Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> and six adults including one giving its resonant call and a pair at the nest were seen from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Palmnut Vulture** *Gypobierax angolensis*

Reasonably common and widespread, seen at a number of sites from Abuko to Georgetown, with a couple perched up and grilled well. A stunning raptor especially in flight, most birds seen were adults, with immatureatures seen at Faraba Banta and Pirang on the 13<sup>th</sup> where a count of five was the highest in any one area.

**Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Commonest raptor by far and seen everyday, often in large numbers overhead in all suitable habitats – in fact there must have been at least 100 around the airport as we waited for the bus upon our arrival. A small group of

three feeding on a baby goat!! Alongside the northern road was a more stereotypical view on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The large numbers present at the animal orphanage inside Abuko allowed close views and great photographic opportunities.

**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus*

Only began to be sighted as we journeyed inland, the highest count was a total of c80 along the river on the boat trip from Georgetown on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The last bird was seen perched opposite the dead kid on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruppell's Vulture** *Gyps ruppellii*

Two were seen circling overhead the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Almost as big as the accompanying Marabouts, this was the only sighting.

**Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus beandouini*

One ad soaring over Pirang was the first seen on the 10<sup>th</sup>. An excellent ad perched along the bolong on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> was the only one seen that wasn't in the air and everyone had great views. The following day another was seen soaring with other raptors over Solomon's waterhole, two were seen from the bus on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with another seen over Farasutu Forest and one over Baobab island on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Brown Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus*

One was seen soaring over Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup> with the only other sighting being of another singleton soaring above Boabulo wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Western Banded Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens*

The only sighting was of a singleton soaring over the river on the Georgetown boat trip. This is the most reliable area for this elusive species.

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus*

One superb ad female soared low overhead as we watched the Greyish Eagle-Owl at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The following day another excellent ad male was 'scoped soaring over the airport area at Tendaba.

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeroginosus aeroginosus*

The first was noticed flying across the road as we drove from the airport on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Seen regularly at wetland habitats visited throughout.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

One female was seen as she flew across the bolong at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>, with a pair quartering over the Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Gymnogene** *Polyboroides typus pectoralis*

Sorry, but 'African Harrier-Hawk' is just so mundane! These charismatic raptors were fairly common and seen everyday in a variety of habitats, but usually only a couple of birds a day – the exception being Pirang where five adults and two immatures were seen. One adult was watched at Bansang on the 13<sup>th</sup> as it unsuccessfully attempted to reach into a nest cavity in a hollow tree branch with its double-jointed legs whilst hanging on to the end and being bombarded by an angry Red-billed Hornbill – just as they're portrayed on TV.

**Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus monogrammicus*

First encountered perched in a palm on the 8<sup>th</sup> on the Faraja Golf Course was enjoyed by all. Seen fairly frequently perched in trees at a variety of dryer habitats.

**Dark Chanting-Goshawk** *Melierax metabates metabates*

The second-commonest accipiter, widespread and seen frequently along the roadside in mostly open wooded landscapes.

**Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar niger*

One seen flying low down the bolong ahead of the canoe at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> perched up briefly on a fallen tree for the front few to see it. At Boabalong Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>, three black-phase birds were seen flying out over the river early morning and a further three were seen in flight later as we began the boat trip.

**African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro sparsimfasciatus*

one adult flew across the main croc pond at Abuko, giving good views to most of the group on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badius sphenurus*

The commonest accipiter by a long way, seen everyday except 17<sup>th</sup> in various habitats, usually in flight. A day total of ten when travelling was not uncommon.

**Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis*

A fine-looking raptor, especially in flight. Two seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> from the bus were followed by eight other sightings. The four separate birds seen on the 15<sup>th</sup> as we travelled back towards the coast was the highest day count.

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax belisarius*

Four seen on three separate days, all in flight.

**Wahlberg's Eagle** *Aquila wahlbergi*

Reasonably common, with eight seen. The narrow tail when soaring was a very useful identification feature. A light-phase adult perched at Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup> was very nice.

**African Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraaetus spilogaster*

One excellent adult caused the bus to screech to a halt as it soared overhead on the journey inland on the 12<sup>th</sup> and another was seen along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*

One light-phase bird was watched soaring amongst Hoodies over Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>, until a Lanner had a go at it!

**Martial Eagle** *Polematius bellicosus*

A majestic pair copulating in a huge tree beyond the bolongs on the Tendaba boat trip was the only sighting. A truly huge raptor!

**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Scarce, with a single seen soaring over Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and two seen around the airport area at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A further two were seen perched along the river from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Fab-looking raptors, especially in flight when the white wing patches are easily visible even at a great distance.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus rufescens*

Only one male seen perched en route to Fulabanta village on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiacens*

The most common falcon, seen across the country in most open habitats. Seen on all but two days, numbers were usually only ones or twos. The best view was of one along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> feeding atop a bare tree.

**Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera ruficollis*

A lovely little falcon first encountered at Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup> as it sat deep inside a tree watching the weavers before shooting out and giving them a scare. four more were seen the following day on the Georgetown boat trip – in fact it was the 4<sup>th</sup> one of the day sat perched in a palm that almost caused the toppling of the boat....! one over Panchang on the 15<sup>th</sup> and two over Kotu fields on the 18<sup>th</sup> were the only other sightings.

**African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii*

A gorgeous adult circled overhead as we walked the track behind Tendaba camp and landed nicely in a tall tree allowing 'scope views.

**Lanner** *Falco biarmicus abyssinicus*

Fairly frequent and widespread, seen over various habitats. two seen over the airport as we waited by the bus on the 7<sup>th</sup> were the first of our total of ten seen.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus minor*

Only one sighting of a bird flying across the river at Georgetown on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Ahanta Francolin** *Francolinus abantensis*

Surprisingly good views of this skulker were had at Abuko just beyond the Darwin hide on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The first bird to show was missed by most, but another two came into view soon after, causing great relief! On our return visit on the 17<sup>th</sup> one member saw two on the path and two others were calling loudly at their original site.

**Double-spurred Francolin** *Francolinus bicalcaratus bicalcaratus*

Reasonably common and widespread, and obviously more often heard than seen and most sites. Good views were had along the tracks at Brufut on the 8<sup>th</sup> and at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The best views, however, were of a single bird that came in to dust-bathe at Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Stone Partridge** *Ptilopachus petrosus petrosus*

After tracking down a couple of calling birds and finally seeing brief flight views in Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>, seven were seen by the whole group at their regular site at the entrance of the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A

party of six that seemed reluctant to leave the track ahead of the bus along the Farababantang Bush track on the 16<sup>th</sup> was an added bonus.

**Black Crane** *Amaurornis flavirostris*

Probably three birds were watched well as they slipped in and out of the lush reeds at Panchang on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Another pair with a tiny chick was seen along the edge of the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio madagascariensis*

one seen at the rear of the lily-filled ponds at Panchang on the 12<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus meridionalis*

The only sighting was of oneadoneimmature noted at Panchang on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis senegalensis*

Humph! Being on the upper deck, I didn't see the female that slid into the water (saw the ripples though) as the boat passed close to the shore on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Only seen by three lucky lower-deckers!

**Black-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis melanogaster melanogaster*

A bustard in flight at Wassu on the 12<sup>th</sup> was called as a Savile's by the leader. It was also seen on the ground as it ran ahead of us on the path before taking flight again. I saw the bird well in flight from a further distance and saw a large amount of white present in the upperwing – something that Savile's doesn't show and thus I wasn't happy with the id. As the field guide isn't that great, internet searches and checking other field guides upon returning home proved my initial thoughts correct.

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus*

Attractive birds that were present on all lily-covered ponds we visited at Kotu, Panchang and Jahali rice fields. A pair with two small young was at Panchang on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the ten adult + one immature seen at Jahali on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the highest count. Great looking birds that still look odd when flying!

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*

One seen in flight at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two on the shore by the Barra ferry and five at Tanji were the only sightings.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

Reasonably common and seen in all wetland habitats visited. c30 on the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> was the highest single count.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

c.60 at the Pirang Shrimp Farm were the only birds seen.

**Senegal Stone-Curlew** *Burhinus senegalensis*

Common and widespread resident. Seen everyday in all suitable habitats, including the hotel roof! c80 together at the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> was the highest count.

**Spotted Stone-Curlew** *Burhinus capensis maculosus*

A single bird that took off from the road in front of the bus as we returned to Tendaba Camp after nightjarring was the only sighting.

**Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius*

Seen initially on the 12<sup>th</sup> as we drove upriver, a single bird was first found feeding on the road through the Soma Wetlands. A further singleton was seen at another stop that day, with 12 beauties together at the Kaur Wetlands and two at Panchang. Five in total were seen at the latter two sites on the return journey on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A truly stunning bird and voted co-bird of the trip along with Carmine Bee-eater.

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*

A total of c45 were present at the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The following day c20 were seen over the Jahali rice fields and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, five were hawking over the Kaur wetlands with another ten 'scoped on the mud at the Boabulo Wetlands.

**Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*

The most common plover by far. Seen everyday in all suitable habitats, good numbers were seen at the wetlands visited and several pairs had recently-fledged chicks at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus tectus*

Scarce, seen on five days of the trip, usually in pairs. The eight on the Faraja golf course on the 8<sup>th</sup> was the highest count.

**Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus senegallus*

Widespread, seen on all but one day of the trip. A flock of c80 on the Kaur wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup> was the highest single count.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Common and widespread, especially nearer the coast, but c20 seen on the pools at Tendaba airport on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula*

Common and widespread, especially nearer the coast, but one immature also seen along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius curonicus*

two seen at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and one in the flooded areas along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> were the only sightings.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius*

These plovers were amazing – as soon as they sat down into the dry cracked mud of the Kaur Wetlands they totally disappeared! A flock of 16 was counted on the 12<sup>th</sup> as first one, and then the rest, got up and moved to reveal their presence to us. Upon the return journey on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the flock had grown to 22 individuals.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa limosa*

12 were seen at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, one on the flooded pools at the airport area at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> and two at Barra and one off of Bunde Road on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica lapponica*

Three seen at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Whimbrel** *Numerius phaeopus phaeopus*

Common and widespread, seen at all wetland sites nearer the coast and also seen in good numbers along the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> and at the Kaur wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. One perched in a tree opposite Baobab Island on the 16<sup>th</sup> was unusual to say the least!

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numerius arquata arquata*

Only seen singly at the Kaur Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Tanji beach on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus totanus/ussuriensis*

Common and widespread, present on all wetlands and beaches visited.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*

A single bird was on the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, two birds were present at the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and ceight were at the Soma Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia nebularia*

Common and widespread, present on all wetland areas visited.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

The scarcest sandpiper, seen at Kotu ponds on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the Abuko rice fields on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Fairly common in low numbers: four birds were present on Kotu ponds on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two were at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, one at the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, one at Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup> and one at Abuko rice fields.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Very common on all riverine habitats visited and seen everyday of the trip except the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres interpres*

One flew along the shoreline at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>, csix were on the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and c30 were on the rocks at Tanji beach on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago gallinago*

Six were seen in flight over the Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

Four were feeding along the shoreline at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>, a singleton was off of Bunde Road on the 15<sup>th</sup> and c40 were on the beach at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

c30 were present at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

A single bird was seen in flight at Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup> only to disappear completely from sight once it landed in a muddy field.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina arctica/schinzii*

Seen on two dates: a single bird was at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> with another single bird at the Kaur wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup> and later c20 on the mudflats off Bunde Road.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

Eight were seen at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, three were on the mudflats off Bunde Road on the 15<sup>th</sup> and one was on the beach at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

Two were seen at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, c40 were at the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, eight were at the Jahali rice fields and two were on the Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

At least 15 of these awesome birds were seen from the Barra-Banjul ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Most of the light-phase adults seen had a varying selection of 'spoons' with the remainder being immatures. They often harried the gulls right along the beach at Banjul port and showed a lot better here than they do off Selsey Bill in May!!

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A single immature was picked out harassing gulls with the Poms on the Barra-Banjul ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>, finally settling on the sea with a group of four of its larger cousins.

**Lesser black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus graellsii/intermedius*

Seen in low numbers flying offshore from the hotel most mornings, there were large gatherings at Barra ferry port and Bunde Rd, Banjul totalling perhaps 200 immatures. C.250 adults and immatures were seen on the beach at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup> with thousands of gulls, large and small, visible out on the islands.

**Baltic Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus*

At least four of this noticeable small and black gull were present with LBBs on the beach at the Barra ferry port on the 15<sup>th</sup> and another three were seen with the large mixed gull/tern flock at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus poiocephalus*

The commonest *larid* in the area, seen everyday on the coast and in good numbers at several places such as Tanji. Absent inland where only seen at the wetlands as journeyed in and out.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*

Seen in small numbers on the coast at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup> and also two present further inland on the Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica nilotica*

Fairly common in low numbers around the coastal sites, with three also seen flying downriver from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also noted at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the Soma Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the Boabulo Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

Common along the coast, with c50 on the shoreline at Barra as we waited for the ferry to depart on the 15<sup>th</sup>. one also seen on the Boabulo wetlands that day.

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maxima albidorsalis*

The commonest large tern that defied all attempts to turn any of them into Lesser Crested's! Good numbers along the coast only and seen from the hotel every morning we were there.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis sandvicensis*

Reasonably common, with birds seen flying past the hotel most mornings we were there, and numbers seen at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>, on the shoreline and from the Barra-Banjul ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup> and at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo hirundo*

One with the gull/tern flock on then beach at Cape Point as we lunched at the Sandplover Bar on the 8<sup>th</sup>, c.2 flying around Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and c500 on the shoreline at Barra on the 15<sup>th</sup> were the only sightings.

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons albifrons*

Two in flight over the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> were the only sightings.

**Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus*

A total of six were seen in flight at a couple of stops as we drove further inland on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Some of the group saw three fly-up from the path as we left Bansang Quarry on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with another three flying alongside the bus as we drove back towards Boabalong Camp, one allowing good views as it kept pace with us.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia skyrattiensis*

Surprisingly scarce and seen around a few larger villages only

**Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea*

Common and widespread, seen everyday in a variety of habitats. A surprisingly good-looking pigeon.

**Eurasian Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur arenicola*

At least four were seen along the track from the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**African Mourning Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens shelleyi*

First seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> and becoming increasingly common inland where it was probably the most numerous dove, its excellent call reminiscent of someone gargling water and trying to 'coo' was a constant companion. Particularly common in the riverside vegetation.

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata*

Common and widespread, seen everyday in a variety of habitats.

**Vinaceous Dove** *Streptopelia vinacea*

The commonest and most widespread dove, seen everyday in a variety of habitats

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis senegalensis*

Common and widespread, seen everyday in a variety of habitats.

**Black-billed Wood-Dove** *Turtur abyssinicus*

This delightful little dove was fairly common and widespread, being seen in most habitat types, from grasslands to mangroves, often flying across in a blur of bright orange underwings. The six-or-so visiting the drinking pool at Brufut were very photogenic.

**Blue-spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur afer*

Only one seen, perched in a tall mahogany tree in Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis capensis*

A brief flight view of a male on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> behind Tendaba Camp was wholly unsatisfactory but the following day was much better with two males and a female feeding just ahead of us on the track there. At least 20 birds were present around the two waterholes on the 12<sup>th</sup>, giving excellent views. four were seen on the 13<sup>th</sup> - two at Jahali rice fields and two en route. A female on the track ahead of the bus at Wassu on the 15<sup>th</sup> was followed by at least ten at Kerr Corsa and ten again around Solomon's waterhole. Absolutely beautiful doves and so unbelievably small!

**Bruce's Green-Pigeon** *Treron waalia*

First seen on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and usually seen in low numbers daily inland with a fine perched individual outside Boabalong Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A count of 12 birds seemingly coming into roost along the track at Boraba was also noteworthy.

**African Green-Pigeon** *Treron calva nudirostris*

Two in flight and a perched individual were seen at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup> with the only other sighting being of two in flight at Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri krameri*

Common and widespread, usually flying around in typically noisy flocks and seen on all but one day of the trip in a variety of habitats.

**Senegal Parrot** *Poicephalus senegallus*

Common and widespread in a variety of habitats and seen on all but one day of the trip also

**Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa buffoni*

With the whole group missing a flight view in Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>, we eventually had excellent views of at least three birds feeding in the trees near the smaller hide inside Abuko on our return visit on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Target bird of the day acquired! We were getting a bit worried about this one...!

**Violet Turaco** *Musophaga violacea*

One of these simply gorgeous birds, a blur of purple and red, flew into the trees on the Faraja Golf Course on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Another was seen well in trees at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>, another perched low in bushes by the ponds at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup> and another couple again seen in Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Western Grey Plantain-eater** *Crinifer piscator*

Renamed 'Wannabe Turacos', these birds were seen everyday of the trip in a variety of habitats and their raucous calls were a familiar sound throughout.

**Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii*

Initially and annoyingly heard-only at our dinner-stop at Campanti on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the airport area at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>, one showy individual by the roadside finally gave itself up as we left Tendaba on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Two others were seen in riverside vegetation on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and on the 16<sup>th</sup> one was seen from the bus as we ventured into no-man's land between the Gambia-Senegal borders.

**African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis*

One adult was seen as it was mercilessly mobbed by a male African Golden Oriole along the Farababantang Bush Track on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Klaas' Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas*

A brief flight view of a male along the entrance track to the Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup> wasn't great and most of group dipped, but a stunning male and a showy female seen well on Baobab Island as we had dinner there on the 16<sup>th</sup> more than compensated. The following day a further two females were seen at Abuko.

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis senegalensis*

Common resident, seen everyday in all suitable habitats.

**African Scops-Owl** *Otus senegalensis senegalensis*

Solomon spotted perhaps up to three birds roosting in the mangroves along the river on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>. After a scramble to get views as the boat floated past, the whole group finally managed decent looks of at least one bird. Nice!

**Northern White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis*

Solomon found a stunning adult sitting watching the world go by in its regular spot at Brufut Woods.

**Greyish Eagle-Owl** *Bubo cinerascens*

The regular adult was found at its roost at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup>, giving fantastic views after it flew into a taller tree, whereupon it was mobbed by Purple Glossy-Starlings.

**Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** *Bubo lacteus*

The regular pair at Abuko had not been relocated this year but we were lucky Ousman knew of a site upriver at Brikamaba where we had brilliant views of an adult on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Apparently there can be up to four birds here but the local kids throw stones at them.... Another bird was seen perched in a tree as we left the Bird Safari Camp at dusk on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A pair duetted nightly at Boabalong Camp also, but weren't seen.

**Pearl-spotted Owllet** *Glaucidium perlatum*

A surprisingly difficult one this bird! After having a couple of near misses, including hearing one around the Tendaba airport area on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and then on the 10<sup>th</sup>, behind Tendaba camp, whistling a reply to a call that got louder as we approached – only to find another group with their guide whistling back at us....classic! We eventually had great views of the resident pair around the Boabalong Camp during our stay there, often seeing them over breakfast. One was also calling around the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus climacurus*

As below, we had excellent views of three birds as we drove around the roads near Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A single bird also took off from the track as we left the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Standard-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx longipennis*

After borrowing a spotlight and i-pod we returned to the dusty tracks near Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup> and had fantastic views of a male with emerging 'standards' perched on the road and nearby a female that was settled nicely only to be scared off by the only cyclist around for miles!! Two females were seen, one extremely well, on the roads as we returned to Boabalong Camp on the 13<sup>th</sup>. On a more depressing note, over 100 nightjar casualties were counted on the northern road from Farafenni to Georgetown on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and most looked to lack white in the wing and the couple that were examined proved to be this species. The few casualties on McCarthy Island were also this species. I just hope that with this many dead, the surviving population must be quite substantial....

**Mottled Spinetail** *Telacanthura ussberi ussberi*

Singles were seen over Faraja golf course and Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup>, behind Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> and Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Flocks of c10 were seen over Campanti on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the river at Georgetown on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**African Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus parvus*

Common and widespread, seen in good numbers everyday of the trip.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

Small flocks of c10 and c40 at the Kaur Wetlands and the Barra-Banjul ferry respectively on the 15<sup>th</sup> were the only records.

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis aerobates*

Very common and widespread. Seen everyday, often in high numbers, and a large colony had nests under the main jetty at Tendaba.

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata galerita*

Reasonably common and widespread, seen at a variety of riverine habitats, including Kotu bridge. The best sighting was of a confiding individual fishing at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

**African Pygmy-Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta picta*

Three of these exquisite little birds were seen around the pool at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup>, showing excellently as they dip-bathed in the shallow pool. three were seen around Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup> and three were seen along the trail at Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala leucocephala*

One seen perched along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> showed well, as did cthree seen along the river from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis senegalensis*

A striking bird, with c.8 seen along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> with another two seen behind the Bird Safari Camp later – one perched up and ‘scoped. The only other sighting was of a single bird perched on roadside wires at Tanji beach on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica torquata*

The commonest large kingfisher, present and approachable around Kotu. c15 seen along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> was the highest day count.

**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti chelicuti*

At least three were present in the grasslands around Brufut Woods on the 9<sup>th</sup> and the group all had had good views. Others were heard calling at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup> and behind Tendaba Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima maxima*

A truly magnificent bird! A female was well-watched perched on wires over the mangroves at Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>, with another flying across the main pond at Abuko a couple of times on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A male sat up in a tree at Panchang on the 15<sup>th</sup> allowed more prolonged views.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis rudis*

The commonest kingfisher around, present at all wetland sites visited and especially numerous along the Georgetown River trip.

**Red-throated Bee-eater** *Merops bulocki bulocki*

The impressive colony at Bansang was a riot of colour and noise during our visit on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with c200 birds present. A Nile Monitor in one of their holes was getting heavily mobbed – hopefully it was just an old nest.

**Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus pusillus*

Fairly common, seen at a variety of habitats, but never in any significant numbers. 16 on the 8<sup>th</sup> was the highest day count, with the eight at Brufut Woods the highest site count.

**Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus chrysolaimus*

Only two of this delightful species were seen from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>, thankfully performing well as they hawked from riverside trees as we floated by.

**White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis*

Disappointing showing this year with just one individual perched distantly along the bolongs on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>. This was one of those times I was glad to have lugged my 'scope along as it was only through it that the white was visible.

**Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis viridissimus*

A pair was seen hawking from a riverside bush from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> with a singleton perched in bushes at Kerr Corsa the following day.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus chrysocercus*

One perched on wires en route to Cape Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> was a nice find but Lamin Lodge was the most reliable site with up to eight seen feeding over the creek on both lunchtime visits on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Another single bird was observed flying around Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup> also.

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*

A large flock of c80 was seen hawking over the bolongs at Tendaba from the boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and several birds were over the track behind Tendaba Camp and at Kiang West NP later that same day.

**Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus*

Voted co-bird of the tour, six of these beauties were well-watched at close quarters around Wassu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinica*

A very striking bird, common in most habitats and often seen on roadside wires. Seen on all but two days of the trip.

**Rufous-crowned Roller** *Coracias naevia naevia*

The scarcest roller, usually seen on roadside wires.

**Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster*

A very attractive roller, common and widespread but not seen around the Tendaba area and seemed to be more of a tree-percher! Also seen on all but two days of the trip.

**Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus afer*

Fairly common in open habitats but not seen inland.

**Green Woodhoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus senegalensis*

Common in suitable habitats especially Abuko and Bijilo, with noisy family parties a familiar sight often checking out holes in palm trees. Seen on all but three days of the trip.

**Northern Red-billed Hornbill**      *Tockus erythrorhynchus erythrorhynchus*

Common resident seen on all but one day of the trip, normally in more wooded habitats than the Greys. Usually seen feeding in small groups, often dropping to the ground.

**African Pied Hornbill**      *Tockus fasciatus semifasciatus*

An unusual sighting of a single bird around the Kotu ponds on the 8<sup>th</sup> was a lucky find. The bird showed well perched alongside the road and flew low over our heads as it disappeared into the taller trees beyond. three others were also seen in flight over the canopy in Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**African Grey Hornbill**      *Tockus nasutus nasutus*

Common resident, seen on all but one day of the trip in most wooded and open habitats. Their whistling calls seem misplaced coming from a hornbill, but they do look impressive as they do it: flinging their heads back and raising their wings up and down.

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird**      *Pogoniulus chrysoconus chrysoconus*

A fairly common – and impressive – resident seen singly or pairs in most open wooded habitats visited and also seen outside the Kombo Beach Hotel.

**Vieillot's Barbet**      *Lybius vieilloti rubescens*

Initially heard at Brufut on the 8<sup>th</sup>, a lovely perched bird was seen by all along the track at Tujereng the following day. One perched atop a tall tree at the fields around Bansang Quarry on the 12<sup>th</sup> was nicely 'scoped, as was the pair perched in the same bush as the Carmine Bee-eaters at Wassu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Bearded Barbet**      *Lybius dubius*

What a bird! two lucky group members saw a pair along the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The rest of us finally caught up with a pair whilst watching the Greyish Eagle-Owl at Faraba Banta the following day. Some group members saw one at Tendaba Camp on the 12<sup>th</sup> whilst at least three were present daily at Boabalong Camp during our stay. one was seen from the Georgetown boat trip and another later at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Two were seen well in trees at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup> with three 'scoped well by the waterhole over the border later that same day.

**Greater Honeyguide**      *Indicator indicator*

Single females were seen along the bolong on the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> and at Abuko rice fields on the 17<sup>th</sup>, with an immature perched up in the Verreaux's Eagle-Owl tree at Brikamaba on the 13<sup>th</sup> and a fine male perched along the track at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Lesser Honeyguide**      *Indicator minor senegalensis*

Two separate birds were seen in flight by some of the group at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Fine-spotted Woodpecker**      *Campetbera punctuligera punctuligera*

Only three males were seen: one at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one at the Abuko rice fields on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens lafresnayi*

Two males distracted us from breakfast as they clambered round the bare branches of a tree at Boabalong Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup> with another flying over the following morning.

**Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos goertae goertae*

The most numerous woodpecker by far and seen on seven days of the trip, first encountered at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Four seen around Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> was the highest daily count, usually seen singly or in pairs.

**Singing Bushlark** *Mirafra cantillans chadensis*

Only one seen by a couple of the group when flushed from the fields in the Dibbakunda area on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark** *Eremopterix leucotis melanocephala*

Another stunning bird, dressed in black and chestnut and an explosion of white as they took flight. C10 of these beauties were seen around the waterholes on the 12<sup>th</sup>, with two at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup> along with one at both the Boabulo and Kaur Wetlands and two drinking around Solomon's waterhole.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata senegalensis*

Several were seen on the pathways through Pirang Shrimp Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup> and several were in the beach vegetation at Tanji on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia riparia*

A large flock of c300 hawking over the Kaur Wetlands on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica rustica*

Scarce but probably overlooked. Seen in small numbers around Kotu on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida lucida*

The commonest hirundine, seen everyday bar the 14<sup>th</sup>, and usually in good-sized flocks in all habitats.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii smithii*

This beautiful hirundine has an affinity with water and was seen well at most wetland habitats visited, although not recorded further inland than Tendaba. A pair feeding fledged young at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> was a great photographic opportunity.

**Pied-winged Swallow** *Hirundo leucosoma*

After missing one called by Solomon over Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the group all had excellent views of a bird feeding over the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The only other sighting was of another bird swooping down to drink from the first waterhole around Dibbakunda on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Rufous-chested Swallow** *Hirundo semirufa*

Only seen on the 12<sup>th</sup>, when c50 were seen in the Dibbakunda region.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica domicella*

Fairly common but not seen around the coastal sites. First seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> with c40 over Pirang and last seen over the waterhole in Senegal on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Mosque Swallow** *Hirundo senegalensis senegalensis*

When first seen amongst the Red-rumps these birds could easily be mistaken for a hobby, with c10 being well-watched over the ponds at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Several visiting their nest holes in a huge baobab tree on Baobab Island on the 17<sup>th</sup> with two over the Farababantang Bush Track later the same day were the only other sightings.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*

c.20 seen with a mixed hirundine flock from the Tendaba boat trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, three were seen perched on wires with Red-chested Swallows and a very interestingly-coloured immature: it was grey-brown above which led to a natural initial id of Sand Martin. As it turned to face us, however, there was no apparent breast-band so out came the 'scope, through which the 'mask' was seen to be very clear cut with a few darker feathers apparent on the ear-coverts and the first tertial on the left-wing was bottle blue-green. As they all took flight the paler rump was obvious and it kept with the adults at all times. Most odd, but interesting nonetheless.

**Fanti Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne obscura*

A very smart hirundine first seen at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> and then in good numbers around Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, and also at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava*

Males of this species were the only ones seen accompanied by one styx birds presumably being of this species also. Seen at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the Kaur wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

Fairly common on wetter habitats such as Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the Kaur Wetlands on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. One was also seen on the main jetty at Tendaba on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and two were around the Yellytenda ferry port, also on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus inornatus*

Very common and widespread, seen everyday in good numbers. Most often the first bird of the morning chorus.

**Little Greenbul** *Andropadus virens erythropterus*

Five seen in the canopy at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> with cfour there on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A single bird was seen well inside Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Yellow-throated Leaflove** *Chlorocichla flavicollis flavicollis*

A bird singing from dense cover at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> was frustratingly elusive. Better luck was had just outside Boabalong Camp with up to four birds present in the riverside vegetation early mornings. Three were also seen along the riverbank as we waited for the Janjanbureh ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Leaflove** *Phyllastrephus scandens scandens*

Very difficult birds to see without the use of a tape which we didn't have. Only a few lucky members of the group got id-able views of these birds as they called and scrambled through the forest at Farasutu on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapilla morelorum*

Only seen at Abuko with three skulking around on the 9<sup>th</sup> and a better, more showy bird perched on hanging vines on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**African Thrush** *Turdus pelios chiguancoides*

Fairly common in woodlands nearer the coast like Abuko, Farasutu and Brufut. c10 were drawn to the drinking pool in the latter site on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythropus erythropus*

Two were seen as they sang in the reeds along the river on the Georgetown boat trip, with at least four others heard at other sites on the trip back up.

**Singing Cisticola** *Cisticola cantans swanzii*

One singing in the grasslands around Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> was followed by sightings of two at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one along the Farababantang Bush Track on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Whistling Cisticola** *Cisticola lateralis lateralis*

Scarce, with two seen in the grasslands around Brufut on the 8<sup>th</sup> and one singing along the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Winding Cisticola** *Cisticola galactotes amphilectus*

One individual at Solomon's regular site around the Yellytenda-Farafenni ferry port showed well as it sang from atop a bush on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis uropygialis*

With its' familiar call and display flight betraying their presence, birds were noted at Tujereng, two on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Pirang three on the 10<sup>th</sup> with singles at Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup> and at Kotu on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava subflava*

Fairly regular in suitable grassy or reedy habitat and seen on seven days of the trip, mostly at more inland sites. All birds were in non-breeding plumage.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida caniceps*

Another forest bird that was heard far more regularly than seen, with at least ten present around Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> and six on the 17<sup>th</sup>, with two seen at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Oriole Warbler** *Hypergerus atriceps*

Three of these excellent birds were seen, giving reasonable views in the waterside vegetation from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>, with at least another dozen calling at various stages along it. The group all got tickable views, but we needn't have worried as back at Kotu Bridge, just behind the birding club building, a very showy bird came down to drink and bathe in the pool by the 'hide', giving fantastic views on the 17<sup>th</sup>. We could've relaxed a bit if we'd been taken to this site earlier!!

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata brevicaudata*

Fairly common in more wooded areas and seen on six days of the trip, with c.5 around the Brufut area on the 8<sup>th</sup>, seen on both trips round around Abuko and two at Bijilo Forest on the 18<sup>th</sup>, its scolding call usually belying its presence. Inland, it was seen at Boraba on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus scirpaceus*

Seen on three dates: one in the reeds unusually!! at the Yellytenda ferry on the 12<sup>th</sup>, one along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Western Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida*

c.3 were seen along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> with another seen along the river on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at Wassu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*

Singles were seen behind the camp at Tendaba and near Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>, along the river on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Senegal Eremomela** *Eremomela pusilla*

Two birds were seen at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup> whilst looking at the Greyish Eagle-Owl, c.4 were seen along the track at Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>, one in the wooded area near the Yellytenda ferry and c.3 were along the track at Boraba on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens flaviventris*

One excellent bird was seen well by everyone eventually! in Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Crombec** *Sylvietta brachyura brachyura*

A pair feeding a well-grown youngster was well appreciated in the roadside trees just down from Kotu Bridge on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>. One other was seen along the track at Boraba on the 13<sup>th</sup>. An adult was seen in the mangroves at Kotu Creek on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>, with a pair present there the following morning.

**Green Hylia** *Hylia prasinus prasinus*

c.4 present at Abuko, initially located by their calls, with two giving uncharacteristically good views.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common winter migrant and seen in a wide variety of habitats.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Two were seen in the treetops along the track at Boraba on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla atricapilla*

Two males seen: one at Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup> and one in the mangroves at Kotu on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Western Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans cantillans*

Seen on four days: one near Kotu bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup>, one at Pirang on the 10<sup>th</sup>, one along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> and one along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Black-Flycatcher** *Melaenornis edolioides edolioides*

After struggling for this species, two were seen well in poolside trees at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>. On the 17<sup>th</sup> a pair showed well feeding from vegetation below the palm trees alongside the Abuko rice fields and another pair was present on Baobab Island.

**Swamp Flycatcher** *Muscicapa aquatica aquatica*

Two adults feeding a well-grown immature were watched well in the low emergent bushes by the sluice at the Jahali rice fields. The following day, at least eight were seen from the Georgetown boat trip, all typically feeding from very low perches over the water.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

A female was seen in bushes along the track from the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

One was singing and seen briefly in bushes along the track at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat** *Cossypha niveicapilla niveicapilla*

The more numerous one, but still tricky to see and noted on five days of the trip: one briefly outside the hotel on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two seen in Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>, two heard at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>. On the 17<sup>th</sup> one was seen in Abuko and an excellent bird was watched bathing at the hide by Kotu Bridge that afternoon giving a couple of group members a much-needed tick and another was heard calling at Bijilo Coastal Forest the next morning.

**White-crowned Robin-Chat** *Cossypha megarhynchos megarhynchos*

Definitely the scarcer of the two, seen only on three days of the trip, but conversely higher in numbers: one in roadside trees outside the hotel on the 8<sup>th</sup>, four outside Boabalong Camp and four along the river on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup>, a single outside the Camp and two seen well in riverside vegetation by the Janjanbureh ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

A female was heard and seen along the track behind Tendaba Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a nice male was seen near the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*

A pair was 'scoped from the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup> with another female in bushes at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe oenanthe*

One female atypically perched atop a high bush at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup> defied all attempts to turn it into something better!

**Northern Anteater-Chat** *Myrmecocichla aethiops aethiops*

A nice perched bird glimmatureered through the heat-haze at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>, with another three seen better perched atop a village well along the northern main road later that day.

**Common Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea cyanea*

Fairly common in wooded areas, especially nearer water. Once its distinctive but melancholy whistle was learned they were surprisingly numerous. First seen outside the hotel on the 9<sup>th</sup>, we encountered another five at Abuko and three at Tujereng later that day. At least six were seen/heard on both boat trips and a particularly showy pair was in the mangroves by the Yellytenda ferry on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Senegal Batis** *Batis senegalensis*

A pair showed well as they fed in the bushes along the track at Tujereng. The only other sighting was of a male at Boraba as the light failed on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda longicauda*

one superb bird flew into trees alongside us on the Tendaba boat trip and gave excellent views on the 11<sup>th</sup>, allowing the whole group to catch up with this tricky species.

**Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone rufiventer rufiventer*

A male seen at the drinking pool at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> showed well, albeit briefly. Seen again at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup> pair and another male at Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Interestingly, the 'Barlow' guide shows hybrids with the following species having a variable amount of black on the underparts and white in the wings; Borrow's Birds of WA shows the nominate as having white in the wings... thus supposed hybrids were seen at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> and at Farasutu Forest also.

**African Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis viridis*

A stunning bird with a pair seen poorly along the track at Boraba on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A nice male flew out and dipped briefly into the water along the river from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and showy pairs were seen at Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup> and Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackcap Babbler** *Turdoides reinwardtii reinwardtii*

Common and conspicuous residents usually heard first before flying low through the bushes in family groups. Only seen along the river at Georgetown inland but regular at the coastal sites.

**Brown Babbler** *Turdoides plebejus platycircus*

A surprisingly attractive babbler with a glowing orange eye when seen well. Present everyday around Boabalong Camp and seen at Brufut, Abuko, Farasutu and Bijilo on the coast.

**White-shouldered Black-Tit** *Melaniparus leucomelos guineensis*

one flying across the clearing whilst the group was watching a Green Hylia was only seen by two members and was the trip's only sighting. Thank god I was looking up!!

**Mouse-brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus*

A single bird showed well in the mangroves by the bridge at Lamin Lodge on the 9<sup>th</sup>. At least ten were seen along the bolongs at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup>, one attending a nest strung low over the water. On the 12<sup>th</sup> c.5 were seen in the mangroves at the Yellytenda-Farafenni ferry crossing, responding well to pishing and approaching very closely, giving great views – until the video camera came out of course...!

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris subcollaris*

Scarce, with only two sightings: two males showing well at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> and a single female in Farasutu Forest on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Pygmy Sunbird** *Hedydipna platura*

A lucky find with a pair seen at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The male showed well perched in the grasses along the field edges and also in flight.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis senegalensis*

Some of the group saw a stunning male behind the animal orphanage inside Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup> and the rest caught up with another later that day at Tujereng with another seen on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A female was seen along the track at Boraba and another was along the Farababantang Bush track on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Beautiful Sunbird** *Cinnyris pulchella pulchella*

By far the commonest – and probably the best looking – sunbird around, seen most days in a wide variety of habitats, although absent from the Tendaba area. For an example, we saw 20 different birds with an obvious male-bias on the 9<sup>th</sup> alone.

**Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus venustus*

Only seen on four dates: one male in trees along the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one male at Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>, a female along the river from the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a female on Baobab Island on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigastra*

Fairly common and seen at a variety of woodland sites with a highest count of three pairs behind the animal orphanage in Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Copper Sunbird** *Cinnyris cuprea*

Scarce with only three sightings: two males seen at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup>, one male at Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a male seen at Bansang on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**African Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis senegalensis*

A very scarce and difficult bird to connect with. Only two members saw two separate birds on the 16<sup>th</sup>: one at Farasutu Forest and the other moving through high in the trees on Baobab Island.

**African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus auratus*

A male in flight from the bus as we left the coast on the 10<sup>th</sup> was a glorious flash of golden yellow, leaving no doubt as to its identity! Another pair was well watched behind Tendaba Camp the following day with another flying over the lake at Kiang West NP that evening. On the 12<sup>th</sup> most of the group saw a fine male in the trees

just outside the restaurant area as we had breakfast. A female around Bansang was seen on the 13<sup>th</sup> and other males were at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup> and around the Janjanbureh ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Good views were had of a male along the Farababantang Bush Track on the 16<sup>th</sup> harassing the African Cuckoo, whether perched or flying!

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator senator*

A single immature in bushes at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Yellow-billed Shrike** *Corvinella corvina corvina*

Scarce but regular, seen on all but two days of the trip, mostly in open wooded areas and often very approachable. Mostly seen singly or in pairs, although four together in a tree early morning at Boabalong Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup> and five around Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup> were the highest counts.

**Brubru** *Nilaus afer afer*

one bird seen briefly on the 9<sup>th</sup> along the track at Tujereng was followed by the only other sighting of one along the entrance road to Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>. This second bird showed much better and the whole group had good views.

**Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis gambensis*

After missing one seen only by Ousman at Tendaba airport on the 11<sup>th</sup>, we did not see another until the 16<sup>th</sup>, when a pair finally showed well for the whole group on the edge of Farasutu Forest. Later that day another two males and a female were seen around Baobab Island and an excellent male showed very well in front of us by Kotu Bridge on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala senegala*

Two seen well and one other heard along the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, with others heard at Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the Farababantang Bush Track on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Yellow-crowned Gonolek** *Laniarius barbarus barbarus*

A common and widespread resident of mostly mangrove and riverine habitats. Very gaudy and noisy birds, seen on all but three days of the trip.

**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti blanchoti*

One calling distantly at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup> was tracked down and gave excellent 'scope views as it continued to call from atop a bare tree before flying off after getting a bit of grief from a glossy-starling.

**White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus plumatus*

A party of one male and three female of these cracking birds was watched well along the track behind Tendaba Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The male has a huge crest and looked a lot funkier than in the fieldguide! The only other sighting was of a single bird flying up off the northern main road as we headed back towards Barra on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii sharpei*

one bird was seen perched on dead branches as we lunched on Baobab Island on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis divaricatus*

Common, albeit in low numbers, and widespread and seen on all but three days of the trip.

**Piapiac** *Ptilostomus afer*

A common and charismatic bird of more open areas nearer the coast, usually feeding on the ground in big groups. The only inland sighting was of six birds en route to Georgetown on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus*

Very common and numerous on the coast, but absent from most places inland. In fact only one was seen flying over the pool at Tendaba on the 11<sup>th</sup> as several of us escaped the heat.

**Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis chalbaeus chalbaeus*

Fairly common and widespread, seen on all but three days of the trip.

**Lesser Blue-eared Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis chloropterus chloropterus*

A single seen definitely in fields outside Tendaba with Greaters and Purples on the 10<sup>th</sup> and three within a mixed starling flock at the Bird Safari Camp on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Bronze-tailed Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis chalcurus chalcurus*

Common and seen on all but three days of the trip.

**Purple Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureus purpureus*

Common, probably the commonest starling inland and seen on all but three days of the trip also.

**Long-tailed Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis caudatus*

The commonest and most impressive starling in the area, seen everyday in all habitats and seemingly the only starling to inhabit human settlements. Very gaudy and very noisy!

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus africanus*

Seen on four of the six days we spent inland, usually perched on and around donkeys but actually seen twice on oxen – so the name fits well!

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus indicus*

Surprisingly scarce – a couple of pairs inhabited the hotel grounds, and others were seen around the Banjul ferry port, the airport and the bigger towns.

**Northern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer griseus griseus*

Very common – in fact, most passerines perched up in a tree were these!! Seen everyday in all habitats, from urban to woodland.

**Sudan Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus*

One gorgeous ad still in breeding plumage and two in n-br plumage were seen at Solomon's Waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup>. As we journeyed back on the 15<sup>th</sup>, one non-breeder was seen at Kerr Corsa, with the breeding plumaged adult and five non-breeders present around Solomon's waterhole again. An excellent find!

**Bush Petronia** *Petronia dentata dentata*

Only seen further inland, with six behind Tendaba Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup>, two around the first waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup>, four around Bansang on the 13<sup>th</sup>, six others seen en route and two at Wassu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**White-billed Buffalo-Weaver** *Bubalornis albirostris*

Fairly common and their spectacular nests that seem to take over whole trees were a regular sight nearer the coast, and provided great photo opportunities as a couple of large colonies are right beside the road.

**Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver** *Plocepasser supervillosus*

A pair showed very well on low branches along the entrance road to Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Weaver** *Ploceus luteolus luteolus*

one female in flight across the river with Village Weavers as we waited for the southern pull-ferry to take us back onto McCarthy Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting.

**Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis brachypterus*

This weaver is often seen inside forests and was seen on two days at various coastal sites at either end of the trip: at Brufut Woods where up to four birds showed well at the drinking pool on the 8<sup>th</sup>, c10 birds at Abuko with another two outside the hotel on the 9<sup>th</sup>, four inside Farasutu Forest and two on Baobab Island on the 16<sup>th</sup> and another six again in Abuko on the 17<sup>th</sup>. All but two birds at Brufut were females.

**Vitelline Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus vitellinus*

This species is split by some and by others kept as the ssp vitellinus of African Masked-Weaver. It is fairly uncommon seen on five consecutive days of the trip and was usually seen in low numbers such as at Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> where we had two pairs coming to visit the drinking pool and at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup> where we had at least five pairs. three pairs at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup> and Kiang West NP on the 11<sup>th</sup> were notable also.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus cucullatus*

By far the most numerous passerine in the area. Seen everyday and everywhere in large numbers, with huge colonies present at various localities including the entrance of Tendaba Camp. Quite a few of the males were still in full-breeding plumage.

**Black-headed Weaver** *Ploceus melanocephalus melanocephalus*

Also called 'Yellow-backed', the only sightings were of four birds at Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup> and c20 along the river on the Georgetown boat trip the following day.

**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea quelea*

Two seen with the mixed bishop flocks around Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup> with three again there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Also on that day, three, including a breeding-plumaged male with his lovely black face, were seen at Kerr Corsa.

**Yellow-crowned Bishop** *Euplectes afer afer*

Present in good numbers only at the Kaur wetlands with c20 seen on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-winged Red Bishop** *Euplectes hordeaceus hordeaceus*

Only seen in very small numbers, with four pairs at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>, two males at Faraba Banta on the 10<sup>th</sup> and two pairs along the Farababantang Bush Track on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Red Bishop** *Euplectes franciscanus franciscanus*

Very common and widespread in all habitats. Most males were still in pristine plumage, but those inland were moulting more than those on the coast.

**Yellow-shouldered Widowbird** *Euplectes macrourus macrourus*

A lovely male was found around the fields at Tunjina on the 16<sup>th</sup>, perched in the reeds and showing very well, but looking a bit scruffy as his moult was beginning.

**Red-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia phoenicoptera phoenicoptera*

A single bird was seen in flight by three of us near the first waterhole at Dibbakunda on the 12<sup>th</sup> with one lucky member seeing another typically brief view of one at Solomon's waterhole on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba citorior*

I was lucky enough to 'scope a single female by the first waterhole in the Dibbakunda region on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately she disappeared as quickly as she appeared....

**Western Bluebill** *Spermophaga haematina haematina*

Two birds, couldn't see if they were a pair or two rival males, were seen chasing each other through the trees just beyond the Darwin hide at Abuko on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Soon after, a single gorgeous male perched up on low vines over the little swampy area there and gave, for this species at least, excellent views - I even managed to get some grainy video of him. Result!

**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala senegala*

Most common and widespread finch, seen everyday in a wide variety of habitats. The males really are stunning!

**Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus bengalus bengalus*

Not as numerous as the preceding species but very widespread and again, simply gorgeous and very approachable.

**Lavender Waxbill** *Estrilda caerulescens*

Surprisingly scarce, and only seen on three occasions: a single male visiting the drinking pool in Brufut Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup>, a nice flock of c20 along the track at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup> and two in flight behind Tendaba Camp on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Orange-cheeked Waxbill** *Estrilda melpoda melpoda*

A scarce but sublime-looking finch with just two seen well in the road-edge grasses by Kotu Bridge on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda troglodytes*

Another gorgeous finch, first seen on the track through Pirang Shrimp Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup>, followed by two at the Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup>, a single bird on the Georgetown boat trip on the 14<sup>th</sup> and four birds visiting the bathing pool on Baobab Island on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza atricollis atricollis*

four of these exquisite finches were seen feeding just ahead of the group on the track at Pirang Shrimp Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup>, showing exceptionally well. At Jahali rice fields on the 13<sup>th</sup>, three more were seen well.

**African Silverbill** *Lonchura cantans cantans*

A pair showed well perched and preening in the grasses in front of the Red-throated Bee-eater colony at Bansang quarry, with another single bird seen in the bushes near Kotu Creek on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Bronze Munia** *Lonchura cucullata*

More numerous nearer the coast and common in the Kotu area, with counts of over 12 birds seen there. c30, mostly immatures, were present at Brufut on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the only inland sighting was of cfour birds around Bansang on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Cut-throat** *Amandina fasciata fasciata*

c.10 were seen around the two waterholes, including 'Solomon's', in the Dibbakunda region on the 12<sup>th</sup>. A very showy pair was well watched by the whole group as they came in to drink at Solomon's waterhole on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Simply gorgeous birds, especially the males!

**Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata chalybeata*

Surprisingly uncommon given the high numbers of their preferred host species, the Red-billed Firefinch. Seen in small numbers in a variety of habitats, from villages, no misnomer there, to open woodland. The males were very striking with their off-white bills and bright red legs. Eight at Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup> was the highest day count.

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura*

Two fully-tailed males were in trees as we left Tujereng on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Other sightings were of a female perched in trees behind Tendaba Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup>, a male in flight from the bus on the 12<sup>th</sup> and two males and a female at Kerr Corsa on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Exclamatory Paradise-Whydah** *Vidua interjecta*

c10 males in full stunning breeding-plumage were seen around the waterholes in the Dibbakunda region on the 12<sup>th</sup>, looking amazing in flight and quite ungainly on the ground as they landed to drink with two rivals threat-displaying to one another at the waters' edge around Solomon's waterhole. On the 15<sup>th</sup> another male was seen at Kerr Corsa and a further three were around Solomon's waterhole again, one with no tail. I know that Barlow et al, 1997 maintains there is uncertainty as to whether this species or the Sahel PW is the commonest species along the northern bank, but all males seen matched the illustration for Exclamatory, with rich chestnut collars and upper-breasts.

**White-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus leucopygius riggenbachi*

One seen in the tall roadside grasses just up from the Farafenni ferry port on the 12<sup>th</sup> and two seen in the gardens near the southern pull ferry on McCarthy Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> were the only sightings.

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Serinus mozambicus caniceps*

The first encounter of this species was of a male that flew into the bus whilst we had lunch at Lamin Lodge on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Upon our return, Chris jumped on board and caught it only to let it go out of the window - straight into my eye! Talk about a close encounter! Seen at a variety of dryer habitats, usually in pairs but never in high numbers and more numerous inland.

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi goslingi*

Two of these gorgeous emberids were seen well as they came in to drink at Solomon's waterhole on the 12<sup>th</sup> with just a singleton present there briefly on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Mammals**

Hippopotamus	Guinea Baboon	Red Patas Monkey
Red Colobus Monkey	Green Vervet Monkey	Marsh Mongoose
Scrub Hare	Gambian Sun Squirrel	Striped Ground Squirrel
Epauletted Fruit-Bat	Straw-coloured Fruit-Bat	Pipistrelle sp.

**Reptiles**

Nile Crocodile	Nile Monitor	West African Mud Turtle
Agama Lizard	Red-flanked Skink	Brown-sided Skink
Gecko sp.		

**Amphibians**

Common African Toad	West African Reed Frog	Shovel-nosed Frog
sm. Tree Frog sp.		

**Butterflies**

Caper White	Calypto Caper White	Zebra White
African Wood White	Tiny Orange-tip	Scarlet-tip
Dark Blue Pansy	Soldier Pansy	African Emigrant
African Tiger	Small Orange Acraea	Elegant Acraea
Pink Acraea	Encedon Acraea	Painted Lady
Citrus Swallowtail	White Lady Swallowtail	Little Commodore
Common Grass Yellow	Common Dotted Border	Senegal Blue Policeman
African Grass Blue	Pea Blue	Vulgar Bush Brown
Pearl Charaxes	Cream-bordered Charaxes	Common Green Charaxes
Guinea fowl	Dark Commodore	River Sailor
False Swift	African Joker	Variable Eggfly

## Dragonflies

Banded Groundling

Scarlet Dragonfly

St. Lucia Widow

Strong Skimmatureer

## Others

West African Fiddler Crab	Atlantic Mudskipper	African Praying Mantis
Eyed Flower Mantis	African Honey Bee	Desert Locust
African Giant Millipede	Dung Beetle sp.	Driver Ant sp.
Firefly sp.		